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The Imperial Capital

John F. Richards



Generations of travelers, tourists, and scholars have responded to the ruined city of Fatehpur-Sikri; its coherence, spatial alignments, textures, and motifs exert a magic that has never lost its appeal. But the brevity of its fourteen-year life as the royal seat for the emperor Akbar also presents an enigma. Why did the young emperor decide to build the city in the first place? Why did he then abandon it so soon and so abruptly? Why did he never return to a place he obviously found so congenial? What, if any, purpose did the city serve after its abandonment in 1585? How did the city fit into the strategic, political, ceremonial, and ideological interests of the emperor and his ruling elite? If we can answer these questions, we will begin to have a satisfactory context in which to place this marvelous work.

Michael Brand and Glenn Lowry, in their introduction to the *Sourcebook*, suggested one possible reason for founding Fatehpur-Sikri when they remarked that in the design for the city Akbar and his planners focused attention on the great mosque containing the "jewel-like tomb of Shaikh Salim [Chishti]" and Akbar's imperial palace. The two were "ideologically linked" and "formally related" through the layout of the city and the design of its principal buildings. Beyond the walled city lay a ten- to fifteen-mile zone in which could be found rest-houses, gardens, and villas. Central Fatehpur-Sikri and its environs were, "in turn, part of an almost 300-mile long royal corridor running from Agra . . . to Ajmer in the west." Because Ajmer was the destination for the annual pilgrimages that Akbar made to the shrine of Khwaja Mu'in ad-Din Chishti, the new capital represented "a formal point of connection between the older political and spiritual poles of Agra and Ajmer,"¹ and Akbar, in siting and designing the city, clearly stated that the spiritual basis for his rule was Islamic.

Brand and Lowry further argue that construction of Fatehpur-Sikri was an expression of political stability and military victory. By the late 1560's, Akbar had survived rebellions and attempted coups and had begun to win control over territories in northern India. He was free to indulge in an established and lavish life in a new capital. Permanent stone structures were a noticeable departure for the peripatetic Mughal rulers.² At Fatehpur-Sikri he abandoned the nomadic, tent-dwelling life of his father and grandfather.

Finally, Brand and Lowry mention Fatehpur-Sikri's role in Akbar's attempts to set aside religious strife and to promote social harmony in the empire, and claim that structures such as the 'Ibadatkhana symbolized the new order that Akbar was trying to promote.³

My own analysis of Fatehpur-Sikri⁴ is set in a general discussion of imperial authority under Akbar and Jahangir. Akbar spent the first two decades of his reign establishing an infallible spiritual authority that would make his person the metaphor for empire; one could not exist without the other. As the noble elite of the empire gradually came to accept this view, challenges to Akbar's authority became more and more difficult. Part of this ideological campaign involved rejecting Delhi as the traditional seat of Muslim rulers in North India.

By moving to Agra, Akbar reduced associations of legitimate rulership with Delhi. He spent fifteen years building immense palace-fortresses at Agra and Lahore that contained an elaborate selection of official and private buildings. Attock and Rohtas forts on the Indus and Jhelum served to defend Lahore; the Rohtas Fort in the eastern Gangetic valley also guarded Agra, along with the strongly defended fort at Ajmer. Once completed, the emperor could move quickly and easily from one virtually impregnable bastion to another as imperial needs demanded.

Fatehpur-Sikri's construction in 1571 represented a break with the Delhi-centered political tradition of Mughal India. It was to be a "courtly city," whose uniform architecture and design was very much an expression of Akbar's personality. The audience hall (the Divankhana-i Khass) [63] with its great throne pillar and platform and elevated passage symbolized the awe-inspiring dominance of the emperor over all his subjects. The cohesive architecture and arrangement of the capital also gave expression to the centralized administration and the religious ideology that Akbar relied upon for legitimacy in the early years of his reign.

The new capital contained both a great congregational mosque [17] and the elegant marble tomb [18] (*dargah*) which held the remains of the widely revered, still-worshipped saint Shaikh Salim ad-Din Chishti—the binary institution of legal and mystic Indian Islam. Akbar had visited and frequently sought spiritual advice from Chishti in the years just before his death in 1571, and it was Shaikh Salim's blessing and prophecy regarding the birth of Akbar's long-awaited heir, Sultan Salim, that caused the emperor to locate his capital at the village of Sikri. By placing the saint's tomb inside the great mosque, Akbar was able to draw upon the sanctity adhering to it, and to assimilate it to his own authority. Akbar encouraged the sons and grandsons of Shaikh Salim to enlist as high-ranking officers in the imperial service, rather than to remain as heirs to the shrine and its mystical tradition. This made it easier for him to attach the Chishti mystical aura entirely to Fatehpur-Sikri. Its eventual subordination to the emperor was an essential part of the religiosity Akbar claimed for his reign.

Most writers have accepted the reason for the founding of Fatehpur-Sikri given in the standard chronicles: Akbar expressed his gratitude to his Sufi mentor and saint for the birth of an heir by enclosing the saint's hospice in his capital. Even the careful treatment of the city by Rizvi and Flynn does not explore the reasons for its founding beyond that.⁵ They too simply attribute it to Akbar's "gratitude for the blessings he ascribed to the Shaikh's intervention." Far more effort has been devoted to identifying the functions of the various structures still standing in the city walls than to the purpose the city served.

The ideological appeal of the newly founded capital and the fervor of popular Indian Islam is obvious. When the Chishti died in 1571, Akbar had built a magnificent tomb for his remains that rapidly became a pilgrimage site. By surrounding the khanqah of Shaikh Salim with the buildings and gro-

of his new city, Akbar appropriated his friend and mentor to his own imperial purposes. For a young ambitious ruler, adoption of a Chishti saint could scarcely have been more propitious. The order was noted for its austerity and its rejection of secular power and influence, undoubtedly a refreshing change from the greed and ambition of the official ulema. Akbar's annual pilgrimages to the tomb of Khwaja Mu'in ad-Din Chishti at Ajmer, performed in remarkably devout and humble style, support this. His reign was characterized by devotion to this most venerated of Indian Sufi orders, popular among Muslims and Hindus alike. Significantly Akbar did not choose to identify himself with the Naqshbandis of North India, despite his family's long association with that orthodox Central Asian order.

Akbar juxtaposed his appeal to popular mystical Islam with an unambiguous affirmation of the orthodox Muslim foundations of his regime. The great congregational mosque at Fatehpur-Sikri is the largest and certainly the dominant building in the city. For nearly a decade after its erection, the emperor took an active interest in its operation, even to the point of sweeping the floor, calling the *azan*, acting as prayer leader, and, on one celebrated occasion in June 1579, mounting the pulpit to read the *khutba*.⁶ He also organized a pilgrimage to Mecca each year. Although he himself was dissuaded by his advisers from going on the Hajj, many royal and high-born women made the journey to the Hijaz.⁷

Inside the walled courtyard of the Jami' Masjid where the tomb of Shaikh Salim lay were the cloisters for his disciples. By placing the Chishtis in the congregational mosque, Akbar affirmed their legitimate role in Islam—a symbolic statement that surely was deliberate. The founding of Fatehpur-Sikri was then clearly meant to be an affirmation of the emperor's orthodoxy and the legitimacy that he claimed for his rule.

Assigning other imperial purposes to the new city involves considerably more speculation. Brand and Lowry suggest that Fatehpur-Sikri reflects the security Akbar derived from his political and military triumphs. They argue that rebuilding the Agra Fort and constructing Fatehpur-Sikri also signal the beginning of a new urban consciousness for the Mughals. Certainly calling the city Fatehpur, or "Place of Victory," to celebrate the conquest of Gujarat lends credence to this argument. That the building façades and the layout of the new city bear a strong resemblance to the massive tent structures and arrangements of the imperial camp as portrayed in the *A'in-i Akbari* adds further weight to this interpretation.⁸

Whether the young emperor's restless mode of royal residence and governance can be called "nomadic" is less clear. Akbar was on campaign most of the time in the early years of his rule. He rarely remained for more than a very few months at a time in Delhi, Lahore, Agra, or Jaunpur. More often he was off to the hunt, to direct a military campaign, or to make his presence felt in one or another of his possessions. When he did so, he was generally accompanied by the imperial camp (that the camp at this early stage was the massive organization described by Abu'l Fazl in the *A'in-i Akbari* is not clear) and a substantial army. On a number of

occasions the emperor left his camp to make sudden forced marches (possibly out of youthful exuberance, as much as necessity). In 1562 he returned from the vicinity of Ajmer to Agra, for example, a distance of over 120 *kurohs* in less than two days.⁹ Akbar's Turco-Mongol ancestry would certainly have accustomed him to rapid movement and living in tents, but whether this style can be called "nomadic" in any strict sense is doubtful. The urbane Timurids were far removed in culture from their nomadic cousins still ruling in the steppe at Kashgar. Akbar's unwillingness to settle in a fixed capital might simply have reflected the insecurity of his territories, rather than preference for moving about. His decision to erect such a capital after he had overcome the crises besetting the first decade of his rule seemingly bears this notion out.

Why did he settle in Fatehpur-Sikri rather than Delhi, Agra, Lahore, or even Jaunpur, all great political capitals and urban centers in North India? The emperor had resided and had ordered the construction of fortresses and palaces in each of these cities and had lived at various times in all of them. They all had easy access to overland trade routes and to rivers for ready transport of goods and, in the latter case, reliable water supplies as well. Why move to a village? Apart from the religious sanctity of the site, what did Fatehpur-Sikri offer?

