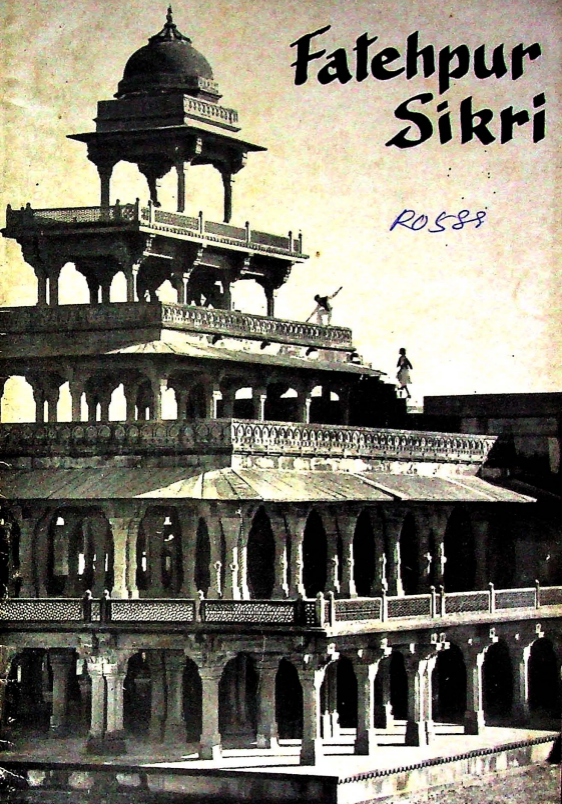


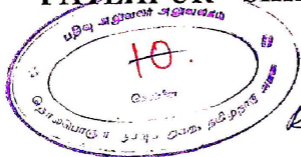
Fatehpur Sikri

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Archaeological Survey of India

FATEHPUR SIKRI



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(Released on the occasion of the 400th Anniversary
of the foundation of Fatehpur Sikri)



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HISTORY

The village Sikri, a stronghold of the Sikarwar Rajputs during the twelfth Century A.D. became a Turkish settlement in the early thirteenth century after the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi. The inscribed Khalji and Tughluq mosques and tombs in village Nagar and Sikri testify to the notable past of the ancient site.

Babar, after defeating Rana Sanga in A.D. 1527, renamed the village as *Shukri* (returning thanks to God). Nothing remains of his pavilions and gardens except an inscribed well, which corroborates the statement of Babar in his Memoirs.

Akbar had his games and hunting expeditions in the neighbourhood of Sikri and in 1564 he built a pleasure-resort, named Nagar Chain near the village Kakaroli now known as Karaoli, situated not far from Sikri. During the construction of Agra Fort in 1565, the Sikri ridge was quarried for procuring red sandstone of superior quality and during the quarrying operations the stone-cutters, settled on the ridge near the hermitage of Shaikh Salim

Chishti, built a mosque in honour of the saint, which is the earliest edifice of the Mughal period on the ridge.

In 1568-69 Akbar met the saint and requested him to pray for a son to succeed him. The pregnant queen was removed to a newly-built palace, now known as Rang Mahal where on 30th August 1569, prince Salim was born and the queen mother received the title of Maryamu'z-Zamani ("the Mary of the Age"). On 7th June 1570, another prince was born of a concubine and was named Murad. On his way back from a pilgrimage to Ajmer, Akbar stayed here with the saint on 9th August, 1571, and commemorated the event by ordering the building of palaces and announced his decision to shift the seat of Mughal Government from Agra to Sikri. Here was planned a new capital worthy of the Mughal splendour. The emperor himself selected the site on the Sikri ridge which commanded a magnificent view as far as Bharatpur. The building activities started with speed, employing thousands of labourers and eminent architects, stone-cutters, masons and sculptors from all parts of the empire. Red sandstone was partly quarried from the site itself and partly from Rup Bas, a place not far from Sikri. The emperor's interest in project was so keen that he even quarried stone himself amidst workers and "sometimes put his hands to the

