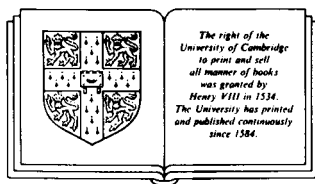


# SHAHJAHANABAD: THE SOVEREIGN CITY IN MUGHAL INDIA, 1639–1739

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## *City and Empire*

Shahjahanabad, the capital city of the Mughal Empire, occupied a prominent spot in the Delhi triangle. Within the watersheds of both the Jamuna and Indus rivers, the Delhi triangle had been the preeminent site for the capitals of North India empires for over six hundred years. It was an area steeped in the glorious traditions of the past and Shahjahanabad was the last in a long line of premodern capital cities. The Mughal capital was the culmination of a period of urban development that began to the north in the Indus Valley about 2000 B.C. and continued until about A.D. 1750, when both Shahjahanabad and the Mughal Empire collapsed. In the almost unbroken succession of urban settlements in the Delhi area, Shahjahanabad was the crown jewel, the climax of the premodern urban process in the Indian subcontinent.

The Mughal Empire (1526–1739) was the last of the great premodern Indian empires. It was direct heir to the Mauryan and Gupta Empires, earlier states that had also aspired to subcontinental dominance. The Mughals, however, surpassed all other premodern Indian polities in the efficiency and extent of their rule and in the strength of the order which they imposed. The British followed the Mughals and, for many years, saw themselves as successors, attempting to rebuild the rotten imperial structure which they had so easily toppled. As a patrimonial–bureaucratic empire, the Mughal state was an intermediate structure, situated somewhere between the personal, household-based polities of earlier traditional rulers and the great bureaucratic, nation-states of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The subcontinent of India drops from the Eurasian land mass into the Indian Ocean like the submerged section of a great iceberg. Walled off from the rest of Asia by the Himalayas in the North, the mountains and jungles of Assam in the East, and the ranges and deserts of Baluchistan in the West, this triangular tapering piece of land constitutes a separate

geographical entity. Physical geographers distinguish three major geomorphological components: the Himalayas and their flanking ranges to the east and west, the peninsula of South India and, between these two, the flat expanse of the Indo-Gangetic Plains.<sup>1</sup>

The Indo-Gangetic Plains are divided into three parts. The Punjab Plains, the northern section, are composed primarily of the *doabs* (area between two rivers) of the five rivers that feed the Indus – the Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum. The Ganges Plains, the southeastern section, extends from the upper Jamuna to the Bay of Bengal, and includes most of present-day Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal. The two rivers (the Ganges and the Jamuna) and the moist climate combine to make this area one of the most productive and populous in the subcontinent. The third part of this central region, the Indo-Gangetic Divide, lies between the deltas of the Indus and the Ganges. It encompasses the area between the Sutlej and the Jamuna and marks the shift from the dryer environment of the Northwest to the more humid climate of the lower Delta.<sup>2</sup> For the Mughals and, in fact, for most premodern Indian empires, the primary geomorphological region was the Indo-Gangetic Plains. This was the core of all Indo-Muslim empires and Delhi (or Shahjahanabad), the capital of most of these states, lay within the Indo-Gangetic Divide.

### Urbanism in India

The emergence of urban life in the Indian subcontinent dates to about 2150 B.C.<sup>3</sup> This first appearance of cities seems an indigenous phenomenon, unrelated to the earlier beginnings at Sumer in West Asia. Because scholars have yet to decipher the script of the Indus Valley civilization, however, less is known about the origins of urban life in India than in China, West Asia, or Middle America. The two principal cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, are thought to have been the capitals of a civilization spread along the Indus and its tributaries, covering about 500,000 square miles in northwestern India.

Each city was divided into two areas: an elevated citadel surrounded by a high brick wall and a lower residential area where the main body of inhabitants lived. The citadel contained a great bath, a granary, and a small number of houses, and it has been argued that the citadel was

<sup>1</sup> O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth, *India and Pakistan: A Regional Geography* (London: Methuen and Co., 1967), pp. 176–7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 513–18.