Although Fatehpur-Sikri was an imperial capital between 1570 and 1585, it was far from being an imperial city like Delhi, or Rome, or Baghdad. It was built and peopled in a remarkably short period of time and heavily dependent on nearby Agra, a day's march away. Had he remained, Akbar and his successors might have nurtured it into a truly metropolitan society. Over time the economic pull of the court and central institutions of the empire might perhaps have diverted major imperial trade routes away from Agra. As it was, Fatehpur-Sikri withered away after the emperor's removal to Lahore. Although the city was never completely abandoned, by the early seventeenth century it was already being described as ruined and deserted.¹⁰

Nor could Fatehpur-Sikri offer the impregnable and massive defenses of Agra; the new citadel was scarcely as formidable as the Red Fort or, for that matter, the fortresses at Delhi and Lahore. Had Akbar suffered a serious military reverse and been pursued by an invading army it is doubtful that he could have relied upon the walls of Fatehpur-Sikri to protect him. Agra was the bastion designed as protection against a determined siege. The new capital did not have to meet that need, because harem and treasury could instead be removed to the security of Agra Fort, if necessary.

Akbar's new capital did offer him a secure command post, however, and so long as security flowed from aggressive expansion, Fatehpur-Sikri worked as a single-purpose urban site, a base from which Akbar could mobilize men, money, and supplies for his virtually unending conflicts. From this base he rode forth to encourage and lead his commanders. The most dramatic of these episodes was his forty-three-day dash to subdue the Afghan revolt in newly conquered Gujarat in 1574. Fatehpur-Sikri also served as a bureaucratic command post for organizational and administrative measures that

put an indelible stamp upon the Mughal imperial system. Akbar put into effect numerous innovations in taxation, coinage, military organization and practices, and provincial administration during the years he resided there.

Building the new capital also provided an outlet for Akbar's energies. What we know of the city's layout and appearance confirms his passion for symmetry and completeness. The city permitted him to install his harem and to live pleasantly and luxuriously. The city provided a setting in which to play out the drama of imperial ceremonial and for a vast range of intellectual pursuits. Painting, calligraphy, poetry, and epic all flourished under his patronage.

The new capital was a refuge reminiscent of those desert cantonments the Arabs founded in the seventh century to control their new conquests. The ruler could be free and at his ease, moving securely about the city. He need not be cloistered within a fort, because the population of Fatehpur-Sikri could be controlled more effectively than that of Agra. The people of the town had but one purpose—to serve the court, harem, and central bureaucracy of the empire—and their livelihood depended upon its success. This did not entirely remove the risk of assassination (it was attempted by an Afghan) or coup, but it did reduce it. Akbar re-created in stone within the boundaries of Fatehpur-Sikri a comfortable and certainly grand encampment. It was an urban form somewhere between a camp and an imperial city.

For the first fourteen years of his reign (1556 to 1570) Akbar ruled at Agra where he had acceded to the throne, survived a regency, and gained authority. During this period he oversaw the conquest of Malwa, occupation of the greatest fortresses of Rajasthan, the invasion of the kingdom of Gondwana; and the defeat of Uzbek nobles who attempted to place Mirza Kamran's son on the Timurid throne.

Between 1570 and 1585, the Afghans of North India and Kabul replaced the Rajputs as his principal enemies. His first objective was to conquer Gujarat once the corridor to and beyond Ajmer was secure. Initially victory was thwarted by the arrival of two fugitive Mirzas who mobilized largely Afghan rebels against the new order. A second major objective was the assimilation of Bihar and Bengal, then under Afghan control. Victory in 1576 was followed by over a decade of warfare and reverses, until finally Akbar could send Raja Man Singh to set up a regular system of administration in Bengal and Orissa. The emperor overcame the most severe challenge to his rule in 1579-80 when his generals put down a rising of Afghan nobles in the east. Simultaneously Akbar led an expedition to drive back his half-brother Mirza Muhammad Hakim, who had marched into the Panjab.

Fatehpur-Sikri was well situated for the management of imperial expansion through Rajasthan to the western coast and through Uttar Pradesh into the eastern Gangetic plain. He could move communications and men and material quickly in either direction when necessary.

For the third phase, Akbar transferred his capital to Lahore. Mirza Muhammad Hakim's death allowed Akbar to

bring Kabul directly under imperial administration. He then returned to the "pleasant palaces" of Fatehpur-Sikri and chose to stay in Lahore. His reasons, according to Abu'l Fazl, were straightforward:¹¹

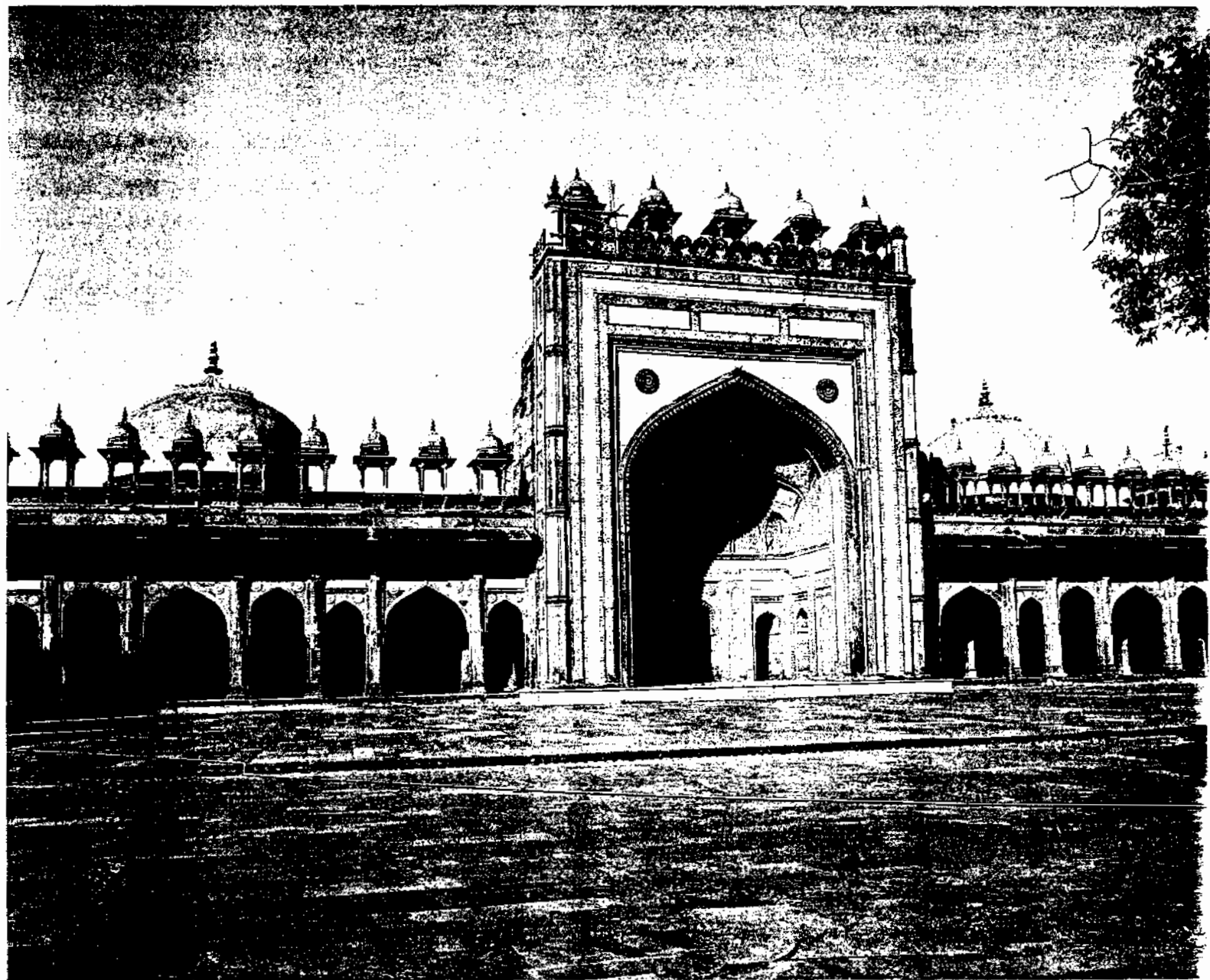
[Akbar's] sole thought was that he would stay for ever in the Panjab, and would give peace to the Zabti [Afghanistan], cleanse Swat and Bajaur of the seeds of rebellion, uproot the thorn of the Tarikian [the Rautas] from Tirah and Bangash, seize the garden of Kabul and bring the populous country of Tatta [Sind] under the empire. Furthermore, should the ruler of the empire remove the foot of friendliness, he would send a great army thither, and follow it up in person.

No longer threatened by serious resistance in the Indian provinces, Akbar proposed to teach the Afghans a lesson in imperial power and at the same time subdue the popular Raushania religious movement that threatened to mobilize resistance among them. At Lahore he could keep a border watch on the activities of Abdullah Khan I who whose expansionist aims threatened invasion from the northwest, and direct the annexation of Kashmir and to round out his empire in the north.

Between 1585 and 1598 the emperor systematically completed his program of pacification, conquest, and frontier defense in the northwest. He fought incessantly with the Safavid ruler over the fortress of Qandahar. Finally in 1595 Mughal troops succeeded in occupying the fortress and seizing the regions of Zaman, Dawar, and Garmsir. In 1598 the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek eased the threat of invasion from Central Asia. The emperor decided again to plan to mount an invasion of Turan then being debated by the councils. Instead he turned his attention to expansion in the south, where his armies were slowly pressing against the frontier defenses of the Deccan Sultanates.

