insights into the Ghūrids' settlement hierarchy. These suggest that they did not radically alter that of their predecessors. As I discussed in Chapter Five, many of the fortified sites in central Afghanistan appear to have been founded in earlier periods and exhibit continuity of occupation. Archaeologists have yet to identify evidence of the proliferation of fortresses attributed to Ghūrid rulers by al-Djūzdjānī. Although it is difficult to gauge their precise use of, and impact upon, the existing major urban centres, the historical sources and archaeological evidence from Ghazna and Lashkar-i Bāzār suggest limited elite patronage of cities during the early years of the Ghūrid interlude, with subsequent modifications of existing structures and some, later major building programmes.

Although the tentative nature of these conclusions is frustrating from the point of view of this thesis, it should not detract from the potential contribution the analysis of satellite images has to make in the broader study of archaeological sites in Afghanistan and elsewhere. This topic and others more directly relevant to the Ghūrid polity will be discussed in the concluding chapter of the thesis, Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight: the Ghūrids – an unsustainable Early Islamic polity

8.1 Introduction

The principal aim of this thesis has been to re-assess the Early Islamic Ghūrid polity in the light of recent archaeological fieldwork at Djām, one of its major centres in the heart of modern Afghanistan. By adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, inspired by the *Annales* School, I have sought to demonstrate that the Ghūrids metamorphosed from a loose confederation of often fractious rival chieftains into a significant Early Islamic polity. Their rapid rise and fall were inextricably linked to their environment, unstable political structure, seasonally-nomadic socio-economic way of life and *mentalités*, and the varying fortunes of the other contemporary dynasties in the region. The study has sought to integrate historical source material with the archaeological data from Djām and other sixth-seventh / eleventh-twelfth century sites in Afghanistan. In the process, Adam T. Smith's concept of an archipelagic landscape (Smith 2003: 109) has provided a useful framework in which to conceptualize these scattered nodes of data.

A re-assessment of the Ghūrids is timely given the successful nomination of Djām as Afghanistan's first World Heritage Site in 2002 and the limited number of previous detailed studies. The use of satellite imagery, in particular, is important from a heritage management perspective, given the widespread looting at Djām (and other sites in Afghanistan) and the difficulties the Afghan authorities have had in fulfilling UNESCO's requests for revised spatial data and plans of the site.

This concluding chapter of the thesis will focus on several key, interrelated themes running through my research – Ghūrid identity and *mentalités*; the Ghūrids' isolation; the urban characteristics of Djām; the ultimately unsustainable nature of large-scale habitation at the Ghūrids' summer capital; and the role that the lack of an original, cohesive ideology played in the demise of the Ghūrid polity. I conclude by considering possible avenues for future research and the role that new technology such as Google Earth could play in the investigation, representation and management of archaeological sites, not just in Afghanistan but around the world.

8.2 Ghūrid identity and *mentalités*

Geo-historical tags or dynastic identifiers, such as 'the Ghūrids', are potentially misleading despite their near ubiquitous usage (including in this thesis), due to the implied art historical trajectory from one dynasty's material culture to that of the next (Whitcomb 2003: 271,

274). They assume homogeneity and a static sense, and representation, of 'self' where none, or others may have existed, whilst masking diversity and metamorphosis. These identifiers gradually acquire imagined identities, forged by contemporary chroniclers (such as al-Djūzdjānī in the case of the Ghūrids) and are often adopted uncritically by modern scholars writing within the current global political paradigm of nation-states. This results in a tendency to equate a people with a place and a polity, delineated on maps with stark, static boundaries.

Detailed analysis of the historical sources and archaeological evidence, however, highlights the fallacy of such assumptions. As Norman Yoffee (2007: 6) notes, ancient societies "can hardly be understood as "integrated" since there are many social orientations and identities in all societies, and these are often contested, fragile, and transformable". Modern scholars' theoretical models and cartographic representations, therefore, need to be capable of conceptualizing and accommodating discontinuous, but also periodically overlapping, ephemeral polythetic entities whose characteristics may vary depending on the sectors of society which are represented in the historical sources and material remains (Clarke 1978: 36-7, 311-12). This is best done within the theoretical framework of an archipelagic landscape, where nodes of archaeological, architectural and historical data are incorporated into overlapping, trans-regional entities whose constituents, extent and duration vary thematically and diachronically. Scholars need to think of networks rather than fixed territories with rigid borders (Flood 2009a: 8), maps of fluid mosaics rather than solid monochromes.

From the limited ethno-linguistic evidence available, the indigenous people of central Afghanistan seem to have come from eastern Iranian Tādjīk stock. These hardy mountain folk may originally have spoken a now extinct pre-Persian language (Ball 2008: 93; Bosworth 1965a: 1099) – Masᶜūd of Ghazna, for example, who was admittedly descended from Turk *ghulām*s from the steppe, employed interpreters during his campaign in Ghūr in 411 / 1020. A century later, al-Djūzdjānī (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 312) states that "the Ghūrīān race" became united in their opposition to their neighbours, and greatest rivals, the Ghaznawids.

Al-Djūzdjānī's account of the ascendancy of the Shansabānīds, the preeminent tribe in Early Islamic Ghūr, fulfils Anthony Smith's definition of an *ethnie* (Smith 1999: 13; see also Giddens 1985: 116-21). The chronicler furnishes the 'Shansabānīd Ghūrids' with ancestral myths, historical 'memories' and an association with a homeland, while also unintentionally providing glimpses of the ethno-linguistic and religious diversity of the region. The Shansabānīds' sense of identity (or at least prejudices against 'outsiders') is

evident in the fact that Ghiyāth al-Dīn's uncle was prevented from occupying the throne in Fīrūzkūh because his mother was Turk in origin (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 422). It would, however, be misleading to equate the Shansabānīds' apparent 'sense of self' with that of their subjects as a whole, or even the Ghūrid elite – Shansabānīd rule was contested by the rival Shīsānid clan, although both groups had similar sartorial traditions (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 315).