<sup>3</sup> See Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Birth of Indian Civilization* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 126–55, 238–311.

controlled by a group of priests who ruled both city and state, somewhat on the West Asian model. The cities featured gridiron street patterns, elaborate drainage systems, barracks-like blocks of houses, and buildings for shops and crafts. The population of Mohenjo-Daro, the best preserved site, is estimated at 35,000 persons. The demise of the civilization has been dated to c. 1750 B.C. A number of theories have been put forward but, without deciphering the script or excavating more thoroughly, no definitive answers can be given. It seems likely, however, that the downfall of the civilization was due to one or more of the following factors: flooding, desiccation due to a shift in the course of the Indus, lake formation and silting, or invasion.

The Aryans, a semi-nomadic tribe of hunters and herders who entered India in the early centuries of the second millennium B.C., may or may not have attacked and destroyed Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. They did, however, lead an unsettled, uncited existence, living mainly in camps. During the first half of the first millennium B.C., with the emergence of kingship and territorial states, permanent settlements of size and complexity began to reappear. By c. 500 B.C., the capitals of the largest of these territorial states (called *mahajanapadas*) were cities of considerable size.<sup>4</sup>

Magadha, the mahajanapada that came to dominate the Indo-Gangetic plains, had its center in northeastern India on the lower Ganges delta. In c. 321 B.C. Chandragupta Maurya, an adventurer of uncertain origin, collected a body of troops, marched down the Ganges, and defeated the Magadhan ruler. Taking over the army and resources of the state, Chandragupta and his successors extended Mauryan rule to all of the subcontinent north of the Narbada river, leaving out only the southern half of the peninsula. Under Asoka (c. 272–232 B.C.), perhaps the greatest Indian ruler before Akbar, the empire represented an imperial achievement unmatched until the time of the Mughals. After Asoka, however, the strains of size and scale began to tell; decline set in, and the empire lasted only until 183 B.C., when the last Mauryan ruler was slain.

The period between the decline of the Mauryans and the arrival of the Ghurid Turks in c. A.D. 1200 is not one of particular interest for students of Indian urbanization. Broken into a mosaic of small states by the attacks of feuding rivals and the invasions of Central Asian armies, the subcontinent offered an inhospitable soil for urban growth. The last

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of urban development after the fall of the Indus Valley civilization see A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1973), pp. 1–53; Amitya Ray, *Villages, Towns, and Secular Buildings in Ancient India* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhyopadhyay, 1964), pp. 1–47; B.B. Dutt, *Townplanning in Ancient India* (London: Thacker, Spink, and Co., 1925), *passim*.

Mauryan ruler was overthrown by his commander-in-chief, a Hindu warrior who established the brief Shunga dynasty (*c.* 183–173 B.C.). With the downfall of the Shungas began a period of nearly five hundred years in which the ruling dynasties in North India were largely foreign.

Under the Guptas, the first indigenous ruling group since the Mauryans, a revival of urban activity took place. Chandra Gupta (*r.* A.D. 320–328), the founder of the dynasty, established himself in eastern India and slowly extended the area under his control. With the pacification of North India, trade flourished, and cities and towns prospered and grew. Under Kumara Gupta (*r.* 415–455) the rate of urbanization probably reached a level not seen since the end of Mauryan rule. The attacks of the Huns in the latter half of the fifth century, however, and their subsequent and repeated depredations over the next century or so, forestalled further growth. Even Harsha (*r.* 606–48), the North Indian ruler who rekindled the blaze of Gupta glory, could not reverse the trend of urban decline. For the next six hundred years, the subcontinent remained disunited and unsettled.

With the arrival in *c.* A.D. 1200 of the Ghurid Turks, the first Muslim dynasty of the subcontinent, a new and different era begins. The rapid expansion of Muslim rule in the early thirteenth century brought peace and stability to large portions of North India for the first time in centuries. Secure borders and safe roads encouraged expansion of trade. A routinized system of administration led to the founding of a network of administrative centers. Often sited in the hierarchy of market towns that grew up to service the newly expanded trade in grain (that stimulated by the revenue demands of the new rulers), these centers attracted converts, merchants, artisans, bureaucrats, soldiers, and others dependent on the new regime.

There were other reasons for the revival of urban activity after 1200. Islam, unlike Hinduism, was congenial to city life. A Muslim had to worship once a week in a congregational mosque in the company of fellow believers. In India a great many of the foreign nobility settled in cities and towns. After the Mongol conquest of Eurasia in the middle decades of the thirteenth century, a conquest in which city after city was razed and ploughed under, India received a good number of immigrant Muslims from urban West Asia. In addition, the rapid increase in the number of converts served to swell the urban population. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, on the eve of Mughal conquest, the level of urbanization in India had never been greater.