Akbar removed his court, treasuries, harem, and his armies from Lahore to Agra, rather than Fatehpur-Sikri. On Nauruz day, he received in formal audience his eldest son Prince Daniyal, who had displayed worrisome signs of incipient rebellion. From Agra, Akbar sent his best confidant Abu'l Fazl to prod the Mughal armies into vigorous action against the Deccanis and to summon the commander Prince Murad to return to court at Agra. Murad learned of Abu'l Fazl's mission, he led his army in march against the city and fortress of Ahmadnagar. While en route in May 1599, Murad, also alcoholic, died of an apparently brought on by excessive drinking. Abu'l Fazl took command of the imperial armies, reorganized them, and pressed vigorously against the defenses of Bera. He captured Ahmadnagar.

Akbar sent Prince Daniyal back to administer the Deccan territories and to lead his armies against Ahmadnagar. Shortly thereafter, in his last great campaign, the emperor himself left Agra, ostensibly for hunting in Malwa, to urge his lethargic son to more vigorous military action. Finally Akbar abandoned this pretense, took command of the imperial armies, and led an assault on Asir, the great triple hill fortress at Burh:



occupied by the defiant Sultan of Khandesh. After a masterful siege the defenders surrendered to the imperial army.

During the siege Prince Salim (Jahangir) went into open rebellion in the north. The prince seized Allahabad Fort and its treasury, allied himself with dissident Afghan nobles, and proclaimed himself ruler of the empire. Upon completion of the campaign at Asir, Akbar promptly returned to the north to cope with Salim's rebellion. The emperor stopped for eleven days at Fatehpur-Sikri, but returned to his more defensible capital at Agra. Despite the later formal capitulation of Salim, and Akbar's forgiveness for his rebellion and the murder of Abu'l Fazl, it is clear that Akbar could no longer trust his heir. Agra remained the imperial capital until Akbar's death in 1605. The lovely palaces of Fatehpur-Sikri were not suited to the grim realities that confronted an aging emperor coping with an ambitious son.

During his fifty-year-long reign Akbar never established a permanent capital. He shifted the court when he felt it

necessary. He delegated tasks, but not the supervision of his territorial expansion, and often led the imperial armies into battle himself. For that reason there was always a direct correlation between the location of the capital and the empire's strategic interests. Where Akbar was, there too was the capital of the empire.

But even if imperial strategy and Akbar's choice of residence do coincide, this does not really answer the conundrum of why Akbar left the city in 1585. Why did he not return to its "pleasure palaces" in early 1599? Once again we must seek the answer in ideology.

Both before and during his fifteen-year residence at Fatehpur-Sikri Akbar publicly displayed all the conventional Islamic pieties: attending prayer, serving the mosque, organizing the Hajj. In his twenty-eighth regnal year (1583) he welcomed a holy relic brought from Mecca:

Mirza Abu Turab had brought a stone, and he said that the print of the auspicious feet of his Holiness the asylum.

of prophethip, may the blessings of God be upon him, and His peace! was on it. His Majesty went four *karohs* to receive the foot print, and showed every honour and respect to the stone. An order was passed, that all the *amirs* should carry that foot print on his shoulder, and each one should carry it a few steps, and in this way each one in turn held it, till they brought it into the city.¹²

In this early period he was also still very much under the influence of Shaikh 'Abd an-Nabi, the imperial *sadr* and most influential Muslim divine at court.¹³

At the opening of every year in the *ilahi* (regnal) era, Akbar went on pilgrimage to the Chishti shrine at Ajmer. At the beginning of the nineteenth year,

he took the generous-hearted and noble-minded prince Sultan Salim, with himself for the circumambulation of the auspicious and heavenly illuminated tomb at Ajmer. When the eye of that fortunate, God-gifted and successful prince fell on the tomb of the great Khwaja, he following the example of his illustrious father, bowed with great humility to the noble tomb and sacred threshold, and performed the ceremony of circumambulation, and the duty of pilgrimage.¹⁴

Immediately thereafter followed the ceremony of weighing both ruler and prince against gold and silver and other precious commodities. The next day the emperor "again prayed to the victory-giving soul of his Holiness the Khwaja for attention and aid and assistance, and obtained permission to depart."¹⁵ Shortly after his return to Fatehpur-Sikri, Akbar led the imperial army in his first assault against Sultan Daud Karrani, the Afghan ruler of Bihar and Bengal.

A clear statement of the spiritual reference point sought by Akbar for his rule is demonstrated by this episode. In addition to his own worship at the tomb, the emperor proclaimed his son Salim's devotion as well. This was to become a precedent for Akbar's successors. The same message is expressed in stone in Fatehpur-Sikri. Royal heirs, royal victory, and royal authority all flowed from devotion to the Chishti saints properly enclosed in the framework of orthodox Islam.

Abruptly, in 1585, the pilgrimages to Ajmer and veneration for the Chishti saints ended. In Lahore Akbar did not visit the Chishti shrines, nor did he continue any similar form of public worship at other Sufi tombs. The royal weighing ceremonies were divorced from the pilgrimage. The silence of the chronicles also suggests that he ceased regular worship in the congregational mosque, whether at Lahore or Kabul or any other city he visited. Akbar's departure from Fatehpur-Sikri coincided with a definite change in religious attitude.

The Fatehpur-Sikri years also saw the emergence of a controversial imperial ideology directly related to the growing influence of the family of Shaikh Mubarak, a free-thinking liberal theologian, and his sons Abu'l Fazl and Fayzi, who opposed and eventually set aside the power of the orthodox ulema at the court. Partly as a result of their influence, Akbar engaged in a restless search for truth and enlightenment as he interviewed and tested the arguments of a motley collection of Parsi, Christian, Jain, Hindu, and Muslim divines. At the same

time he invented a form of sun worship expressive ceremonies involving fire and an order of nobles that accorded him illumined divinity.¹⁶ The four degrees of devotion which its members swore fidelity seem to have been articulated in 1581 at Fatehpur-Sikri.¹⁷ In the later years Abu'l Fazl defined the light-illumined nature of Akbar's source of authority for mankind.

By the 1580's, then, a new imperial religion began to supplant the orthodox forms of Islamic piety, and the Chishti symbolism of Fatehpur-Sikri and Ajmer were outdated. When Akbar abandoned Fatehpur-Sikri, he abandoned one mode of legitimacy for another.