The material culture from the sixth-seventh / eleventh-twelfth centuries indicates a significant degree of continuity and shared traditions (Ball 2008: 94; Flood 2009a: 137; Gascoigne 2010). While regional stylistic variations are discernible in the architecture and artefacts produced by artisans from Harāt (Flood 2009a: 105, 186), for example, many elements transcend the rise and fall of the Shansabānīd dynasty (Blair 1985: 84-6). This is unsurprising – 'regime change' is seldom "accompanied by whole-scale changes in the production of materials" (Yoffee 2008: 138), socio-economic *conjunctures* and belief systems. The early Ghaznawids, for example, retained much of the existing socio-political and administrative structures in their new empire (Bosworth 1973: 9).[1] Equally, however, it is also important to recognise that "'continuities' themselves are choices made, often to stem the tide of discontinuity" (Yoffee 2008: 138).

Eclectic tastes define the architectural patronage and consumption of luxury artefacts by the Ghūrid elite – the blending of Persianate and Indic artistic forms, media and techniques in the later Ghūrid period appears key to "the self-fashioning of elites in twelfth-century contact zones" (Flood 2009a: 219). Consequently, their material culture is an often subtle transformation of its constitutive trans-regional elements rather than being indigenous and distinctive in itself (Flood 2009a: 179; Sourdel-Thomine 1960: 280). These regional variations further emphasize the futility of attempting to define a single Ghūrid style.

The extent of the diverse identities and *mentalités* amongst the Ghūrids is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify. The historical and archaeological evidence reflect this plurality in subtle ways, hinting at multiple, morphing, and at times intangible, constituent identities, rather than a unique Ghūrid identity. At Djām, however, one distinct non-indigenous group is evident in the historical and archaeological record – a vibrant, respected Judaeo-Persian community living in the heart of the Ghūrid polity, with the freedom to practice their religion and undertake commercial activities. The presence of this Judaeo-Persian community corroborates (or is reflected in) the account of a Jewish trader's role in the rise of the

[1] In recent years archaeologists have been able to demonstrate that the impact of the Islamic 'conquest' of Syria-Palestine, for example, was not as cataclysmic as has traditionally been assumed (Walmsley 2007: 21 ff).

Shansabānīd tribe in the *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāṣiri* (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 314-15). More subtle traces of the sporadic influxes of nomadic peoples such as the Ghuzz, Khaladj and Khʷārazmians from the steppe to the north are alluded to in the historical sources. Nomad mercenaries, for example, were enlisted into Ghūrid armies, which included Afghans, Tādjīks from Khurāsān and Khaldj troops from Zamīn-Dāwar (Kumar 2007: 63 ff; Wink 1991: 137). As under the ᶜAbbāsids, these outsiders, bereft of local tribal allegiances, proved particularly useful to the Ghūrid sultan Muᶜizz al-Dīn – the *bandagān-i khaṣṣ* or elite Turk *mamlūk*s rose to prominence during his later campaigns in the northern Indian sub-continent and administered Muᶜizz al-Dīn's territories (Flood 2009a: 227; Jackson 2000a: 210; Kumar 2007: 80; Wink 1991: 139-141).

The socio-political fragility of the multi-ethnic Ghūrid polity is evident in the power struggles that followed the assassination of Muᶜizz al-Dīn in 602 / 1206. Rivals within the Ghūrid elite manoeuvred for control of Fīrūzkūh, a site with symbolic, rather than strategic, importance. In the wake of their territorial losses in Khurāsān, the indigenous elite failed to recognise, or ideologically could not accept, that the powerbase of the polity had shifted beyond the Ghūrid heartland to Ghazna, the 'gateway' to the northern Indian sub-continent. Thus, it was Muᶜizz al-Dīn's Turk *mamlūk*s, rather than his kin, who established the Delhi Sultanate, as dominion over the Ghūrid heartland became untenable in the face of the ascendant Khʷārazm-Shāhs and then Čingiz Khān's Mongols. In a sense, therefore, the ideology of the Ghūrid elites held firm; as is the case today, localized identities had greater meaning than a more nebulous national or regional one. Faced by unsurmountable external threats, the Ghūrids abandoned their imperial pretensions and reverted to their previous, parochial way of life.

8.3 The Ghūrids' isolation

The present-day challenges of reaching, let alone conducting fieldwork in, central Afghanistan reinforce the impression of the inaccessibility and isolation of the Ghūrids' heartland which emerges from the historical sources. The recent *Afghanistan: crossroads of the ancient world* exhibition in the British Museum (Simpson 2011), however, reminds us that the valleys and passes of Afghanistan have always provided routes through its apparent topographic barriers – much depends upon personal perspective, time pressures, and the mode of transport.

Little is known about the Ghūrid heartland prior to the campaigns of the Ghaznawid sultan Maḥmūd in 401 / 1010-11. The Ghaznawid armies did not encounter any towns

of note in the region, only agricultural settlements and fortresses (Bosworth 1961: 118). C.E. Bosworth argues that the persistence of paganism in Ghūr until this date indicates "the cultural backwardness of the region and its isolation from the surrounding higher civilisations" (Bosworth 1961: 125). Although Islam did eventually penetrate the region, as late as 897-8 / 1492 the historian of Harāt Muᶜīn al-Dīn Zamčī "characterised the people of Ghūr as notoriously stupid but impeccably pure in their faith and hatred of innovation" (Bosworth 1961: 133).

Political power in the Ghūrid heartland was localised in the fortified structures scattered across the landscape; as such, it reflected the fractured nature of the topography with its myriad isolated valleys. Defensive concerns played a prominent role in the introverted Ghūrid elites' *mentalités*. Local chieftains spent much of their time warring amongst themselves before the Shansabānīd tribe came to prominence in the mid-sixth / twelfth century. Even then, the region cannot be considered as a single cohesive political entity, due to the existence of major semi-autonomous centres in Fīrūzkūh, Ghazna and Bāmiyān, as well as the numerous smaller fortified strongholds.

