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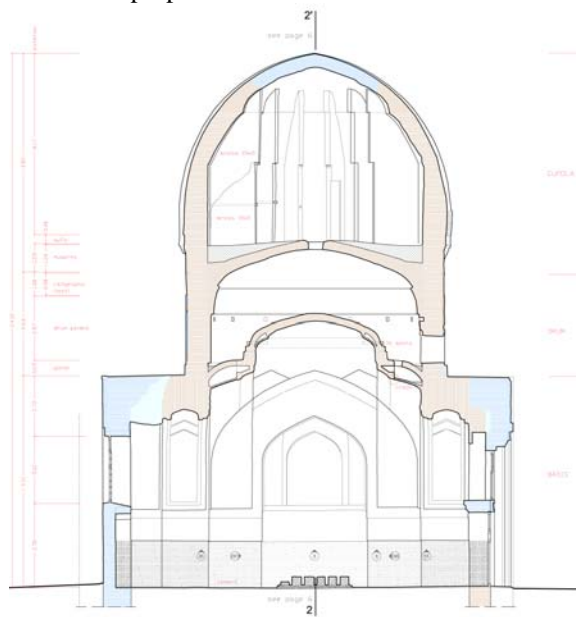
Courtauld Institute of Art

R.Byron 1933

This mausoleum is built first half 15th c. AD – 9th c. H. Now it is freestanding but originally it was part of a larger complex, a *madrasa* or religious college, together with one surviving minaret (see chart on the minarets of Jam and Herat, 2002).

Gawhar Shad was the daughter in law of one of the key figures in Central Asian history: Timur or Tamerlane. As patroness of the arts she contributed largely to a Renaissance at Herat. At that time the city was the capital of a vast empire, stretching from the Tigris to China.

A detailed survey and extensive photographic documentation is made, followed by a scientifically based restoration proposal.



The building has a solid base containing a cubic hall with 4 niches. The western niche is extended to a *mihrab* in the direction of Mecca. Two series of 4 pointed arches making an octagon carry the drum of 11,6m diameter. The first four arches rest on the massive corners crossing the niches, superimposed by another 4 arches rotated 45°. On top of the drum rises a ribbed melon-shaped dome to a total height of 24m. In section this exceptional structure contains 3 cupolas: a light inner cupola shaping the interior, a structural middle cupola and an outer cupola as an imposing sign to the city. The inner cupola rests on 4 interlacing arches, surrounded by small semi- vaults. The middle cupola carries 12 radial walls interconnected with the lower part of the outer cupola. In fact, only the upper part of the outer cupola functions as a vault. The lower part consists of a thick wall, bulged at the outside and cantilevered at the inside.

At the outside the mausoleum was completely covered by glazed and unglazed ceramics. A small part survived but enough to catch its former splendour. The basis shows geometrical Timurid patterns. The drum is decorated by 29 frames of faience mosaic. Large parts are injudiciously retiled recently. The lower part of the cupola is covered by large ceramic pieces of exquisite *hafrank* glaze or seven-colours technique. The 46 ribs are curved in double direction and diminish in section towards the top.