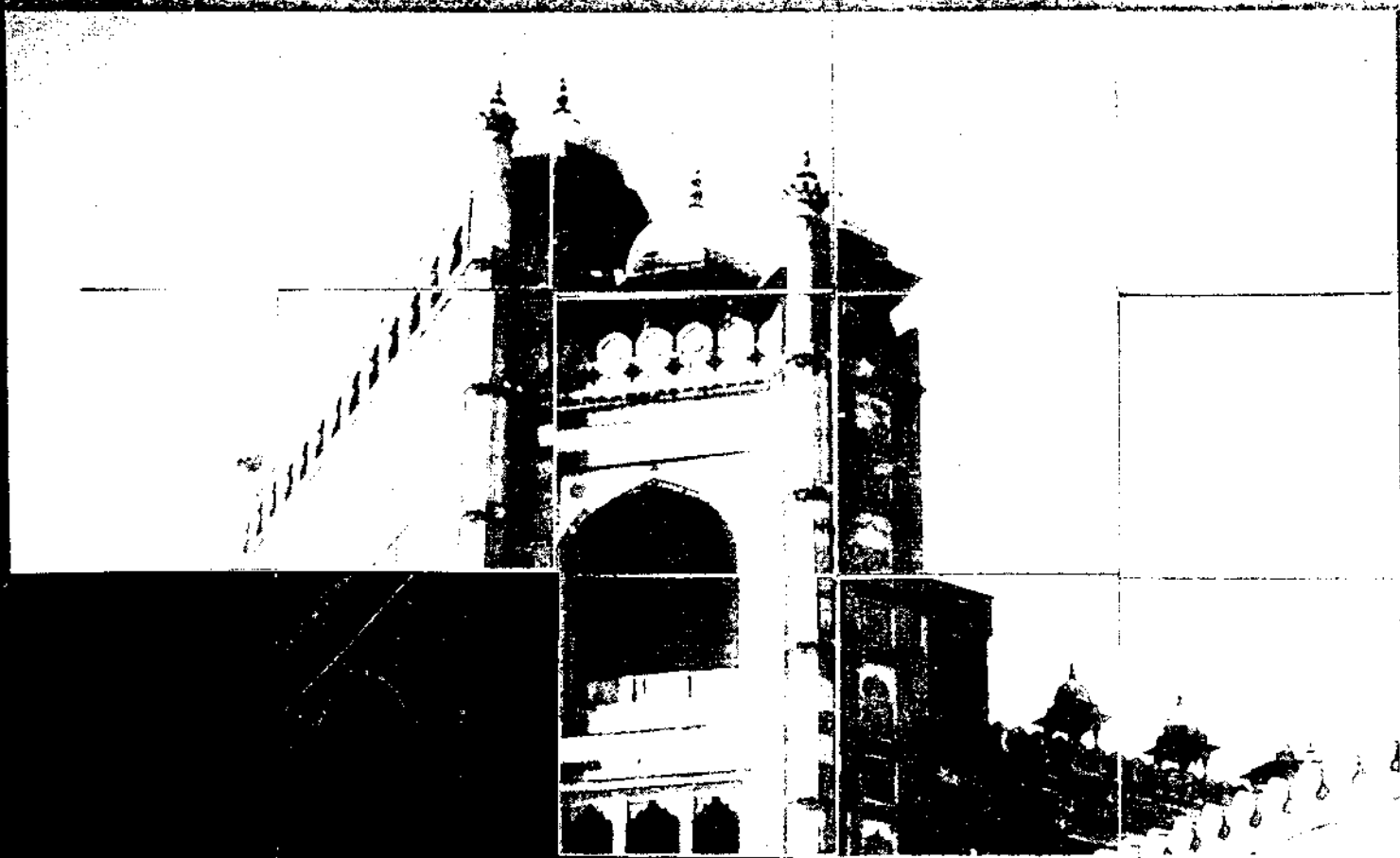
NOTES

1. Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry, eds., *Fatehpur-Sikri: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, Mass.: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1985).
2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
4. J. F. Richards, "The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J. F. Richards (2d rev. ed., South Asian Studies Publication no. 3 (University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 255-57.
5. S. A. A. Rizvi and V. J. A. Flynn, *Fatehpur-Sikri* (Bombay: Taraporee Society, 1975), p. 13.
6. Ibid., p. 75.
7. Nizam ad-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, trans. B. De and Prasad, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927-39).
8. Brand and Lowry, *Sourcebook* (p. 7), in commenting on this similarity observe that tents and awnings were still in extensive use in Fatehpur-Sikri. Elsewhere ("Formulation of Imperial Authority," Richards, p. 255) I have noted the resemblance between the façade of the palace at Fatehpur-Sikri and the wall of the canvas two-storied tent used for the emperor's private quarters.
9. Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2:258.
10. Brand and Lowry, pp. 45-46.
11. Abu'l Fazl, *The Akbar Nama*, ed. and trans. H. Beveridge (revised ed., New Delhi, 1977), 2:748.
12. Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2:558.
13. S. A. A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslim Empire of Akbar's Reign*, (New Delhi, 1975), p. 72.
14. Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2:429.
15. Ibid.
16. Richards, "Formulation of Imperial Authority," pp. 267-71.
17. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, p. 393.

5

The Economic and Social Setting

Irfan Habib



The monuments at Fatehpur-Sikri represent a splendid achievement of planning, design, craftsmanship and good taste. But besides everything else, the impressive scale of construction alone demanded a considerable investment of resources, all made within a period of almost sixteen years, 1569-85, but especially during 1571-79. (See Appendix¹ for chronology of the building construction at the city.)

Jahangir tells us that the Great Mosque at Fatehpur-Sikri (including, apparently, the Buland Darvaza [17]) involved an expenditure of half a million rupees from Akbar's treasury; and this did not include the cost of marble work which was added by Qutbuddin Khan later on.² For the imperial palaces and other structures, including the city wall, we have an estimate from Pelsaert, who says they cost Rs. 1.5 million.³ It is not clear whether this includes the cost of construction of the mosque. If it does not, the total imperial expenditure on the buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri must have been about Rs. 2 million.

That this is not an immoderate estimate is shown by what we know of the costs of other buildings of Akbar's time. According to Jahangir, the Agra Fort and buildings within it had cost Rs. 3.5 million.⁴ This estimate must be considered authoritative and is to be preferred to the earlier one by Badauni of "30 millions of money" (presumably *tankas* and so equal to Rs. 1.5 million),⁵ and a later one of Rs. 2.5 million by Pelsaert.⁶ The lower figures in the two unofficial estimates may be due to the exclusion of the cost of some of the palaces and other structures within the fort. Pelsaert also places the total cost of Akbar's fort at Allahabad at Rs. 1.2 million.⁷ The mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandara, built over a period of years early in Jahangir's reign, cost about Rs. 1.5 million, according to official accounts placed before Jahangir himself.⁸ Finally, we have an inscription on the gateway of the fort of Nagar built by Akbar at Srinagar. This records the laying of the foundations of the fort in 1598, and says that no unpaid labor (*begar*) was used, and that the emperor sent 11 million to meet the cost of construction.⁹ If the money was in *dams* the sum would be equal to Rs. 275,000; but double that amount, if it was in *tankas*, as is equally likely. Considering the comparatively modest scale of that fort, the expenditure of Rs. 2 million on the mosque and imperial buildings at Fatehpur-Sikri does not seem unreasonable.

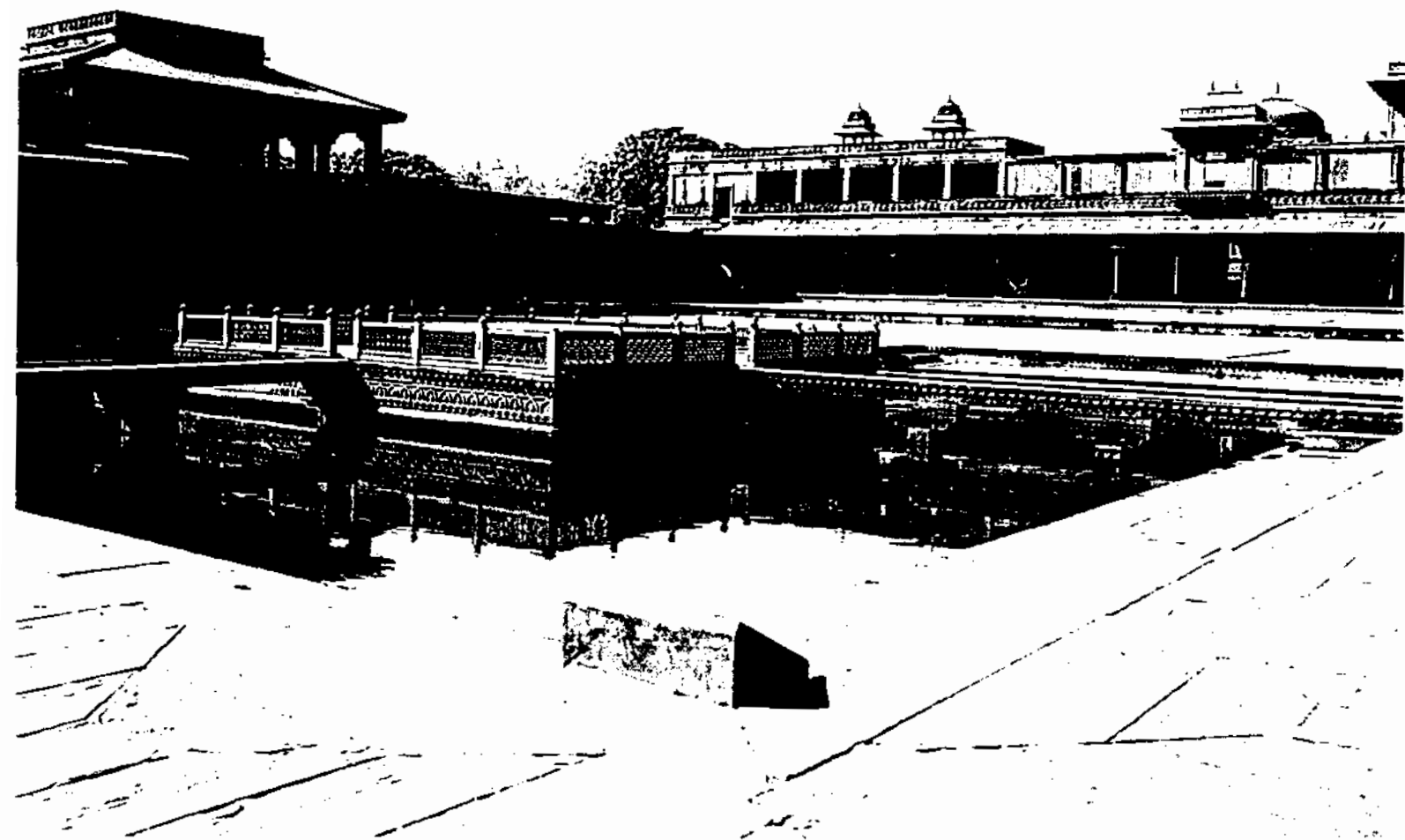
In fact, the total imperial expenditure on Fatehpur-Sikri could well have been greater than this amount. One does not know if the cost of the dams that created the great lake, the waterworks and the imperial gardens is included in Pelsaert's estimate. When Jahangir laid out a large fine garden called Nur Manzil in the vicinity of Fatehpur-Sikri, the total cost of the work (inclusive of pavilions, surrounding wall and waterworks) came to Rs. 150,000, when yet incomplete; it was expected to cost Rs. 200,000 in all before completion.¹⁰ Allowing for the expenditure on the lake, water supply and gardens, we may, then, suppose that the total expenditure on Fatehpur-Sikri out of the imperial treasury was probably in the vicinity of Rs. 2.5 million, or about five times the

expenditure on the construction of the mosque, for which we have an authoritative statement.

One way of judging the magnitude of this expenditure is to remember that the rupee weighed 178 grains troy was of practically pure silver, the alloy never rising above 4 percent. The expenditure was moreover incurred within a space of sixteen years, giving an annual average of Rs. 0.15 million. Since the bulk of the expenditure incurred within half that duration, the annual expenditure must in many years have exceeded a quarter million rupees. Moreover, the building of Fatehpur-Sikri had been preceded by heavy expenditure on the Agra Fort complex, which continued into the period when Fatehpur-Sikri was being built;¹¹ and the expenditure on the fort at Allahabad and Lahore (for which no estimate of cost has come down to us) was to follow later.