The relative unity established by Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad following his accession to the throne in 558 / 1163 was crucial to the success of the Ghūrids' subsequent expansion. He set aside his ancestors' internecine tendencies, installing his younger brother Muᶜizz al-Dīn Muḥammad in Ghazna and permitting his uncle to remain in Bāmiyān despite his treachery (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 373-4). The first fifteen years of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's reign, however, were spent securing Ghūr and its immediate vicinity – as his predecessors and subsequent invaders found, the defensive structures which characterise central Afghanistan made the region difficult to subjugate and control.

Although some of these fortified sites exhibit significant stylistic similarities in their construction and decoration, few have been dated conclusively and exclusively to the Ghūrid period, let alone to one of the building programs documented in the *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāṣiri*. Numerous sites in the Bāmiyān region, for example, seem to have been constructed in the Turco-Shāh and Hindū Shāh periods (second-fourth / eighth-tenth centuries – Chapter 5.3.1). Given the lack of precise chronological data and the complex political landscape, it is unsurprising that studies by the likes of Warwick Ball (2002) and Werner Herberg (1982) have found it difficult to interpret the fortified sites' geographic distribution and the different decorative styles. Whatever the origins of the fortified sites, the heavily militarized landscape enabled Ghiyāth al-Dīn to expand the Ghūrids' domain from a position of strength and security, once he had secured his peers' loyalty.

The expansion of the Ghūrid polity in the late sixth / twelfth century provided new

sources of income, primarily from their appanages and campaigns in the northern Indian sub-continent, but also in the form of tribute from vassals in Khurāsān and Sīstān. Al-Djūzdjānī states that a steady supply of exotic goods reached the Ghūrids' summer capital of Fīrūzkūh (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 406), despite its geographic isolation. The range of luxury items listed is (and was intended to be) impressive – pearls, jewels, silk, perfumed leather, ceramics and receptacles made from precious metals (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 403-6). Predictably few traces of such valuable commodities have been unearthed at Ghūrid period sites, although the recent fieldwork at Djām has identified the presence of high status ceramics from China and Iran (Gascoigne 2010: 115-19). These instances are complemented by anecdotal information about the treasures looted from the site in recent years, and by the extent and intensity of the looting in itself.

The transportation of goods, tribute and booty into the Ghūrid heartland also enabled the creep of social, religious and intellectual influences from the wider Islamic world and beyond. Architectural remains preserve evidence of some external influences – structures such as the Masjid-i Sangī exhibit the stylistic traits of craftsmen from the northern Indian sub-continent, while inscriptions state that an architect from Nīshāpūr was responsible for the construction of the minaret at Djām and a master craftsman from Harāt supervised the construction of at least part of the Ghūrids' Ḳuṭb Minā[…] in Dilhī.

The erosion of the Ghūrids' intellectual isolation is evident in the changes in the religious allegiances of the Shansabānīd elite. The local population predominantly adhered to the Karrāmiyya sect, due to the prominent role its devotees played in the introduction of Islam into Ghūr (Bosworth 1961: 129). As the Ghūrid polity started to expand and royal patronage extended to literary and religious scholars, prominent Shansabānīds began to embrace other forms of Islam. Towards the end of his reign, for example, the first significant Ghūrid ruler ᶜAlā' al-Dīn was openly receptive to proponents of the Ismāᶜīlī branch of Shīᶜa Islam. Although such heresy (in the eyes of the Karrāmiyya sect) was brutally eradicated after ᶜAlā' al-Dīn's death, Ghiyāth al-Dīn adopted the more mainstream Shāfiᶜī sect at Fīrūzkūh around 595 / 1199 (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 384-5), while his brother Muᶜizz al-Dīn chose the Ḥanīfī sect, which was pre-eminent throughout his power base at Ghazna (Flood 2005b: 281-3). The seemingly pragmatic abandonment of the Karrāmiyya sect was highly unpopular in parts of the sultanate – rioting broke out in Harāt and Nīshāpūr, and even spread to Fīrūzkūh. Bosworth, following Ibn al-Athīr (cited in Bosworth 1961: 130), interprets this dramatic shift in official Ghūrid piety as a reflection of their changed status as players on the 'world stage': the Ghūrid elite were seeking to distance themselves from their unsophisticated origins and attempting to broaden their appeal to new, more cultured

and diverse constituencies. The devotional changes also highlight the issue of morphing identities in the Early Islamic world.

Whether a direct result of the rioting in Fīrūzkūh or not, Ghiyāth al-Dīn seems to have started to favour Harāt over the Ghūrid summer capital in the latter years of his reign. If the minaret at Djām was the "focal monument for the Karrami self" (Flood 2005b: 280), Ghiyāth al-Dīn could hardly have continued to live in its shadow following his abandonment of the sect. Ghiyāth al-Dīn received embassies to the Ghūrid court in Harāt and rebuilt the burnt-down Friday mosque in Harāt using gold trophies from Adjmēr previously displayed in the Friday mosque in Fīrūzkūh (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 404). A few years later, he was buried beside the refurbished mosque in Harāt (Glatzer 1980; Hillenbrand 2002). As Michael Gismondi (1985: 230) notes, "mentalities are nevertheless reconvened in historical time, handled by historical actors, questioned and sometimes even resisted". Fīrūzkūh's isolation had ceased to be an asset to the Ghūrid elite as their view of the world became more cosmopolitan.

8.4 Djām / Fīrūzkūh – an atypical Early Islamic capital

The characteristics of the Ghūrids' remote summer capital are worthy of consideration at this point, in the light of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's eventual preference of Harāt. The results of the renewed archaeological fieldwork at Djām complement the fleeting descriptions of Fīrūzkūh in the historical sources: although several scholars have voiced scepticism that the archaeological remains at Djām are sufficient to be indicative of an imperial capital, much depends upon our preconceptions of what a Early Islamic capital 'should' encompass (Ball 2002: 43) and few now dispute the correlation of the two sites originally proposed by Ahmed Ali Kohzad (1957: 34).