other menial tasks". Stone columns, beams, capitals, brackets and certain other architectural members, were chiselled, dressed and carved at the quarries and brought to the construction site which enabled the building activities to be continued with the court functions. The capital city, originally designated Fathabad, came to be popularly called Fathpur (the city of victory) after Akbar's conquest of Gujarat in June 1573. The occasion also marked the building of the southern gateway of the Jami Mosque, the Buland Darwaza, which constitutes the glory of Fatehpur Sikri. The palaces were built to the east of the Jami Masjid, while the city was laid out below the palace-site along the border of the ridge. Measuring some 9.75 kilometres in circumference, it was fortified with lofty battlemented walls of rubble, covered with lime plaster. It was enclosed on three sides by walls and on the west by a large artificial lake. It had nine gates namely Delhi Darwaza, Lal Darwaza, Agra Darwaza, Suraj Pol or Bir Pol, Chandra Pol, Gwalior Darwaza, Terha Darwaza, Ajmeri Darwaza and Hathi Pol (Elephant Gate) besides a Chor Khirki (wicket or postern gate). The gateways are dressed in red sandstone with carvings and plaster decoration, sharing the principal features with the gateways of Ranthambore Fort and Purana Qila, Delhi. The flanking semi-circular or half-octagonal bastions on either side,

loopholed for musketry, add strength to the lofty gateways.

The town-planning of Sikri, generally conforming to the imperial encampment described by Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i Akbari*, was improved by certain innovations of Akbar which are represented by the unique character of the existing monuments of Fatehpur Sikri. The various blocks and quarters of the city were connected with stone-paved streets and adorned with green avenues, *charbagh* gardens, pleasure-pavilions, public *hammams* (baths), water-channels and fountains, the remains of which excite the wonder and admiration of the visitors.

The development and beautification of the city continued for about fifteen years and it remained the centre of administrative, cultural, religious and commercial activities. Jahangir records in his Memoirs that "in the course of fourteen or fifteen years that hill, full of wild beasts became a city containing all kinds of gardens and buildings, and lofty elegant edifices and pleasant places attractive to the heart", while Father Monserrate writes that "In the past nine years the city has been marvellously extended and beautified, at the expense both of the royal treasury and of the great nobles and courtiers, who eagerly follow the king's example and wishes". Monserrate also speaks of the elegance

of the public baths and "the Bazar which is more than half a mile long, and is filled with an astonishing quantity of every description of merchandise and with countless people, who are always standing there in dense crowds. To supply the city with water a tank has been carefully and laboriously constructed, two miles long and a mile wide. The king descends to the lake on holidays and refreshes himself with its many beauties."

From 1574 to 1586, Akbar lived and held his court in the new city where with the help of the councillors he pursued policies of state that ensured justice to every citizen of the Mughal empire. He had already abolished *Jazya* (poll-tax) in 1564. He also established a unique institution of *Ibadat Khana* (house of worship) where, every Thursday night, representatives of various religious sects assembled and discussed metaphysics and philosophy throughout the night in the presence of the emperor. Thus, at Fatehpur Sikri Akbar initiated policies of communal harmony and religious toleration for which he is celebrated in history.

Jahangir (1605-1627) held his court at Agra but in 1619 spent three months at Fatehpur Sikri when Agra was in the grip of severe plague. Shah Jahan (1627-1657) visited Fatehpur Sikri and once celebrated 'Idul Adha here. Aurangzeb (1658-1707) did

not take interest in Sikri, but palaces of Fatehpur Sikri once again throbbed with life when the coronation ceremony of Muhammad Shah (1709-1748) took place at Sikri, the Pachisi Board on the grand platform in front of the Abdar Khana (Girls School) seems to belong to this period. After this event life receded from historical Sikri.

In 1876, the British Government of India paid its attention to conserve the Sikri monuments. Lord Curzon (1898-1905) took keen interest in the archaeological conservation of Fatehpur Sikri and got important buildings repaired and some of the paintings re-embellished.

In 1920 most of the Sikri monuments of national importance were declared centrally protected and they are since being maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India. A substantial amount is annually spent for the conservation of these monuments. To commemorate the 400TH ANNIVERSARY of the foundation of Fatehpur Sikri, it is proposed to undertake shortly an archaeological excavation at the site to expose its original town-plan.