This scale of expenditure on buildings may now be judged by being set against the revenues of the Mughal empire. In 1580 the *jama'-i dah-sala* or total nominal net revenue of the empire amounted to 3,629,755,246 *dams*.¹² But a large part of this had to be either assigned away in *jagirs* (territorial assignments) or paid out in cash from the imperial treasury to the *mansabdars* constituting the Mughal nobility, who maintained the bulk of the army, especially cavalry. S. M. Habib basing her calculations on the *A'in-i Akbari*'s data about the number of *mansabdars* and their pay-claims, has argued that the *mansabdars* appropriated 82.13 percent of the total, in 1595-96;¹³ and if this ratio prevailed earlier also, we may assume that, after meeting the *mansabdars'* claims, the emperor was left with about a sixth of the total revenue of the empire. Converting *dams* into rupees at the standard rate of 40 *dams* a rupee prevailing at the time of the *A'in-i Akbari* (1595), the emperor's own share of the revenue should have been about Rs. 15 million in 1580.¹⁴ Since the *jama'* was a nominal statement of revenue-income and not actual realization, the actual income might have been somewhat less. Still its size dwarfed the level of annual expenditure on buildings at Fatehpur-Sikri, say a quarter of a million rupees, the height of building activity there. We may be sure that, relatively speaking, building work at Sikri alone could hardly have put the emperor's resources to much strain.

Indeed, the emperor had enough of other things to spend his income on: he maintained cavalymen (*ahadis*) of his own who numbered 4,441 with 10,717 horses at his death;¹⁵ he had 12,000 musketeers in addition.¹⁶ But above all, there was the expenditure on the household: a harem of over 500 women inmates;¹⁷ an army of 1,000 door-keepers (*darwazas*) and 1,000 personal attendants (*khidmatiyas*);¹⁸ a vast staff of craftsmen, building workers, couriers, clerks, painters, musicians, etc., whose duties and wages are given in detail in the *A'in-i Akbari*; enormous herds of animals in the imperial stables, reported at his death to number 15,000 horses, nearly 6,000 elephants, 6,223 camels, 7,000 mules, 260 mules, 5,000 deer, and nearly 1,000 cheetahs,¹⁹ besides other beasts and birds; and a large number of attendants to look after the animals.²⁰ Then there were the requirements



of conspicuous charity. Akbar had a large tank (Kapur Talau or Anup Talau [56]) made inside his palace at Fatehpur-Sikri to contain clear water. He suddenly decided to have it filled with "coins of copper, silver and gold" and, beginning with 1578, used the treasure to make gifts of cash in 'handfuls' and 'skirtfuls,' till an amount equal to over Rs. 1.67 million had been distributed.²¹

With all this, there was still much saving. In the 39th regnal year (1593-94), while "most officers of the Household (*buyutat*) are paid salary in the army," i.e. as *mansabdars*, the total imperial expenditure amounted to 309,186,795 *dams*,²² equal to Rs. 7.73 million, i.e. only about half the nominal figure of imperial income (15 million rupees). And Akbar was, therefore, able to leave a large hoard of treasure and jewelry behind at his death.²³

The relatively minor share that building activity, even one that was on so grandiose a scale as at Fatehpur, claimed in the imperial budget may perhaps partly explain the readiness with which Akbar could abandon his favorite seat. A capital investment of that magnitude could always be made elsewhere.

While considering the shift from Fatehpur-Sikri, we should also bear in mind the fact that the town was never intended to be the sole seat of the imperial establishments. The larger portion of the vast number of men and women of the

imperial household, of whom we have already given some contemporary estimates, could never have been accommodated within the imperial buildings at Fatehpur-Sikri, even if we assume that tents supplemented the masonry structures.²⁴ Writing about 1595-96, and recording the amount of imperial expenditure during the preceding year, Abu'l Fazl tells us that the emperor maintained "over a hundred houses, each like a city, even a country."²⁵ Discounting exaggeration about the size of the "houses," their number still shows that these could not all have been situated at one place; and Fatehpur-Sikri could not just have the space for all of them. Indeed, even when Fatehpur-Sikri was the emperor's favored seat, Agra still housed probably the larger part of the imperial establishment. The main treasury was at Agra, its fort obviously offering security that the city wall of Fatehpur-Sikri could not furnish.²⁶ In 985/1577-78, we are distinctly told, Shah Mansur and other officials were sent from Fatehpur-Sikri to set right the affairs of the imperial treasury (*khaza'in-i 'amira*) at Agra.²⁷ When in 1585 Ralph Fitch visited Fatehpur-Sikri he found that the imperial household and animals were divided between the two cities: "The King hath in Agra and Fatehpur (as they doe credibly report) 1,000 elephants, thirtie thousand horses, 1,400 tame deere, 800 concubines."²⁸ The two cities were thus joint-capitals even

in the heyday of Fatehpur-Sikri. When the latter was abandoned in 1585, the greater accommodation offered by Agra still remained available; and we need not doubt that it continued to contain a considerable part of the imperial establishment during the next thirteen years when Akbar mainly resided at Lahore.

II

If the Mughal emperors disposed of a vast income, the nobility, composed of his *mansabdars*, laid claim to an income which in aggregate, as we have seen, was probably five times that of the emperor. In 1595-96 it was distributed among a little over one and a half thousand persons. But within this relatively small class, there was a very great difference between those who were in the higher ranks and the others. Thus it has been calculated that the pay claims of 122 *mansabdars* of 500 and above accounted for over half of the total *jama'* of the empire.²⁹ This is corroborated by the data for Shah Jahan's 20th regnal year, analyzed by A. J. Qaisar. Then, 115 highest *mansabdars* (of 2,000 *zat* and above) claimed 44 percent of the total *jama'*.³⁰ If we study the rates of pay in the *A'in-i Akbari* we can perhaps still better visualize the high income of the top nobility. A *mansabdar* of 5,000, class I, drew as his personal pay Rs. 30,000 a month.³¹ Allowing for a deduction of one month's pay (*irmas*), which begins to appear in the documents of the following reign,³² the annual pay should have amounted to Rs. 330,000—substantially more than the total amount that Akbar spent annually on the buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri even during the most active period of construction, and a little less than one-twentieth of the total expenditure of the imperial establishment in 1594-95. Looking at the recipients of incomes of such size, Pelsaert at Agra in 1626 could well wonder at the contrast between “the rich in their great superfluity and absolute power” and “the utter subjection and poverty of the common people.”³³

When in 979/1571-72 Akbar decided to build an imperial palace complex at Fatehpur-Sikri, he also decreed that “all the grades of the nobles (*umara'*) and [other] classes of people should build mansions and houses for themselves.”³⁴ He allowed people freedom to build their houses within a circumference of “2 or 3 *kurohs*” (5 to 7 miles) fixed by him.³⁵ Monserrate observed of Fatehpur-Sikri in 1580 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.”³⁶ It is likely that as the lake was filled, with a circumference of 12 *kurohs* (or over 27 miles) according to Abu'l Fazl,³⁷ and 7 *kurohs* (16 miles), as measured in December 1618 by Jahangir's officials,³⁸ the houses, gardens and pavilions of the nobility would be established along its banks, to the west of the mosque, the northeast of the palace complex, and on the opposite side of the lake. The need for easier access to water for the tanks and fountains in Mughal nobles' houses,³⁹ should have dictated sites close to the lake where wells could be dug easily and the water table would



be high. This is what happened at Agra where the nobles' houses extended along the Yamuna, the whole city having the appearance of a "halfe-moone" hugging the river.⁴⁰

It may be expected that the greatest nobles built houses on the grand scale. It is possible to take as examples of one type the houses popularly (though probably wrongly) believed to be those of Abu'l Fazl [97] and Fayzi [96].⁴¹ "Abu'l Fazl's house" has been recently surveyed by Naheed Khan: it is double-storied, with many chambers; the zenana (or women's apartments) is on the second story, with access to the baths (*hamam*) and latrines outside on the ground.⁴² But the larger number of the aristocratic houses were probably built differently, if Pelsaert's description of these at Agra some forty or fifty years later (1620's) is any guide.

As a rule they [the Mughal nobles] have three or four wives. . . . All live together in an enclosure surrounded by high walls, which is called the *mahal* having tanks and gardens inside. Each wife has separate apartments for herself and her slaves, of whom there may be 10 or 20 or 100 according to her fortune. . . . They [the houses] are noble and pleasant, but there is not much in the way of an upper storey except a flat roof, on which to enjoy the evening air. There are usually gardens and tanks inside the house; and in the hot weather the tanks are filled daily with fresh water, drawn by oxen from wells. . . . These houses last for a few years only, because the walls are built with mud instead of mortar, but the white plaster of the walls is very noteworthy, and far superior to anything in our country. . . . Outside the *mahal* there is only the *diwan-khana* [*diwan ghana*] or sitting place, which is spread with handsome carpets and kept very clean and neat.⁴³

In other words, there was usually a hall with verandahs fronting courtyards lined with rooms, which constituted the main house (*mahal*). The wall being usually of mud, there was no upper story. The mud walls explain, as Pelsaert notes explicitly, why the houses had short lives. If such houses, then, comprised the large majority of the structures built by the nobility at Fatehpur-Sikri, it is not surprising that they began to go rapidly out of repair and collapse into shapeless ruin once the city was abandoned. In contrast to the stone and rubble structures of the imperial and mosque complexes, most of the houses of the nobility are now represented by confused ruins that would need careful exploration and excavation to enable even the outlines of the houses to be traced.⁴⁴

III

Sikri was a mere "township" (*qasba*) before Prince Salim was born there in 1569 under the protection of Shaikh Salim.⁴⁵ It had its one asset in an apparently rain-fed lake, which nestled under the ridge, to supply water for the small rural settlement;⁴⁶ and Shaikh Salim gave it a local reputation after he established his *khanqah* (hospice) on the ridge upon his return from Mecca in 1563-64.⁴⁷ During the construction of the Agra Fort, the red sandstone quarries on the ridge began to

be extensively worked, and a thousand carts are said to have been employed in taking the quarried stone to Agra in the late 1560's.⁴⁸ The prosperous quarry masters probably built the Stonecutters' Mosque [15], which Edmund W. describes so sympathetically.⁴⁹ But this was practically the sum total of the economic activity at Sikri before 1566. In that place, it is true, was on the Agra-Ajmer highway, and in the indigo-producing tract. But the main center of the indigo trade was Bayana, then a far more important town. There was no further natural advantage with Fatehpur-Sikri, such as in the shape of a river, that gave to towns like Delhi or Lahore, a large hinterland from which supplies could be cheaply drawn by barge and boat.