One reason for the doubts about the identification of Djām as Early Islamic Fīrūzkūh has been a failure to appreciate the site's formation processes, both from an archaeological point of view and a scholarly one. The historical sources state that Fīrūzkūh was twice besieged by the Mongols, after the Khʷārazm-Shāh had extinguished Ghūrid independence following "two or three days fighting in the hills and around the city" (Rauẓat al-Ṣafā, cited by Raverty in ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 410-11, fn. 6). Little remains from the period at other sites attacked by these most belligerent of Early Islamic powers. Djām's remote location has since severely limited the amount and type of archaeological fieldwork that has been possible at the site, which has never been surveyed comprehensively. The magnificence of the minaret also has a tendency to overshadow the rest of the site,

although ironically the recent widespread plundering has helped define the extent of the site and provided new insights into its characteristics.

Detailed study of the available archaeological data reveals that Djām was a significant urban centre, albeit one influenced by its environmental setting and the seasonally-nomadic Ghūrids' *mentalités*. Defensive concerns and an element of reclusiveness seem to have prompted the choice of the site rather than more conventional principles of urban planning – the site was deliberately located on precipitous mountain slopes and craggy outcrops at the secluded junction of tributaries feeding into the Harī Rūd, rather than in the broader valley floor of the Djām Rūd 3 km to the south. Considerable resources were, nonetheless, invested in the capital's architecture, most obviously in the magnificent minaret, but also in its other civic, defensive and domestic structures (see Chapter 6.4). Polychrome plaster fragments were found amongst the debris in several robber holes, while the microscopic analysis of other samples has revealed the careful preparation and repeated application of layers of plaster. The inhabitants of Djām clearly took pride in the aesthetics of their permanent dwellings, and the site as a whole, even if they spent part of the year living elsewhere in more portable structures. This investment suggests that the site was occupied for a number of months, rather than days or weeks, each year, and may have had a 'caretaker' population throughout the year to ensure maintenance and prevent squatting and looting.

The likely minimum extent of Djām is now known, following a combination of the results of previous fieldwork at Djām, MJAP surveys and salvage excavations in 2003 and 2005, and the detailed study of high resolution satellite images. At ca 19.5ha in size, Djām is not large by comparison with other Early Islamic capitals in central Asia, but it does exhibit features typical of urban centres across the Islamic world.[2] The remnants of monumental religious and elite architecture dominate the centre of the site, with dense, more plebeian structures clinging to the south-facing valley sides in particular. The extensive defences, both military and riverine, indicate the scale of measures undertaken to counteract a variety of environmental, internal and external threats to the site. Like other Early Islamic urban centres such as Samarḳand, Marw and Nīshāpūr, parts of the peripheral areas of the site were assigned to craft production and mortuary sites. Ultimately, whether Djām is Fīrūzkūh (as the evidence strongly suggests) or not is of secondary importance. It was a carefully planned and well-organized urban centre, located in a remote mountainous environment unsuited to the development of conurbations, and apparently quite distinct

[2] Note that few scholars "continue to adhere to the idea of an Islamic city" *per se* (Bonine 2005: 394; see also Bennison 2007a: 2-5).

from their as yet unidentified winter capital / region, Zamīn-Dāwar. Djām is significant in its own right as the best known Ghūrid site, as well as being the site of the world's second tallest surviving pre-modern minaret.

The single-period nature of settlement at Djām prevents diachronic analysis of continuity and change at the site, although aspects of the capital's life-cycle are evident in the historical and archaeological records. The sectarian unrest in 595 / 1199, major flood which inundated the Friday mosque (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 404) and may also have washed away the baked brick bridge beside the minaret, Ghiyāth al-Dīn's subsequent preference of Harāt and the succession of Muᶜizz al-Dīn (whose power base was in Ghazna) suggest that Djām / Fīrūzkūh was in decline prior to the assassination of Muᶜizz al-Dīn in 602 / 1206. The extravagant munificence of his successor, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd (d. 607 / 1210; ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 405-6), therefore, may in part reflect Fīrūzkūh's waning fortunes over the previous decade, as well as the need to secure the loyalty of his subjects. Further indications of Fīrūzkūh's decline may be evident in the fact that the fortresses at Fīrūzkūh were re-built and extended after Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd's assassination by Khʷārazmian rebels (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 417-18).[3]

The periodically uneasy relationship between the ruling elite at Fīrūzkūh and its inhabitants is evident in the *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāṣiri*. In addition to the breach of security which resulted in Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd's murder, two of his predecessors were killed in internecine disputes, one within the court harem (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 364-5). Consequently, although the discovery that the Sang-i Manār watchtowers look inwards, rather than monitor the approaches to the site, suggests that they date to the occupation of Fīrūzkūh by the Khʷārazm-Shāh in 612 / 1215-16, they may have been part of the Shansabānīds' own surveillance network.

The Mongol's reputed destruction of the site in 619 / 1222 (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] II: 1047-8) merely delivered the *coup de grâce* to the capital of an empire whose halcyon days were over. Ultimately, Judi Moline's description of Djām as "a small fortified town" (Moline 1973-74: 132) is perhaps the most apt, given the extent and characteristics of the archaeological site. Moline's description mirrors that of the Persian historian Zakariyā b. Muḥammad Ḳazwīnī (cited in Flood 2005a: 538) who refers to Fīrūzkūh as a *ḳalᶜa* (fortress) rather than a city, albeit after the Mongol sieges. The site has largely been abandoned since – the current habitation of the site amounts to little more than a scatter of

[3] Despite appearing to champion Fīrūzkūh and being buried in its *ḳaṣr*, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd's body was later exhumed and "interred in the Gāzār-gāh [catacombs] of Hirāt" (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 407).

households, eking out a meagre existence from pastoralism, subsistence horticulture and other occasional, opportunistic sources of income.

8.5 Living beyond their means – the unsustainable Ghūrid summer capital

The decline of Djām / Fīrūzkūh was probably not only due to political whim and military conquest. The sudden abandonment of the site suggests that its occupation was no longer sustainable following the demise of the Ghūrid 'empire'. One way of assessing this hypothesis is to investigate the size of the site and estimate its population (see Chapter 7.5.4).