Urban expansion continued under Mughal rule. The Mughals extended their sway from the Indo-Gangetic heartland in North India to the west, south, and east, establishing a zone of peace and prosperity. Within



this zone, which each emperor tried his best to enlarge, an administrative system of unprecedented reach and complexity was established. The primary task of the system was to collect the taxes due the state, taxes which were, for the most part, levied on food grains and denominated in cash. In an environment of stability, prosperity, and governmental expansion, a new generation of urban centers was born. Rooted in the past, their origins in the older, smaller, administrative and economic centers of the pre-Mughal period, these new settlements were the outcome of a dramatic transformation. The periodic marketplaces and sluggish towns of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were transformed into thriving, populous centers of economic, social, and political activity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### *Cities of Delhi*

For nearly a thousand years the rulers of North Indian states established their capitals in the Delhi area. The Delhi triangle, a sixty-square-mile area bounded by the Aravalli hills on the west and south and the Jamuna river on the east, occupied a strategic position in upper India. It commanded the 115-mile wide corridor that, on the one hand, separated the Deccan tableland and the Thar desert from the Himalayas and, on the other, separated the Punjab and the lands of the Northwest from the rich unbroken flood plain of the Ganges. Touching the Jamuna at its northernmost point of year-round navigation, the Delhi triangle encompassed the major break in transportation between the two great river systems of the subcontinent, the Ganges and the Indus.<sup>5</sup>

Much has been written about the historic cities of Delhi, but there has not yet been a comprehensive attempt to interpret the archeological findings in light of the historical evidence and what is known about the organization of premodern states. Earlier treatments err by treating as historic cities ancient sites that cannot be reliably identified, by failing to distinguish between palaces or palace-complexes and cities, and by not separating temporary settlements and local headquarters from cities. In this account of the cities constructed in the Delhi area a distinction is drawn between those for which there is solid evidence, both archeological and literary, and those for which there is little or none. Table 1 and map 1 summarize the results of this investigation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the geography of the area see Ujagir Singh, "New Delhi: Its Site and Situation," *National Geographical Journal of India* 4 (September 1959): pp. 113-20; and Spate and Learmonth, *India and Pakistan*, pp. 541-5.

<sup>6</sup> Y.D. Sharma, *Delhi and Its Neighborhood*, 2nd. edn (New Delhi: Director General - Archeological Survey of India, 1974) is the best single source. It has the most

The first appearance of the name Delhi is impossible to pinpoint. According to one tradition a certain Raja Dilipa, mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana*, founded a city named Dili before the time of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>7</sup> A second tradition names Raja Dillu or Dhilu as the founder of Dilli or Dhilli sometime around the beginning of the first millennium A.D.<sup>8</sup> According to the most popular theory, however, the first city was built about the middle of the eighth century A.D. by the Tomar Rajputs and was called Dilli or Dhilli or Dhillika.<sup>9</sup> The earliest documentable use of the name is in an inscription of A.D. 1170 that refers to the capture of Dhillika. An inscription dated 1276 mentions Dhilli of the Hariyanaka region and another of 1316 names Dhilli of Haritana.<sup>10</sup> Delhi is the modern Hindi equivalent of the Sanskrit Dhilli or Dilli.

The first evidence of settled habitation in the area dates to c. 1000 B.C. Excavations in 1955 at a site near *Purana Qila* (Old Fort) turned up shards of painted gray pottery, but further exploration during 1969–73 failed to discover a regular painted gray ware strata. According to local tradition this was the site of *Indraprastha* (Indra's District), the capital of the Pandavas, the great heroes of the *Mahabharata*. The arguments put forward – that painted gray ware had been found at other sites associated