Yet once Akbar's court took its seat at Fatehpur-Sikri (1571-72), the aspect changed. The emperor and the court required a constant supply of luxury articles, and the burgeoning population needed to be fed and clothed. The only industry, which is known to have been established at Fatehpur-Sikri, under the impetus of aristocratic demand, was the manufacture of woollen carpets (*gilim*), apparently through the settlement of Iranian carpet weavers (*qalishan*). Most articles in demand must have come from Agra and elsewhere. In the case of many luxuries and rarities, from distant places, Fatehpur-Sikri was considered a well-laid-out bazaar to be a necessary part of his planned city. Thus in 984/1576-77, he ordered that the Imperial Court (*Darbar-i Padshahi*) be moved to the gate to Agra, excellent shops should be built of red sandstone, gypsum and lime, and near the court, a market (*chahar-suq*) be built comprising well-adorned shops. In 1610 Finch was still able to observe, "at the entrance to the north-east gate," this "goodly bazar (market-place) of halfe a mile long, being a spacious, straight paved street with faire buildings on either side."⁵³ Its ruins have now been excavated by a team of archaeologists from the Aligarh Muslim University, under Professor R. C. Gaur.

Fatehpur-Sikri thus grew rapidly into a center of commerce. One of Akbar's well-known courtiers, the poet Abu'l Fath Gilani, accompanying the imperial camp in the vicinity of Rohtas (Panjab), in 1581, wrote a letter to a friend who had then recently arrived at Jaunpur, who was seeking his fortune in the Mughal empire. The friend was asked to make a decision for Fatehpur-Sikri for, there "if you have the ambition of seeking His Majesty's service, you will—God willing be appointed to a distinguished position; if you wish for *na'ima* [*ma'ash*] [revenue-free grant of land], that too is procurable; and if you are inclined towards commerce (*tijarat*) that too can be better pursued at Fatehpur, which is the capital city (*pai-taht*).

The establishment of a mint at Fatehpur-Sikri marked the city's acquisition of commercial importance, for there was already a mint at Agra, which would normally have met the needs. The Mughal minting was 'free,' that is, it was not for anyone to get his bullion coined, at a charge; and, the output of the Mughal mints reflected not only the treasury's demand for coin, but also the monetary needs of the market. The mint at Fatehpur-Sikri is first mentioned in our sources in connection with the arrangements made

985/1577-78 to replace the *chaudhuris* of the imperial mints with trusted royal officials. The Fatehpur mint was placed under the charge of the famous painter Khwaja 'Abdu's Samad.⁵⁵ In 993/1585, Bayazid Bayat was appointed superintendent (*darogha*) of that mint.⁵⁶ This is the last we hear of it, for Fatehpur-Sikri does not appear in the A'in-i Akbari's list of gold, silver and copper mints, and must have ceased to coin money by 1595-96.⁵⁷

Numismatic evidence supplements our meager literary record. Coins uttered at Fatehpur-Sikri in all the three metals have survived. I give below a comparative table of coins of the Fatehpur-Sikri and Agra mints issued during the period 976-993 (1568-69 to 1585), and recorded in five major catalogued collections (Calcutta, Lucknow, Lahore, Nagpur and the British Museum).⁵⁸ Coins with defective dates and queried readings of mint names and dates have been excluded.

ISSUES OF THE AGRA AND FATEHPUR-SIKRI MINTS

YEAR		GOLD (<i>muhrs</i>)		SILVER (<i>rupees</i>)		COPPER (<i>dams</i>)	
Hijra	A.D.	Agra	Fatehpur	Agra	Fatehpur	Agra	Fatehpur
976	1568-69	7	—	2	—	—	—
977	1569-70	4	—	6	—	—	1(?)
978	1570-71	4	—	4	—	1	—
979	1571-72	4	—	7	—	2(?)	1(?)
980	1572-73	3	—	4	—	—	—
981	1573-74	11	—	8	—	—	—
982	1574-75	11	—	3	—	3	1
983	1575-76	1	—	5	—	1(?)	—
984	1576-77	2	—	10	—	1	—
985	1577-78	1	—	7	4	2	—
986	1578-79	—	7	3	9	—	10
987	1579-80	—	2	—	9	2	8.5
988	1580-81	—	2	—	8	3	5
989	1581-82	—	—	—	8	1	1
990	1582-83	—	—	—	—	—	—
991	1583-84	—	—	—	—	—	—
992	1584-85	—	—	—	—	—	—
993	1585-86	—	—	—	—	—	—

The table shows that copper minting at Fatehpur-Sikri began from 979 (1571-72), if not 977 (1569-70).⁵⁹ On the other hand, the gold and silver issues are confined to just five years, 1577-78 to 1581-82. During this period the Fatehpur-Sikri mint eclipsed Agra altogether. It is possible that from 1578-79 to 1580-81, gold-coining shifted completely from Agra to Fatehpur-Sikri, for apart from the Bengal, Ahmadabad and Kabul mints, gold used to be minted only at the imperial camp,⁶⁰ so that gold could have been minted at one time either at Agra or at Fatehpur-Sikri, but not at both places. With silver and copper it seems otherwise. The years of coins uttered at Agra and Fatehpur-Sikri overlap until 1580-81, and we may assume that the Agra rupee and copper mint was not closed, but that its output declined in proportion as that of Fatehpur-Sikri increased. Apparently, the shift of the court to

Fatehpur-Sikri did take away, as one would expect, a part of the Agra trade to the new imperial seat.

What is difficult to understand is why the Fatehpur mint is not represented in the collections by any gold coin 988/1580-81 and by any silver or copper coin after 989/1581 although the city remained the imperial seat and retained mint, as Bayazid's statement shows, at least till 993/. Even more surprising is the gap in Agra minting 988/1580-81; coins of that mint begin to appear in collections only from the 40th *ilahi* year (1595-96) onward. For the moment, I am afraid, I can only note the apparent collapse of minting at both Fatehpur-Sikri and Agra 1581-82, well before the abandonment of the new capital 1585. I am unable to suggest any convincing reason for this for the continuing inactivity of the Agra mint during the succeeding decade. But there must obviously have been a decline of commerce from these two cities even before Fatehpur ceased to be the capital city. Why this took place remains a mystery.

IV

With the court — and even preceding it — came the pool of the construction of the palace and mosque complexes by large numbers of artisans and ordinary laborers, beside quarry workers, must have been employed. Unluckily, estimates have come to us of the numbers engaged in work; but we may obtain some idea about them by considering the numbers employed at other building projects of Akbar's reign.

The fort of Agra, constructed over the period 972-981 (1564-65 to 1571-72), necessitated the daily employment of 3,000 to 4,000 "skilled masons, hardy labourers and other staff."⁶¹ This estimate is from Abu'l Fazl, and may be regarded as an official statement. But an earlier source closer in time to the event gives a much higher estimate of the hands employed on the same project: "two thousand master stone-cutters, two thousand master-masons (lit. mud-plasterers and lime-plasterers) who worked in the construction of that fort came daily to work; and eight thousand labourers, who brought stone and lime to the site, worked in that fort."⁶² Two slightly lower estimates of labor employed at other buildings may also be considered. Hawkins says that at least three thousand persons were daily employed in building Akbar's mausoleum at Agra 1611.⁶³ Finch, writing of the same year, says that Allahabad Fort had been under construction for 40 years, that under Akbar 20,000 persons had "by report" worked on it, while now 5,000 "of all sorts" were employed.⁶⁴

Keeping in mind these estimates, and duly discounting the possible element of exaggeration present in 'Arif Qandari and Finch, we may suppose that the number of laborers daily employed in the imperial buildings, the mosque, the palace wall, etc., at Fatehpur-Sikri during the main period of building activity (1570's) probably ranged between 5,000 and 8,000. In addition, there must have been workers employed erecting the houses of the nobility. Perhaps, an average daily employment of about 8,000 to 10,000 in the building industry

would not be too high an estimate for Fatehpur-Sikri during the 1570's. It must, of course, have fallen sharply thereafter.