In the following paragraphs is given a short description of the important monuments of Fatehpur Sikri in a rough sequence, as one meets them on entering through the Agra Gate.

MONUMENTS

TANSEN'S BARADARI

This red sand-stone pavilion, standing amidst ruined buildings, is locally ascribed to Tansen and shares certain architectural features with Hujra-i-Anup Talao and Khwabgah.

CHAHAR SUQ (NAUBAT KHANA)

This triple-arched gateway faced with buff sandstone, divided into panels, is locally called Naubat Khana. It is referred to in contemporary records as Chahar Suq ('a market place arranged around a square'). It was originally connected with two-storeyed colonnades on both sides of the road, representing the imperial market of the capital.

THE KARKHANAS (BUYUTAT)

This huge ruined building of rubble, originally covered with lime plaster, is popularly called Taksal (mint). But it probably constituted the imperial workshop (Karkhanas or Buyutat), intended to manufacture under direct imperial control articles of daily need and luxury, including possibly gold and silver coins and presentation pieces.

The building comprised a large courtyard surrounded by spacious arcades with entrance on the south.

DIWAN KHANA-I-AM

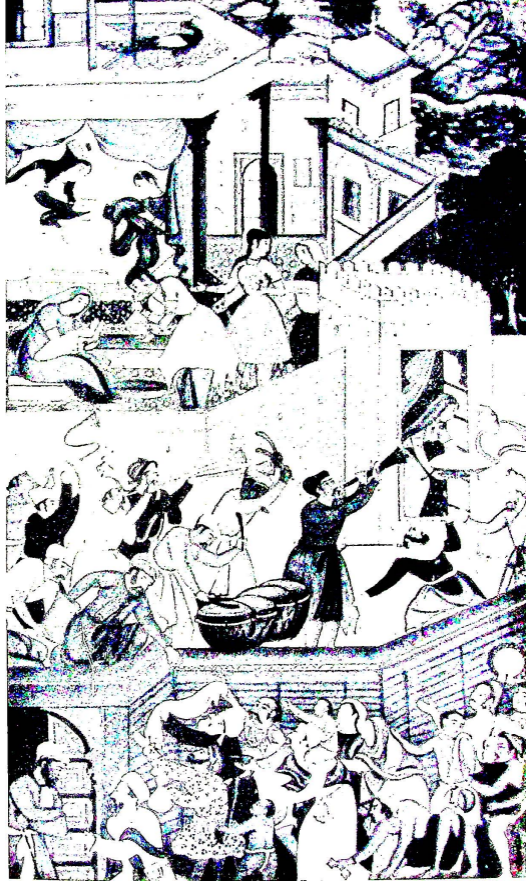
This historical building known as Diwan-i-Am (Hall of the Public Audience) consists of an extensive courtyard enclosed by cloisters of one hundred and eleven bays. The walls of the cloisters are carved with deep recesses, which may have been originally painted. Akbar heard petitions and dispensed justice here sternly and impartially "but without harshness or ill will".

The emperor visited this hall also for reviewing the animals of the royal stables. The huge stone rings at the foot of the colonnade, opposite the imperial pavilion, may have been used for fastening the ropes of shamianas rather than for fettering elephants, as is traditionally believed.

DIWAN KHANA-I-KHAS AND KHWABGAH

This imperial residential complex is composed of two rooms on the ground floor and a well-ventilated pavilion on the first floor (Khwabgah or Khalwat kada-i-khass). The recesses in the walls of the lower rooms were possibly meant for keeping