up-to-date and sophisticated discussion of the archeological evidence. J. Burton-Page in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, "Dihli" presents a lucid and well-illustrated account of the settlements in the area. However, new archeological finds (reported by Sharma) have rendered his treatment of some of the earlier sites inadequate. Alexander Cunningham's report – *Archeological Survey of India: Four Reports Made During the Years 1862, 63–64–65* (New Delhi: Indological Bookhouse, 1972), 1, pp. 131–231 – was the first serious study in English and is still of interest. It has, of course, been superseded in a number of ways, but many of its conclusions and judgements have not been disturbed and its presentation of the literary evidence is excellent. The earliest systematic look at the area is Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Asrar al-Sanadid* (Delhi: n.p., 1854; reprint edn, Delhi: Central Book Depot, 1965). His overall treatment is uneven, but it does throw light on the preliminary remains, the historical literature, and certain local traditions. The Archeological Survey's exhaustive catalogue – *Archeological Survey of India, List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments in Delhi Zail*, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1915–22) – is the basic reference for the remains at each site. Bashir al-Din Ahmad's *Waqiat-i Dar al-Hukumat-i Dilhi*, 3 vols. (Delhi Muhammad Bashir al-Din Khan and Muhammad Shams al-Din Khan, 1919) is, for the most part, an Urdu translation of the Archeological Survey's four-volume report. It does, however, include a number of maps and local traditions. The following sources provide supplementary information. Archeological Survey of India, *Report for the Year 1871–72* (Varanasi: Indological Bookhouse, 1966), pp. 1–91; M.P. Thakore, "Sixteen Sites of Delhi," *The Indian Geographer*, 8(1963) pp. 84–91; and M. Aziz, "The Origin and Growth of Delhi," *The Geographer* 14(1967) pp. 101–17; R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Delhi Through The Ages: Essays in Urban History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> *Archeological Survey: 1871–72*, 4 pp. 4–5.

<sup>8</sup> Aziz, "Origin and Growth," p. 103; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 15; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 15.

Table 1 *The cities of Delhi*

Name	Builder	Dynasty	Date
1. Lal Kot	Anang Pal	Tomar Rajputs	c. 1052 AD
2. Qila Rai Pithora	Prithviraj (c. 1170–92)	Chauhan Rajputs	c. 1180 AD
3. Siri	Ala al-Din Khalji (1296–1316)	Khalji Turks (1290–1321)	c. 1303
4. Tughlaqabad	Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq (1321–25)	Tughluq Turks (1321–1414)	c. 1321
5. Jahanpanah	Muhammad ibn Tughluq (1325–51)	Tughluq Turks	c. 1325
6. Firuzabad	Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351–88)	Tughluq Turks	c. 1354
7. Din Panah	Humayun (1530–55)	Mughals (1526–1739)	c. 1533
8. Shergah	Sher Shah (1540–5)	Sur Afghans (1540–55)	c. 1540
9. Shahjahanabad	Shahjahan (1628–58)	Mughals	1639
10. New Delhi	Lord Hardinge (1910–16)	British (1803–1947)	1911

with the Mahabharata, that the epic mentioned Indarpat as one of the prasthas or districts demanded by the Pandavas, that a Sanskrit inscription of A.D. 1329 placed a nearby village in the district of Indraprastha, and that a village named Indarpat occupied the site until about 1900 – are no more than suggestive. They cannot support the statement that Indraprastha was the first city of the area.<sup>11</sup>