The relatively small size of the site is unsurprising, given its environmental setting – barren mountainous landscapes such as central Afghanistan do not have a naturally high demographic carrying capacity, as the vestiges of the traditional nomadic lifestyle demonstrate today (Ball 1990: 109; 2002: 43-4). The fact that the Ghūrids, like their predecessors, had summer and winter capitals, but few other major urban centres, illustrates their seasonally-nomadic lifestyle and the need to exploit a range of environments, as well as the climatic extremes of the region.[4]

The number of people who moved around the Early Islamic Ghūrid heartland and how long they resided at the various sites are, of course, much harder to determine. By plotting the urban extent of Djām and drawing on a range of population densities, I estimate that the population of the Ghūrid summer capital may have peaked at around 4,000-7,000 inhabitants. Rank size analysis of the other Ghūrid sites listed in Ball's gazetteer suggests that Djām was larger than most of the other contemporary sites in the mountains of central Afghanistan, but dwarfed by the long-established conurbations on the periphery of this environmental zone – estimates for the population of Harāt, for example, vary widely but it probably had at least 50,000 inhabitants prior to the Mongol invasions (Potter 1992: 9, Appendix 3). No other sites the size of Early Islamic Djām are known in the Ghūrid heartland until the modern era, and even then the majority of the population live in villages with a few hundred inhabitants (Adamec 1975: 135-6). Consequently, we need to investigate the mechanisms that enabled the growth of a site of this size and assess why it proved to be so short-lived.

[4] Giddens (1985: 117-18) points out that medieval feudal courts were commonly peripatetic and that the "lack of a capital city in the traditional European states both contributed to, and expressed, the low degree of territorial integration. It helped strengthen communality of outlook and identity among the dominant classes but, by that very token, it inhibited an extension of them to those in the subject populations".

The modern hinterland around Djām is largely devoid of agriculture, other than small irrigated vegetable patches and the occasional orchard. Locally grown produce is supplemented by that purchased from a fruit and vegetable van which visits on a weekly basis during the summer. The relative lack of flat land prevents the large-scale cultivation of food crops, while the mountain slopes offer sparse grazing for ungulates. The modern environment, however, does not precisely mirror with the evidence from MJAP archaeo-environmental samples (see Chapter 6.5.3). Anthracological analysis of charcoal samples from Djām suggests that a broader range of riparian and steppe vegetation zone species grew around the site during the sixth-seventh / twelfth-thirteenth centuries. Similarly, the archaeobotanical evidence points to a wider variety of crops, wild taxa and fruits than is seen around Djām today, including hulled barley and free-threshing wheat, pulses, grapes and figs. These conclusions are tentative, given the small size and nature of the 'grab' samples, but they indicate the quality of the archaeobotanical preservation in burnt horizons visible in the robber holes.

The archaeozoological remains are more in keeping with our expectations, but informative nonetheless. They are unsurprisingly dominated by sheep / goat, but the mortality pattern indicates that Djām was not self-sufficient – it was a 'consumer' site, part of a market or tax economy. The inhabitants of Djām seem to have consumed animals surplus to requirements at nearby 'producer' sites (probably seasonal nomad camps), where secondary products were important.[5]

Further research is required to determine what proportion of Djām's foodstuffs was produced locally and whether the absence of evidence of food stuffs or organic materials imported from significantly different or distant environmental zones is representative, or merely the result of sampling issues and consumption patterns – imported organic products are obviously less likely to survive, and more likely to be harder to identify, than ceramics and artefacts. That said, logistical factors limited the movement of dietary staples over long distances – as Janet Abu-Lughod (1989: 69) notes, most items traded during this period tended to be small, light and of high value. Contemporary travellers and historians, however, frequently remark on the fertility of the lowlands around the mountains of central Afghanistan, which were renowned for their wheat and rice, grapes, pomegranates, melons, apricots and pistachios (Le Strange 1976 [1905]: 410-16). The historical biographies from Nīshāpūr also refer to a merchant shipping wheat from Khurāsān (Bulliet 1994: 103) –

[5] Similarly, in the Byzantine period in the Negev, Steven Rosen interprets the lack of reference to sheep and goats in the Nizzana papyri as indicating that "a major portion of the diary and meat supply was provided by people not settled in the town" (Rosen 1992: 160).

food surpluses were seasonally available relatively close to Djām, if the Ghūrids had the financial, political or military means to acquire them.

The limited agricultural potential of Djām's hinterland, and the estimated size of its presumably seasonal population, implies a considerable degree of short- to mid-range importation of agricultural produce. This produce was either tribute (from local Ghūrid chieftains or client states in nearby Khurāsān and Sīstān), or paid for by tribute from around the Ghūrid polity and some of the wealth generated by their military campaigns. This inflow of tribute and booty was the life-blood of Fīrūzkūh, enabling the population of the site to exceed the natural carrying capacity of the area, its civic structures to be aggrandized and its inhabitants to live beyond their means.

As the Ghūrids' military ascendancy started to wane, regional centres such as Ghazna may have withheld greater proportions of their income. The Khʷārazm-Shāh had little to gain from subsidizing a rival's capital, while the destructive campaigns of the period severely disrupted the local and regional economies. By depriving the Ghūrids of their external sources of wealth, and depleting the agricultural production of the surrounding region, the Khʷārazm-Shāh and the Mongols may have made life in Djām untenable without devastating the site. In this case, the inhabitants of Djām would have had little option other than to relocate their capital beyond the Mongol realm (as Muᶜizz al-Dīn's *ghulām*s in Ghazna did) or disperse and revert to their previous seasonally-nomadic life-style, centred around the small, autonomous fortresses scattered across Ghūr. The transient significance of the *événements* of the 'Ghūrid interlude' is evident against the background of the region's more enduring *conjunctures* and *structures*.

8.6 Borrowed ideologies and the demise of the Ghūrid polity

Norman Yoffee (1988; *inter alia*) has long advocated the study of the demise of ancient states as a means of understanding them, rather than attempts to pigeon-hole them into simplistic hierarchical categories. In this respect, the seeds of the Ghūrid polity's downfall are evident in the mythical origins of its ruling elite, the Shansabānīd dynasty.