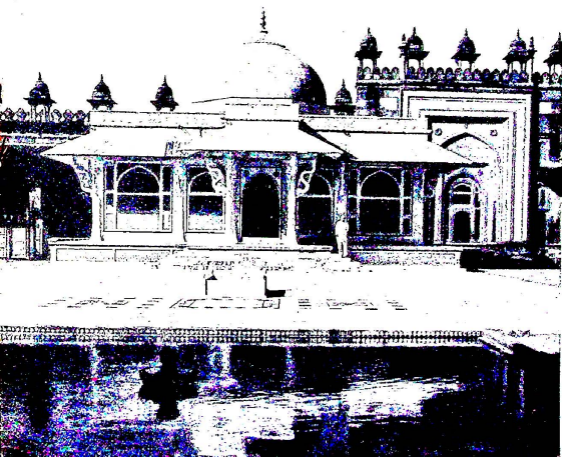
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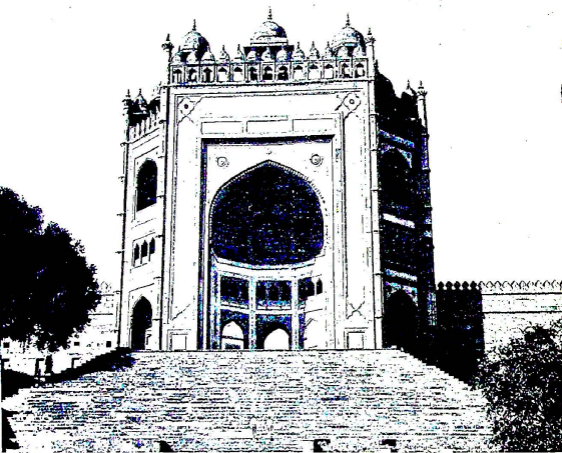




Facade of Shabistan-i-Iqbal (Jodh Bai's palace)

Tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti with Zanana
Rauza in the Background





Buland Darwaza

the books and albums and it is likely that one of the rooms was used as a dining hall.

The pavilion was richly embellished with mural paintings, now partly effaced, and by Persian verses, painted in gold eulogising the palace. Its southern window was known as Jharokha Darshan wherefrom the emperor showed himself to his people every morning. The royal ladies could easily visit this pavilion from Haramsara which is connected through screened passage.

ANUP TALAO

The peerless pool (Anup Talao), also called Kapur Talao by Jahangir, is a pretty tank. It is 29.10 metres square and in its centre is a balustraded platform approached by four causeways which are supported on short stone pillars. Completed in A.D. 1575, it was intended for imperial amusement and private functions.

HUJRA-I-ANUP TALAO (TURKISH SULTANA'S HOUSE)

This elegant pavilion consists of a small chamber surrounded by a verandah supported on richly carved columns. Its exterior as well as interior has ornamental relief of geometric and floral designs in red sandstone which give the impression

of timber decoration. The shelves of the chamber are also remarkable for their attractive design and finish.

The plain colonnades at the northwest and southeast were subsequently added to connect it with Abdar Khana (Girls School). It was completed before A.D. 1575 when an important religious discussion is recorded to have taken place in this pavilion.

THE TREASURY

Composed of three rooms and wrongly designated as Ankh Michauli, this building was most probably the imperial treasury of gold and silver coins. Its notable features are the struts supported on corbels projecting from the walls. The struts spring out from the jaws of the trunked monsters in the form of serpentine scrolls, derived from the Jain temples of western India.

TREASURY KIOSK (ASTROLOGER'S SEAT)

Raised on a square platform, formerly enclosed by a stone railing, this interesting kiosk is popularly known as Astrologer's Seat. Its proximity with the treasury suggests that it may have been the seat of the court treasurer. Its ornamental *torana* arches are remarkable for their delicacy and fine execution,

the design being derived from the medieval Jain temples of western India.

THE JEWEL HOUSE (DIWAN-I-KHASS)

It is a unique building in the entire range of Indo-Islamic architecture. Raised on a square plan, outwardly giving the appearance of a double-storeyed structure, it consists of a single vaulted chamber, open from floor to roof, with an opening on each of the four sides.

In the centre stands a profusely carved column supporting a colossal bracketed capital. Four narrow balustraded passages radiate from the top of the capital to the corners of the chamber.

This structure was intended for a special purpose which has been variously conjectured as *Sutun-i-Adl* (column of justice), *Ibadat-Khana* (hall for religious discourses) or *Diwan-i-Khass* (Hall of Private Audience). Some consider it as a hall meant for *tuladana* (weighing ceremony) for the emperor and princes on the Persian New Year's day.