Once the emperor fixed his residence at Fatehpur-Sikri, a part of the vast staff of the household, officials, clerks, servants and slaves must have shifted from Agra to Sikri. We have already seen that under Akbar (ca. 1595-96) doorkeepers (*darbans*) and personal attendants (*khidmatiyas*) numbered 1,000 each;⁶⁵ and these by the very nature of their duties should have accompanied the emperor to Fatehpur-Sikri. Then there were the *ahadis* (imperial horsemen), put at nearly 4,500 at Akbar's death,⁶⁶ and the musketeers, numbering 12,000 in 1595-96.⁶⁷ Of these two categories of retainers we may expect a certain portion to have been kept at Fatehpur-Sikri. If we put the total number of retainers and servants of the imperial establishment at that city at about 8,000, this would not perhaps be an unreasonable figure. It is less than a quarter of the total number (36,000) given by Hawkins in 1611 for "officers and men as belong to the camp and court" at Agra, paid monthly out of the king's treasury; these included "porters, gunners, watermen, lackeys, horse-keepers, elephant-keepers, small-shot, frasses [*farrash*] or tentmen, cookes, light-bearers, gardiners, keepers of all kind of beasts."⁶⁸

The nobility similarly had large retinues of servants; and officers and even cavalymen followed suit. As Pelsaert observed at Agra in 1626: "Peons or servants are exceedingly numerous in this country, for everyone—be he mounted soldier, merchant or King's official—keeps as many as his position and circumstances permit."⁶⁹ Unlike the imperial establishment, we have almost no guidance in our sources as to the numbers involved, but we will probably be on the conservative side if we take the number of household servants employed at Fatehpur-Sikri outside the imperial establishment at about double the figure of the latter's staff, viz. about 16,000.

The demand for goods and non-domestic services generated by the court and aristocracy and their large retinue required a large population of shopkeepers, pedlars, carters, artisans producing for the market, and laborers working for hire in the market or for master craftsmen. To two European observers of Jahangir's Agra, it seemed that there was an extreme superfluity of such people. Hawkins thought that the work a single Englishman dispatched was done here by three men;⁷⁰ and Pelsaert believed that "a job which one man would do in Holland, here passes through four men's hands before it is finished."⁷¹ We can only make a guess at what numbers should have been maintained by the 'private sector' in commerce, manufactures and transport (excluding the building industry) at Fatehpur-Sikri, but they were probably no fewer than the number of servants of the aristocracy, officials and soldiery; allowance of about 16,000 for this section of population too would not, then, be unreasonable.

If we now consider our guesses of the numbers employed in the building industry, imperial and aristocratic establishments and in the market and transport, it would seem that Fatehpur-Sikri during 1572-85 could well have possessed a work force of over 50,000. The male work force might have been smaller,

since we have included women laborers (as in the building industry)⁷² and female slaves and attendants in the imperial and aristocratic establishments as well as 'middle' households. If we then put the male work force at 45,000, and apply the conventional demographer's average of 4.5 persons for each family, we will get a population of 200,000 based on the male work force, to which we perhaps add another 20,000 persons or so, to cover the lower classes (nobles, officials, theologians, scholars, merchants etc., and their families).

My estimate of the total population of Fatehpur-Sikri in 1580 would then be about 220,000, that is, somewhat short of a quarter million. In 1585 Fitch visited the city in its glory, and noted that "Agra and Fatepore are two great cities, either of them much greater than London at this populous." He also thought that "Fatepore" was "greater than Agra," and, rather surprisingly, that its "houses and streets be not so faire."⁷³ London at the beginning of the seventeenth century probably contained around 200,000 persons. To apply this figure to Fatehpur-Sikri on the basis of impressions alone would be hazardous, but, as we have seen, this size of population largely accords with our own estimate of the work force employed in the city.

The poor, who thus probably numbered about 200,000, formed the bulk of the inhabitants of Fatehpur-Sikri, but left almost no mark of their own existence, except in what was created for their masters. Even the localities where they lived cannot be established with any confidence. The villages of Sikri and Nagar could hardly have contained more than a small part of them. It may be supposed that, as in the waterfront was monopolized by the nobility, and the poor formed the next line of settlements, so as not to be too far from the major source of water, the lake. The traces of their dwellings should therefore be looked for at some distance behind the bank of the lake now dry. But what traces could one expect to find? Their homes and what they could afford must have been of the same kind as those of their masters in Agra:

Their homes (says Pelsaert) are built of mud with thatched roofs.⁷⁵ Furniture there is little or none. They have some earthenware pots to hold water and for cooking, and two beds, one for the man, the other for his wife. Their bed-clothes are scanty, merely a sheet, or perhaps two, serving both as under and over-sheet: sufficient in the hot weather, but the bitter cold of winter are miserable indeed, and they try to keep warm with little cowdung fires, which are lit outside the houses because the houses have no fire-places or chimneys. The smoke from these fires all over the city is so thick that the eyes run, and the throat seems to be choked.

A winter pall of smoke from their small warming fires at least have been a nasty reminder of the existence of the poor when Akbar held his splendid court at Fatehpur. Today, there is absolutely nothing to tell the sight of the hearths and hovels of the humble builders of the glittering imperial city.

APPENDIX: Chronology of Building Work at Fatehpur-Sikri

YEAR	WORK	SOURCE
971-[979] = 1563-64 to [1571-72]	New khanqah built by Shaikh Salim Chishti.	Badauni, II, 73.
976 = 1568-69	Foundation laid of imperial building on the Sikri ridge [but see under 979(a)] and of Great Mosque [but see under 981].	<i>Tabaqat-i Akbari</i> , II, 225; Badauni, II, 109.
979 = 1571-72	(a) Plans for building palace complex, city and city wall decreed by emperor. (b) Construction of a palace completed. (c) Great Mosque completed, 5 years after laying of foundations [but see under 981 and 985].	'Arif Qandahari, 149-51; <i>Akbarnama</i> , II, 365; Monserrate, <i>Commentary</i> , tr., 33. 'Arif Qandahari, 149; Badauni, II, 136. Badauni, II, 108-9. Same chronogram in inscription on central architrave in mosque.
981 = 1573-74	Foundations laid of Great Mosque.	'Arif Qandahari, 239; <i>Firishta</i> , I, 263.
982 = 1574-75	Construction of 'Ibadatkhana near new khanqah begins.	<i>Akbarnama</i> , III, 112-13; <i>Tabaqat-i Akbari</i> , II, 311; Badauni, II, 198.
983 = 1575-76	(a) 'Ibadatkhana completed. (b) Building of Anup Talau tank complex completed.	Badauni, II, 200-01. Badauni, II, 201.
984 = 1576-77	Order for construction of line of shops from Imperial Darbar to Agra Gate.	'Arif Qandahari, 150.
985 = 1577-78	Construction of Great Mosque completed [prayers being offered in mosque, 986=1578-79].	<i>Firishta</i> , II, 263. 'Arif Qandahari, 241].
986 = 1578-79	City wall nearing completion.	'Arif Qandahari, 151-52.
1579	Lake completed.	F. Henrique's letter in <i>Letters from Mughal Court</i> , tr., J. Correia-Afonso, Bombay/Anand, 1980, p. 22.

NOTES

- In locating sources for the Appendix and for material in this paper generally, I have drawn much help from *Fatehpur-Sikri: A Sourcebook*, ed. Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry, Cambridge, Mass., 1985.
- Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Saiyid Ahmad, Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64, p. 262.
- F. Pelsaert, *A Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of Mughal India*, tr. Brij Narain and Sri Ram Sharma, Calcutta, 1957, p. 18. The Dutch text (along with that of Pelsaert's *Remonstrantie*) has now been edited by D.H.A. Kolff and H. W. van Santen, *De geschriften van Francisco Pelsaert over Mughal Indie, 1627: Kroniek en Remonstrantie*, The Hague, 1979 where this particular passage occurs on p. 74. I owe access to this edition by the kindness of Dr. Kolff.
- Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 2.
- 'Abdu'l Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhabu't Tawarikh*, ed. Ali Ahmad, Kabir al-Din Ahmad and W. Nassau Lees, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1864-69, II, p. 74.
- Pelsaert, *Chronicle*, tr. Narain and Sharma, p. 18, and ed., n no. 33 on p. 99. There is a misprint where the figure for expenditure in rupees is given as 2,50,00,000, whereas the Dutch text, p. 84, says in words 'twee miljoen ende vijff hondert duysent ropie' or 2,500,000 only. Moreover, Pelsaert gives the total of expenditure on the Agra Fort and Fatehpur-Sikri as Rs. 4,000,000, and this can only be correct if 2.5 million were spent on the Agra Fort.
- Pelsaert, *Chronicle*, tr., p. 21; Dutch text, p. 92.
- Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, pp. 72-73.
- I have personally read the inscription. The text is printed in Pir Ghulam Hasan Khoyhami, *Tarikh-i Hasan*, Srinagar, n.d., II, p. 443 n.
- Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 262.
- Badauni says that the royal palaces at Agra and Fatehpur-Sikri were completed the same year (979/1571-72), and he quotes a chronogram by

- Qasim Arsalan for both palaces (*Muntakhabu't Tawarikh*, II, 136). The same three couplets are also quoted in 'Arif Qandahari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, ed. Muinuddin Nadwi, Azhar Ali Dihlawi and Imtiaz Ali Arshi, Rampur, 1962, p. 149. The chronogram yields the year 979.
- Abu'l Fazl, *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1867-77 Vol. I, p. 386; cf. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay 1963, p. 399.
- 'Share of the Nobility in the Revenues of Akbar's Empire,' *Indian Economic and Social History Review (IESHR)*, XVII (3), pp. 329-41, esp. p. 340.
- At this time, owing to the resumption of *jagirs* in 1574-75, the income of the *khalisa* (emperor's 'reserved' land) must have been much larger than this. But, then, a large number of *mansabdars* were paid in cash from the treasury, so that the balance remaining with the treasury might well have been no more than a sixth of the total *jama*.
- Pelsaert, *Chronicle*, tr., p. 35; Dutch text, p. 120. The Dutch text's figures for *ahadis*' horses total 10,718.
- A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, p. 188.
- Ibid.*, p. 40.
- Ibid.*, I, p. 188.
- Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah, *Tarikh-i Firishta*, litho., Nawa Kishore, Kanpur, 1874, Vol. I, p. 272; and Pelsaert, *Chronicle*, tr., p. 37 (Dutch text, pp. 120-21). Both of them agree on the number of horses and elephants.
- The *A'in-i Akbari* gives minute details of how the animals were obtained, fed and kept.
- 'Arif Qandahari, pp. 151-52; Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnama*, ed. 'Abdu'r Rahim Asiatic Soc. of Bengal, Calcutta, 1886, III, pp. 257-9; *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* 260. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, ed. B.De, Calcutta, II, 1931 pp. 339-40, gives a much higher figure, viz. 20 karor *tankas*, or 10 million

rupees distributed within a period of three years. Jahangir gives the sum of 37,48,46,000 *dams* which would be equal to Rs. 9,371,150 and not Rs. 1,679,400, the equivalent that he himself supplies and I have accepted in the text. Abu'l Fazl prudently gives no figures.

22. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 7.

23. According to Shahjahan's official historian Qazwini, Akbar left a treasure of Rs. 70 million (excluding gold coins), out of which Jahangir spent away Rs. 60 million (*Padshahnama*, Br. Mus. Add. 20734, pp. 444-5). Firishta, I, 272, and Pelsaert, *Chronicle*, tr., pp. 33-34, Dutch text, pp. 116-117, agree that Akbar had a hoard of Rs. 100 million (in silver coin, Akbari rupees, says Pelsaert). In addition, there was a mass of bullion, copper, jewelry and other goods, so that Pelsaert puts the total value of what Akbar left behind at over Rs. 348 million. See also Hawkins, *Early Travels*, pp. 101-104, for the treasure of Jahangir in 1611.

24. In determining the use of buildings within the main imperial complex northeast of the mosque, one would now generally prefer the interpretations of S.A.A. Rizvi and V.J.A. Flynn (*Fathpur-Sikri*, Bombay, 1975) to those of Edmund W. Smith (*The Moghul Architecture of Fathpur-Sikri*, 4 vols., Allahabad, 1895-98), though the latter's detailed survey of the main structures still holds the field.

25. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, p. 9.

26. "After [the Agra Fort] was completed, it became the refuge and asylum of all the treasures of Hindustan." (Badauni, II, 74).

27. *Akbarnama*, III, p. 203.

28. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, ed. W. Foster, Oxford, p. 17. It may be noted that Agra precedes 'Fatepore.'

29. S. Moosvi, *IESHR*, XVII (3), p. 340. There may be some error in her calculation, however. Obviously 25 *mansabdars* of 2,500-10,000 could not have accounted for 42.02 percent of the *jama'* when of these the 12 higher *mansabdars* of 5,000-10,000 claimed only 18.52 percent.

30. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 27th Session*, (Allahabad) Aligarh, 1967, p. 239.

31. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 180.

32. See Irfan Habib, 'Mansab Salary Scales under Jahangir and Shahjahan,' *Islamic Culture*, LIX(3), pp. 203-28.

33. Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr. W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl, Cambridge, 1925, p. 60; Dutch text, ed. Kloff and van Santen, p. 308.

34. *Akbarnama*, II, p. 365.

35. 'Arif Qandahari, p. 150.

36. Fr. A. Monserrate, *Commentary on His Journey to the Court of Akbar*, tr. J. S. Hoyland, annotated by S. N. Banerjee, Cuttack, 1922, p. 30.

37. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 441.

38. *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 259. It is possible that Abu'l Fazl has recorded the extent of the lake during the rainy season; its banks must have retreated considerably by December when Jahangir's officials measured it.

39. See Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, p. 66; Dutch text, p. 315.

40. See Finch's description of Agra as it was in 1611 (*Early Travels*, 182). Also Pelsaert, 1626: "The breadth of the city is by no means so great as the length, because every one has tried to be close to the river bank, and consequently the water-front is occupied by the costly palaces of all the famous lords which make it appear very gay and magnificent, and extend for a distance of 6 kos or 3.5 Holland miles [6 kos = 13 miles]" (Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr., p. 2; Dutch text, p. 246).

41. The description of the two houses as "Prince Salim's nursery" by Rizvi and Flynn (pp. 91-95) seems purely speculative. They might possibly have been built by members of the Chishti family, when they rose to the position of high *mansabdars* under Akbar and Jahangir.

42. This survey is being published in *Madhyakalin Bharat*, ed. Irfan Habib, No. 3 (1985) (forthcoming).

43. Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr., pp. 64, 66-67; Dutch text, pp. 313, 315-16.

44. Impressive ruins of nobles' houses, with traces of floors and water-channels have been explored and partly excavated on the ridge to the northeast of the palace complex above the main road towards Agra Gate, by the Aligarh team under the National Project.

45. *Akbarnama*, I, 343. 'Arif Qandahari, p. 130, calls it a village (*mauza*).

46. Babur, *Baburnama*, tr. A. S. Beveridge, II, p. 588. I have checked the translation with 'Abdu'r Rahim's Persian version, Br. Mus. MS, Or. 3174, f. 476a. It was December, yet the lake was large enough to require Babur to take a boat to reach an island in its middle. This was subsequently to be greatly enlarged by Akbar by means of dams and embankments.

47. Badauni, II, 73.

48. 'Arif Qandahari, p. 145. Cf. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 442; and Finch, *Early*

Travels, pp. 157, 187.

49. E. W. Smith, *The Moghul Architecture of Fathpur-Sikri*, I (Allahabad, 1898), pp. 25-28, esp. p. 27.

50. The best description of the indigo country is that of P. Remonstrantie, pp. 10-15; Dutch text, pp. 255-61. The indigo of B. mentioned in *A'in-i Akbari*, I, 442.

51. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 50. This industry appears to have survived the abandonment of the town. See Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr., p. Thevenot, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, tr. ed. S. N. Se. Delhi, 1949, p. 56 ('Vetapour').

52. 'Arif Qandahari, p. 150.

53. *Early Travels*, p. 149.

54. *Ruqa'at-i Hakim Abu'l Fath Gilani*, ed. Muhammad Bashir I Lahore, 1968, p. 46. The letter is dated 19 September 1581, ; correspondent's name was Hajji Sufi.

55. *Akbarnama*, III, 227.

56. Bayazid Bayat, *Tazkira-i Humayun o Akbar*, ed. M. Hedayat I Calcutta, 1944, p. 373.

57. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 27.

58. Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Coins of the Moghul Emperors of Hind: the British Museum*, ed. R. Stuart Poole, London, 1892; H. Nelson 'Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, includ cabinet of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. III. Mughal Emperors c Oxford, 1908; C. J. Brown, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Pr. Museum, Lucknow*, *Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, Vol. II, Oxford R. B. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum, Lahore*, Oxford, 1914; Shamsuddin Ahmad, *A Supplement to Vol. III Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (The Mughal Em of India)*, Delhi, 1929; C. R. Singhal, *Supplementary Catalogue of. Coins, in the State Museum, Lucknow*, Lucknow, 1965; and V. P. *Catalogue of Coins in the Central Museum, Nagpur: Coins of the. Emperors*, Part I, Bombay, 1969.

59. The Indian Museum (Nelson Wright's Catalogue, p. 40, no. 4; Lucknow Museum (Singhal's Supplementary Catalogue, p. 38, no. 22) possess copper coins of the Fatehpur mint, in which the words for 9 have been clearly read, but the word for the last digit is undecipherable issues cannot therefore be later than 979, and Wright doubtfully assigns Indian Museum coin to 979. Dr. John Brenning has kindly informed he possesses a copper coin of 981 with the mint name Fathabad. These also belong to the Fatehpur-Sikri mint since the name Fathabad has fleetingly given to that city by Akbar (*Akbarnama*, II, p. 365).

60. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, 27.

61. *Akbarnama*, II, p. 247.

62. 'Arif Qandahari, p. 145.

63. *Early Travels*, p. 121.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

65. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 188.

66. Pelsaert, *Chronicle*, tr., p. 35; Dutch text, p. 120.

67. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 188.

68. *Early Travels*, p. 99.

69. Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr., p. 61; Dutch text, p. 310.

70. *Early Travels*, p. 121.

71. Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr., p. 60; Dutch text, p. 309.

72. For women working on a construction site, see the Mughal p almost contemporary depiction of the construction of Fatehpur-Sikri Victoria and Albert Mus. MS of the *Akbarnama*, color reproduction by Geeti Sen, *Paintings from the Akbar Nama*, Calcutta, 1984, Plate also the illustration of construction of the Agra Fort in the same reproduced in *ibid.*, Plates 31-32.

73. *Early Travels*, pp. 17-18.

74. The population of London, ca. 1600, is not easy to determine. I Darby (ed.), *Historical Geography of England*, Cambridge, 1951, p. is implied that it was about 285,000. But R. Mols writing in C. Cipolla (ed.), *Fontana Economic History of Europe. 2 (The Sixteenth Seventeenth Centuries)*, Glasgow, 1974, p. 42, puts it between 150,000 and 200,000.

75. Cf. also anonymous addendum to Finch's journal in *Early Travels*, 185.

76. Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, tr., p. 61; Dutch text, pp. 309-10.