Al-Djūzdjānī's retrospective on the Shansabānīds, the *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāṣiri*, tacitly acknowledges the Ghūrid elite's geographic and cultural isolation – their 'founder king'[6] Amīr Bandjī, for example, had to seek guidance in matters of etiquette and dress from a Jewish trader before appearing in the ᶜAbbāsid caliph's court in Baghdād (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 311-12; Chapter 4.3.2). The myth seeks to legitimize the Shansabānīds'

[6] *sensu* Anooshahr (2009: 74).

pre-eminence through the standard references to higher political authority and their putative religious pedigree, while also effectively normalizing the disputes and division of power within and between the rival clans in Ghūr. The Shansabānīd lineages in Ghūr, Ṭukhāristān and Ghazna are treated separately, while the assassination of Sayf al-Dīn is presented in the context of a longstanding rivalry with the Shīsānid clan which was the subject of a caliphal decree.

Crucially, however, we have no firm evidence as to whether al-Djūzdjānī's account of the rise of the Shansabānīd clan was an imaginary literary device on the part of the chronicler, or an integral part of Ghūrid court folklore. When studying the historical sources, and other inscriptions, it is also worth remembering that literacy was the preserve of a small, primarily urban, cultural elite (Humphreys 1991: 59); chronicles in particular were part of a discourse between, and within, elites. The numerous epigraphic mistakes on carvings and metalwork from the period indicate not only low levels of literacy among the artisans (Flood 2009a: 224) but also presumably among their patrons. Similarly, while the epigraphic evidence on the Minaret of Djām yields important insights into sectarian power struggles, the minaret's primary mode of communication, like that of other monumental structures constructed under the patronage of the Ghūrid elite, was non-literary. It was an ostentatious statement of emergence, self-confidence, capacity, faith and power.

Despite the passing references to "the Ghūrīān race" and "the race of Ẓuḥāk" (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 312, 340), al-Djūzdjānī offers little indication that the Ghūrids had an identity or cohesive, unifying ideology of their own. Similarly, the material culture and architecture from the period provide few readily identifiable examples of shared 'Ghūrid' emblems. It is particularly notable that scholars have been unable to identify coherent spatial patterning in the array of distinctive plaster decorative motifs found on many of the Early Islamic fortifications in central Afghanistan – this implies that they were not simply geographic or ethnic markers (Chapter 5.3.1).

The Ghūrids' 'sense of self' (if such an esoteric concept existed in the minds of the Early Islamic inhabitants of the region) seems largely to have been formulated through opposition to an 'other', as in many other nationalist movements (Giddens 1985: 116-17, following Barth; Hart 1999: 70). Like other military victors, the Ghūrids sought to consolidate their defeat of the Ghaznawids in 545 / 1150-1 by publicly demonstrating their primacy and successes in ways that denigrated the vanquished. The sack of Ghazna and Lashkar-i Bāzār / Bust, desecration of numerous Ghaznawid sultans' bodies and tombs, and the literal incorporation of several *sayyid*s and bags of earth from Ghazna in newly constructed towers in Ghūr (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 355-6) provided an emphatic

display of the 'new order' in the region. As Ernest Gellner notes (1988: 147), a "new centre of power has nothing to elevate it above its rivals, other than its capacity to intimidate more convincingly". Ironically, ᶜAlā' al-Dīn's sack of the Ghaznawids' capitals, and the subsequent demise of the Ghaznawid dynasty, may have simultaneously undermined the principal basis for the Ghūrids' group identity.

Although ᶜAlā' al-Dīn's subsequent defeat and imprisonment by the Saldjūḳid Sultan Sandjar provided a swift reminder of the limitations of his successes and the fragility of his alliances with nomads, his successors were eventually able to fill the void left by the demise of the Ghaznawids and the Saldjūḳids. Even during this short fluorescence, however, little emerges to differentiate Ghūrid material culture from that of their contemporaries, other than the 'transculturated' (Flood 2009a: 9) nature of the few artefacts and monuments which can firmly be attributed to them. They did little to re-fashion the Ghaznawids' urban centres in their own image, and Ralph Pinder-Wilson (2001: 169) even argues that the "similarity in the formal presentation of the decoration of the minaret of Jām to that of Masᶜūd's minaret at Ghazni is so striking that the one cannot but have been designed to emulate the other". Numerous other aspects of the Ghūrids' polity represent continuity from their predecessors – the Ghūrids' attempts to attain legitimacy through caliphal decrees, for example, and to portray themselves as the champions of Sunnī orthodoxy mirror those of the Ghaznawids (Chamberlain 2005: 138). Similarly, their use of elephants in warfare continues the major role elephants played "in the Ghaznavid ideology as symbols of power and authority" (de Blois 1998).

Judging from the *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāṣiri*, the Ghūrid elite recognised the need for an ideology. Much of what they generated, however, was formulaic and based on that of their predecessors, whom they had just usurped. In addition to this lack of originality, their political structure lacked flexibility – where the Ghaznawid elite re-invented themselves, becoming 'Persianized' and embracing the traditional Perso-Islamic mould of monarchy (Bosworth 1962b: 238), the Shansabānīd dynasty attempted to maintain its tribal structure and horizontal rather than vertical principals of succession (Nizami 1998: 186-7). This merely perpetuated its political and military weaknesses.

The two most significant rulers of the Ghaznawid and Ghūrid dynasties – Maḥmūd of Ghazna and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad – provide an interesting contrast. Maḥmūd of Ghazna successful portrayed himself, through the works of the court chroniclers and poets, as the pre-eminent *ghāzī* ("a fighter for the faith" – *EI Index Volume* 2009: 249), imposing Islam on neighbouring pagan / 'heretic' lands such as Ghūr and the northern Indian sub-continent. The *ghazw*s (in this case, expeditions conducted with the aim of gaining

plunder – *EI Index Volume* 2009: 250) were repeatedly invoked "to justify or legitimize" the Ghaznawids' campaigns (Dale 2010: 323) and helped distance the Ghaznawid elite from their servile origins (Paul 1996: 117).[7] The accounts of Maḥmūd of Ghazna's campaigns were carefully constructed using a discernible, epic formula (Anooshahr 2009: 62-5), drawing comparisons between Maḥmūd's actions and those of Moses, Faridun (the mythical pre-Islamic Persian king) and Alexander the Great (Anooshahr 2009: 67-72). The literary portrayal of Maḥmūd, in Ali Anooshahr's opinion, inspired future Muslim rulers such as Bābur.[8] Its potency is evident in the respect ᶜAlā' al-Dīn showed towards the tomb of "Maḥmūd, the Ghāzī" (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 354).