THE SHABISTAN-I-IQBAL (JODH BAI'S PALACE)

This imposing palace comprising the principal *Haramsara* of Akbar has been wrongly ascribed to

Jodh Bai who has nothing to do with Sikri. It is the most impressive of all the royal edifices.

It consists of a large open quadrangle on the sides of which are suites of single-storeyed rooms with double-storeyed blocks in the centre and corners to break the sky-line. The central block on the east forms a vestibule to the main entrance of the building and on the west is a small shrine supported on richly carved pillars. The shrine has niches for keeping images of Hindu deities and a platform for the principal deity. The azure-blue glazed tiles of the roof of this palace are also noteworthy. It was most probably built between A. D. 1570 and 1574.

THE BADGIR OR JAHAN NUMA (PANCH MAHAL)

Popularly called Panch Mahal, this structure has five storeys, each storey being smaller than the one upon which it stands and the crowning one being just a kiosk supported on four slender pillars. The building contains 176 columns of which the ground floor has eightyfour columns, the first storey has fiftysix, the second twenty, the third twelve, and the top storey has four. These columns are richly carved and provide interesting varieties of design and ornamentations.

The building was intended as a place for recreation where the emperor sitting in the uppermost kiosk enjoyed the fresh air of the evening and the moonlight during summer nights. The ladies also visited the Panch Mahal through the screened passage connecting its third storey with the Haramsara.

THE SUNAHRA MAKAN (MARYAM'S MANSION)

This residential building of the Haramsara, popularly known as Maryam-ki-kothi (Maryam's Mansion), was profusely embellished with paintings and hence was designated as Sunahra Makan. It has four rooms, an oblong one running north-south and three others from which a stair-case leads to the flat roof, surmounted by an open pavilion which is supported on eight square pillars and was used for sleeping purposes in summer nights.

The brackets are adorned with sculptures. On the north side is carved Rama attended by Hanuman, while other brackets show a band of *Kirttimukhas* (lion-heads) and a pair of geese and elephants. The building also has mural paintings, while Persian inscriptions are painted on the beams of the verandah, containing verses of Faizi, the poet laureate of Akbar's court.

THE HARAMSARA OFFICES (JODHBAI'S KITCHEN)

This richly carved structure, popularly designated as Jodh Bai's Kitchen, may have been an annexe of the Haramsara, the cloisters adjoining it have not survived. Its sloping roof has been subsequently replaced by a flat one. The outer walls are carved with floral and geometric patterns and bands of *jhumkas* (ear-ornaments) and brick-like pellets of stone (mat design). This building is noteworthy for its refined surface ornamentations.

NORTHERN PALACE OF THE HARAMSARA (BIRBAL'S HOUSE)

This building, popularly attributed to Raja Birbal, was an integral part of the Haramsara. Most probably Akbar's two senior queens, viz. Ruqaiyya Begam (1542-1626) and Salima Sultan Begam (1542-1612) lived in this house.

It is now open on all sides but was originally provided with stone screens. Standing on a large concrete platform, it is a double-storeyed structure raised on pillars and arches of plain masonry and has four rooms on the ground floor and two entrance porches with two domed chambers on the upper storey. The walls and ceilings of the lower

rooms are exquisitely carved. The variety of ornamental carvings displayed both inside and outside the house testify to the masterly skill of the Sikri artisans in plastic art and arabesque decoration.

LOWER HARAMSARA

This large colonnaded enclosure, wrongly called camel stables, elephant stables and horse stables, was probably intended for housing the servicing maids of the ladies palaces, for which an entrance was provided in the north. For the sanitary needs of the staff lavatory blocks were also provided. The stone rings may have been used for fixing curtains for partitioning the space.

JAMI MASJID

The Jami Masjid is the real glory of the Akbari architecture at Fatehpur Sikri. Occupying the highest point of the ridge, it dominates the entire scene of the capital city. Built wholly in arcuate style, it is rightly considered to be among the largest and finest mosques in India, remarkable for its ornamentation and rhythmical harmony.