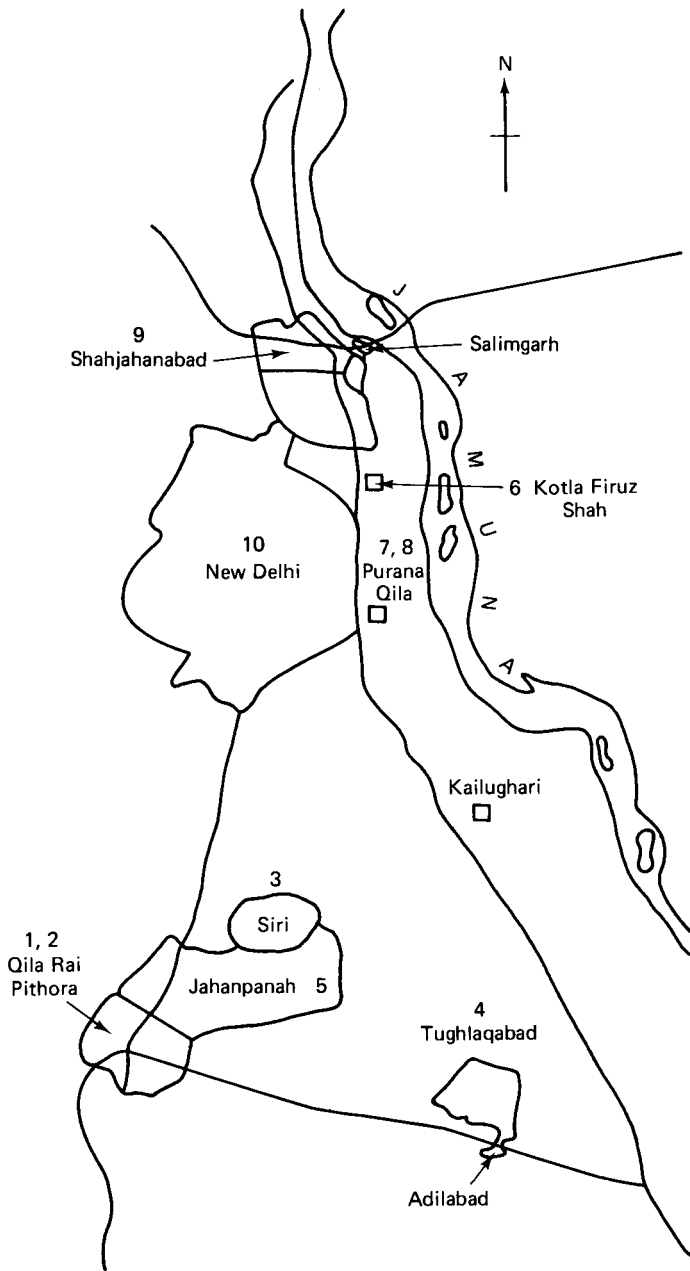
A strata containing northern black polished ware and punch-marked coins and dated c. 300 B.C. is evidence of a settlement during the Mauryan period (322–185 B.C.). In fact, the recent discovery on a rock in the nearby hills of a shorter version of the Minor Rock Edicts establishes an unmistakable tie between Delhi and the great Mauryan Emperor Asoka (c. 269–232 B.C.).<sup>12</sup> Coins, pottery, terracotta sealings, and figurines indicate settlements at the site during the Sunga (c. 185–173 B.C.), Kushana (c. A.D. 48–220), Gupta (c. A.D. 320–510), post-Gupta (c. A.D. 500–700), Rajput (c. A.D. 700–1200), and Sultanate (A.D. 1206–1526) periods.

A clan of Rajput warriors, the Tomars, settled in the Aravalli hills south of the Delhi triangle toward the end of the first millennium A.D. An early ruler named Surajpal, whom we know only from later tradition, is

<sup>11</sup> For a review of the evidence see *ibid.*, pp. 8–9 and Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 10.

Shahjahanabad



Map 1 Cities of Delhi (source: J. Burton-Page, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, 'Dihli', p. 261).

said to have constructed a large reservoir called Surajkund in the area. Scattered here and there about the reservoir are ruins of houses, temples, walls, dams, and other buildings – evidence of a Tomar settlement of sorts.<sup>13</sup>

The Tomar ruler Anangpal, a shadowy figure mentioned in a much later history of Prithviraj, is said to have built the first identifiable city in the Delhi area. *Lal Kot* (Red Fort) is the first site with remains substantial and extensive enough to be called a city. Neither the dates for Anangpal nor the date of the city are known with certainty but Cunningham's estimate of A.D. 1052 seems reasonable.<sup>14</sup> A little over a century later (according to an inscription dated A.D. 1163–4) another clan of Rajput warriors, the Chauhans, defeated the Tomars. The most famous Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj or Rai Pithora, established a new city for his followers by expanding Lal Kot. He raised a great wall that enclosed not only the old city but a much larger area besides. Called *Qila Rai Pithora* (Fort of Rai Pithora), the city is thought to have been founded around A.D. 1180 in response to attacks from the northwest by Muhammad Ghuri.<sup>15</sup>

Prithviraj was given little time to enjoy his new capital. In 1192 he met the Afghan warriors of Muhammad Ghuri outside Delhi and was soundly defeated. In 1193 Qutb al-Din Aibak, the Turkish slave general left in charge of Muhammad's army, captured Delhi. The Muslim conquerors, however, did not build a new city. Content to settle within the walls of Qila Rai Pithora, Qutb al-Din and his immediate successors confined their building activities to renovation and reconstruction within the Rajput city. From the materials of twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples, Qutb al-Din erected a great congregational mosque called *Quwwat al-Islam* (Strength of Islam). He also founded the famous minaret, *Qutb Minar* (Qutb's Minaret), that was finished by Shams al-Din Iltutmish, his successor.<sup>16</sup>

Until the reign of Mu'izz al-Din Kaiqubad (1287–90), the Muslim rulers of northern India kept their headquarters in Qila Rai Pithora. *Qila Marzqhan* (Fort of Refuge), built by Ghiyas al-Din Balban (1266–87) near the tomb of Nizam al-Din Auliya, was an asylum for debtors and not a separate citadel or city.<sup>17</sup> In 1287, soon after his accession, Sultan

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13. Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 pp. 141–52 and Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 256 present accounts that differ from Sharma and one another. Sharma's discussion seems to me the most persuasive.