Ghiyāth al-Dīn adopted similar grandiloquent titles to those of Maḥmūd of Ghazna (and other Muslim rulers), but campaigned solely in the Islamic world, leaving conquest and conversion in the northern Indian sub-continent to his brother. His military successes, in Khurāsān in particular, were numerous but lacked the pious aura of Maḥmūd's *ghazw*s and were short-lived – Nīshāpūr and Marw fell to the Khʷārazm-Shāh Sulṭān Muḥammad within months of their capture and Ghiyāth al-Dīn's other territorial gains were reversed within a year of his death. Even more crucially, he failed to recognise the importance of using religion, as well as tradition, to forge community identity at home (Heinz & Feldman 2007: vii) – his decision to abandon the Karrāmiyya sect undermined the loyalty of his subjects in the Ghūrid heartland and destabilized several other major urban centres.

Nominally at least, religious zeal did play a prominent role in Muᶜizz al-Dīn's campaigns in the northern Indian sub-continent which emulated those of their predecessors. Like Maḥmūd, Muᶜizz al-Dīn was aggrandized as *ṣulṭān-i ghāzī* and compared to Alexander the Great (Flood 2009a: 106). In such campaigns, the possession, confiscation and defacing of objects is closely related to the sub-text of power, victory and legitimization (Lyon Crawford 2007). The appropriation and display of trophies such as the golden ring, chain and melons from Adjmēr hung in the Friday mosque in Fīrūzkūh (ṬN, tr. Raverty 1970 [1881] I: 404; Flood 2009a: 126-7) indicates an appreciation of the "value of looting as a mode of making and displaying rhetorical claims concerning victory, sovereignty, and territorial integrity" (Flood 2009a: 133). The primary message, however, appears to have been for Ghūrid, rather than Hindu, consumption given the remote setting of the display – Muᶜizz al-Dīn's gifts acknowledged the primacy of his brother (Pinder-Wilson 2001: 171).

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[7] Note that Anooshahr (2009: 9), following Linda Darling and others, argues that *ghazw*s cannot be reduced to a single definition which is applicable across time and space.

[8] Note, however, that major aspects of Anooshahr's study are contested by Dale (2010); see Anooshahr (2011) for a response.

Similarly, the removal of these *spolia* to fund the reconstruction of the Friday Mosque in Harāt following the religious unrest and inundation of the Friday Mosque at Fīrūzkūh can be read as a warning to the traditionalists in the Ghūrid heartland. It is also an acceptance that the artefacts' primary value to Ghiyāth al-Dīn was pecuniary, rather than historical and symbolic. The objects' journeys and fate, therefore, are symptomatic of Fīrūzkūh's tenuous existence and the gradual unravelling of the Ghūrid polity which accompanied the latter years of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's reign.

Although the Ghūrid elite had limited success in creating an original, unifying ideology, their monumental architecture indicates a desire to construct a tangible legacy. This aim, however, is subtly undermined by the fact that they largely relied on external architects for their major monuments, a fact documented for all to read in the inscriptions on the minarets at Djām and in the Ḳuṭb mosque complex in Dilhī (Flood 2009a: 97, 186). Even more ostentatious are the Hindu influences (and possibly even materials) in the Masjid-i Sangī (Flood 2009a: 207-18; Scarcia & Taddei 1973: 107). The Ghūrid elites' architectural tastes were as transcultural as their polity.

Ultimately, the Ghūrid elites were incapable of constructing enough of a political ideology to secure unity. The Ghūrids effectively remained a configuration of "petty chiefs" (Bosworth 1977: 7) with localised power bases which outlasted their most able and successful leaders. The bloody demise of both the Ghaznawid and the Ghūrid dynasties typifies the rapid rise and fall of what C.E. Bosworth refers to as 'power states', reliant on military expansion and suppression for their survival (Bosworth 1998: 110; Sinopoli 1994: 162-4, 166-7).[9] Only in the northern Indian sub-continent were the Ghūrids able to establish a lasting polity and then only tangentially through Muᶜizz al-Dīn's Turk *mamlūk*s.

The basis for the eventual success of the Delhi Sultanate was laid in Muᶜizz al-Dīn's flexible approach to governance (such as installing governors and bestowing *iḳṭāᶜ*s upon his Turk *mamlūk*s) and a sophisticated mixture of positive and negative ideology (Kumar 2007: 22, 47, 53 ff). The construction of mosques was "an integral part of the process of state formation as well as the complementary need to portray themselves as purveyors of Sunni orthodoxy" (Singh 2010: 162; see also Patel 2009b: 42, 45), but Muᶜizz al-Dīn also made pragmatic accommodations with existing Indian polities in keeping with Buddhist and Hindu practices (Patel 2004b: 39-40), to such an extent that the 'new political order' greatly resembled that prior to their conquests (Flood 2009a: 110-12). The military campaigns, which included attacks on Ismāᶜīlī 'heretics', were accompanied by the "state

[9] Note that Childe (1965 [1936]: 234) remarked that "Oriental monarchies [in the ancient Near East] were created by war, maintained by continual war, and eventually destroyed by war".

patronage of an India-based Sufi order" (who traced their origins to Čisht in Ghūr), and a policy of "selective temple desecration that aimed not, as earlier, to finance distant military operations on the Iranian Plateau, but to delegitimize and extirpate defeated Indian ruling houses" (Eaton 2000: 289). Similarly, Romila Thapar (2005: 59) argues that the Ghūrids' efforts to establish their political authority were based on an assessment of the merits of the collection of tax revenues over seizing loot.

The successful combination of military might and ideology in the northern Indian sub-continent is reminiscent of the approach adopted by Maḥmūd of Ghazna during his campaigns into Ghūr two centuries earlier. Unfortunately for the Ghūrids, they were unable to implement it throughout the rest of their polity.