On either side of the central arch of the spacious prayer-hall appears the famous versified Persian inscription which assigns the construction of the

mosque to Shaikhu'l Islam (Shaikh Salim Chishti) in A.H. 979 (A.D. 1571-72).

The mosque has two principal gateways the eastern one is called Badshahi Darwaza and the southern one is known as Buland Darwaza because of its extraordinary height. The southern cloisters served as *Madrassa* (College), while the northern enclosed cloisters were perhaps used as Sama Khana, now known as Zanana Rauza, since they contain the female graves of the Chishti family.

BULAND DARWAZA

The Buland Darwaza is the greatest monumental structure of Akbar's capital. Forming the southern gateway of the Jami Masjid, it is more lofty and majestic than any portal attached to any mosque in India.

The gateway was completed in April 1575 to commemorate Akbar's victory of Gujarat. An interesting inscription on the inner side of its walls quotes the saying of Jesus Christ purporting that 'the world is a bridge, pass it, do not build over it'. It further records that emperor Akbar on his way back from his conquest of the Deccan stayed here in 1601.

TOMB OF SHAIKH SALIM CHISHTI

The marble tomb of the celebrated saint Shaikh Salim Chishti is a unique funerary monument in India. Its elegant design coupled with richness of material, its proportionate dimensions and lyrical beauty are indeed remarkable. The site marked the *zawiya* (chamber for meditation) of the saint's new *Khanqah* where he spent his last days in prayer and meditation. He died in A.H. 979 (A.D. 1572) and his tomb was completed in 1580-81. Originally the structure was faced with red sandstone but in 1606 Jahangir's foster brother Qutbu'd Din Khan Koka faced it completely with marble.

The portico and ornamental columns, the serpentine brackets and the latticed screens (*jalis*) of the tomb are superb in conception and execution. The interior chamber was profusely painted and inscribed, the vestiges of which testify to the magnificence of the Mughal building decorations. The cenotaph is canopied by a most remarkable and beautiful catafalque of ebony embedded with pieces of mother-of-pearl, revealing unique artistry and delicacy.

JAMAAT KHANA (TOMB OF ISLAM KHAN)

This red sandstone structure enclosed by perforated stone screens and surmounted by a dome,

surrounded by thirtysix smaller kiosks, was one of the constituents of Shaikh Salim Chishti's new Khanqah within the courtyard of the mosque. It was probably the *Jama'at Khana* for the assembly of the disciples of the saint. Shaikh Husain, Shaikh Masum, Islam Khan and Shaikh Muazzam, relatives of the saint, are lying buried in it. Commonly known as the Tomb of Islam Khan, it shares features of the Sayyid and Lodi styles of architecture.

HATHI POL AND SANGIN BURJ

This massive gateway shares the grandeur of the Rajput and Mughal portals as represented at Ranthambore Fort and Purana Qila, Delhi. Its central arch is stilted and four-centred and the walls are faced with dressed red sandstone slabs, having the usual recesses for guards on either side. Father Monserrate called it the "Circus Gate", for the emperor used to enter the Polo ground through it. The pair of elephants after which the gate is named still stand in a ruined state.

The Sangin Burj or stone bastion was the principal Naqqar Khana (Drum-House) where the imperial drums were beaten and music played at appointed hours, announcing the arrival and departure of the emperor. Akbar's uncle Mirza Sulaiman,

the fugitive king of Badakhshan was accommodated here until he left for Macca in 1575.

The Hathi Pol, the Sangin Burj, and the colonnade and small bastion to the east formed the gateway complex of the Haramsara. The interesting buildings outside the gate are the northern water-works, the Hiran Minar, and the Caravanserai in which the infant Mihrun Nisa (later Empress Nur Jahan Begam) stayed with her father Mirza Ghiyath later entitled Itimadu'd-Daula, Prime Minister of Jahangir.

NORTHERN WATERWORKS

This interesting octagonal double-storeyed structure of red sandstone housed wooden and iron machines operated by a group of men to lift the water for its continuous supply through the masonry viaducts to the palaces, baths, gardens, tanks; water-channels and the fountains, situated on the ridge.

Cover (back) : Relief decoration in Hujra-i-Anup Talao