8.7 Cultural heritage management at Djām and other Ghūrid sites

Ahmed Ali Kohzad (1954b: 9) makes an impassioned plea that the ruined citadels of Ghūr "are places to be honoured and respected and protected as the national treasures that they are". To a certain extent, the successful nomination of Djām as Afghanistan's first World Heritage Site is a first step towards this goal. The fact that the nomination includes the archaeological remains, as well as the minaret, recognises that the significance of the site extends beyond its most visually impressive structure.

A similarly inclusive approach should be applied to the study of the broader Early Islamic landscape of central Afghanistan. The archaeological potential of the region is evident in the research by the likes of Ball, Herberg and Le Berre, as are the major deficiencies in our knowledge of its fortified structures, particularly their chronology. A major research program is required to integrate the data and photographic archives from previous studies with new fieldwork, GIS modelling and analysis of the sites' locations and distribution, and the systematic study of high resolution satellite images. Where possible, the fieldwork should include assessments of the state of preservation of the structures, the documentation of any looting at the sites and educational programs to inform local people of the historical and cultural significance of the sites.[10]

The two seasons of MJAP fieldwork at Djām, and detailed analysis of high resolution satellite imagery, have demonstrated the merits of adopting an integrated approach to studying the site. Numerous challenges remain, particularly given the lack of accurate topographic data and the need to salvage data from the extensive looted areas of the site. While the fact that illicit activities at the site appeared to have ceased in 2005 is encouraging,

[10] See, for example, Thomas (2007c & d).

it is unfortunate that archaeologists have since been prevented from continuing to build a rapport with the local 'stakeholders', and demonstrating the long-term economic, historical and cultural benefits of preserving the site. As Elizabeth Stone (2008a & b) has shown in Iraq, this is the most effective way of ensuring the protection of remote archaeological sites.

The multi-disciplinary research that we have undertaken at Djām has demonstrated that the looting of a site does not necessarily obliterate its archaeological significance. Documenting and sampling the robber holes has proved to be an informative and cost-effective way of studying a site whose stratigraphic integrity has been severely compromised. It also has the virtue of having minimal impact upon the surviving archaeological remains. Archaeologists can use the robber holes as a means of accessing a broader extent of the site than they might otherwise be able to using more traditional strategies. The robber holes have also enabled us to map the likely extent of the site, and thus respond to one of UNESCO's on-going concerns about the original World Heritage nomination document. These new, accurate spatial data have already been used by the Global Heritage Fund in its Early Warning and Threat Monitoring for Heritage Sites in the Developing World website.[11]

The targeted collection of ceramics, archaeobotanical and archaeozoological and other samples from the robber holes has revealed new information on life at the Ghūrids' summer capital, although we should not lose sight of what has been lost and destroyed during the looting, and the value of conducting proper excavations. Alison Gascoigne's study of the ceramics from Djām is important as the first modern analysis of Early Islamic ceramics from Afghanistan. The new evidence of the large courtyard building next to the minaret, and its inundation, are also significant in that they strengthen the supposition that Djām is Fīrūzkūh.

Despite these significant achievements, the scope for further research at the site is great. The survey of the northern and western extents of the site needs to be completed, as does a survey of the Judaeo-Persian cemetery, to complement Ulrike-Christiane Lintz's on-going doctoral research into the tombstones from the site. The other fortifications would also benefit from a detailed standing buildings survey and earthen architecture conservation programmes.[12] The fact that the 2008 satellite image suggests that much of

[11] http://www.ghn.globalheritagefund.org/ [accessed 21/04/2011].

[12] See, for example, the doctoral research by Louise Cooke (2004) at Marw, as part of EARTH (Earthen Archaeology Research, Theory and History) http://www.ucl.ac.uk/mud/index.html [accessed 18/8/2011].

the boulder debris in the vicinity of the minaret has been removed greatly enhances the value of conducting a non-intrusive geophysical survey of the flat land to the east of the minaret, where the courtyard building is located.[13] This survey should ideally be combined with targeted test-pitting and the further investigation of existing robber holes – the *in situ* survival of the ceramic lamp in robber hole RH201 demonstrates the value of carefully excavating the debris in the robber holes.

The use of high resolution satellite images and Google Earth to study Djām and other known archaeological sites, and to explore little studied and currently inaccessible parts of Afghanistan, highlights the value of the systematic study of these increasingly available sources of data. Google Earth is particularly valuable from a heritage management perspective, given the limited amount of data available for many of the known archaeological sites in Afghanistan, and the risks of conducting fieldwork. These resources should form a key component of desktop analyses prior to major reconstruction projects, enabling Afghan and NGO project managers to identify and protect sites, and focus their resources on the sites most at risk.

The ability to add data, images and hyperlinks to Google Earth placemarks also greatly increases the ease of exchanging information and the educational potential of the medium. The nomination of Ghazni as 'Cultural City of the Islamic Civilization' for 2013 raises the possibility of visitors using Google Earth to follow heritage itineraries along de-mined routes on their 3G mobile phones, with the associated benefit of improved communications infrastructure for local people (Thomas 2010b; in press). Millions more people with internet access around the world could use on-line hypermedia publications such as those developed by Ralf Klamma and his colleagues (2006) to visualize, explore and learn about Ghazni's rich archaeological remains.

Similarly, Mark A. Carter, an independent researcher in the USA, is currently generating a three dimensional, photo-realistic model of the Minaret of Djām, which will be published in Google Earth (Fig. 8:1). Just as our way of conceptualizing "the idiosyncratic transregional experiment that was the Ghurid sultanate" (Flood 2009a: 227) has changed in recent years, so scholars need to embrace new modes of studying, visualizing and presenting the Ghūrids' remarkable summer capital to the public. This thesis represents a step towards that goal.

[13] I am grateful to Adam Dunbar of the Global Heritage Fund for providing me with this image.

8:1 Three dimensional model of the Minaret of Ḏjām, generated in Google Earth 3D model warehouse by Mark Carter (work in progress); the final model will have photo-realistic rendering of the minaret's decorated surfaces and be available through Google Earth