<sup>14</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 10; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 151.

<sup>15</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 13–14; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 pp. 183–4; and Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 14–15, 18; Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 256; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 133.

Kaiqubad began work on a new palace-fortress on the banks of the Jamuna at a place called Kailughari. Kailughari was primarily a place of residence for the emperor, a few nobles, and their servants and retainers; it did not replace Qila Rai Pithora. In fact, Kaiqubad's successor, Jalal al-Din Khalji (1290–6), though crowned in Kailughari, soon moved back to the old Rajput city.<sup>18</sup>

Siri, the first complete Muslim city of the area, was finished by Ala al-Din Khalji (1296–1316) in about A.D. 1303. An enthusiastic builder and one of the greatest Muslim rulers of India, Ala al-Din erected or renovated a great many structures in Qila Rai Pithora. Siri, the new city, began as military camp on a plain north of the old capital, a response to the threat of Mongol invasion. Having successfully defended the area, Ala al-Din walled the camp and ordered the building of permanent structures.<sup>19</sup>

Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq (1320–25), founder of the Turkish dynasty that followed the Khaljis, threw up a walled enclosure called *Tughluqabad* (Home of the Tughluqs) on a site about 8 km. east of Qila Rai Pithora. Erected soon after his accession to the throne in 1321, this fortified city was divided into a citadel or palace-fortress for the ruler, his family, and retainers; an area for the houses of nobles and others; and a business-commercial sector laid out in a gridiron pattern. In one corner of the city Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325–51), Ghiyas al-Din's successor, built a palace-fortress named '*Adilabad* (Home of Justice).<sup>20</sup>

Muhammad, however, returned to the area around the original Rajput city for the major building project of his reign. Since the Mongols had plundered the heavily built-up area between Qila Rai Pithora and Siri several times, Muhammad ordered a wall to be erected around the suburbs separating the two cities. The enclosure, called *Jahanpanah* (World-Protector), soon became a thriving center of urban life. During this period Muhammad remained with his family and followers in Tughluqabad. In 1328–9 he led a large part of the Muslim population of the city to Devagiri (renamed Daulatabad) in South India and spent over two years there. He returned in 1330–1 and was followed in 1335–7 by the rest of his North Indian followers.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 18–19; Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 256; and Mohammad Habib and Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, eds., *The Delhi Sultanat (1206–1526), A Comprehensive History of India*, 5 (Delhi: Peoples' Publishing House, 1970), pp. 304–11.

<sup>19</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 23; Burton-Page, "Dihli," pp. 256–7; Habib and Nizami, *Delhi Sultanat*, p. 372.

<sup>20</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 24, 101–4; Burton-Page, "Dihli," pp. 257–8; Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 pp. 212–17; and A. Waddington, "Adilabad: A Part of the Fourth Delhi," *Ancient India*, 1 (1946) pp. 60–76.

<sup>21</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 25, 73; Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 pp. 217–18; Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 258; Habib and Nizami, *Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 487–514; and C. Defremory and B.R. Sanquinet, eds., *The Travels of Ibn Battuta: 1325–54*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1958–71), 3 pp. 619–21.

Firuz Shah (1351–88), the last Tughluq ruler of note and a great builder, founded his new capital *Firuzabad* (Home of Firuz) in an area remote from the southern sites of the previous centers. Begun *c.* 1354 on the banks of the river Jamuna, this city appears to have covered a large area. Although no walls now remain, the city is said to have been about twelve miles in diameter and to have included the entire site of Shahjahanabad. *Kotla Firuz Shah* (Palace of Firuz Shah), near the Akbarabadi gate of Shahjahanabad and one of the few substantial structures remaining, was the palace-fortress of the emperor.<sup>22</sup> After the death of Firuz in 1388, the Delhi area fell on hard times. Timur, the great Central Asian ruler, invaded North India in 1398–9 and plundered, sacked, and burned Siri, Jahanpanah, and Firuzabad.<sup>23</sup>

Two Afghan dynasties, the Sayyids (1414–51) and Lodis (1451–1526), followed the Tughluqs to the throne of Delhi. After the invasion of Timur, however, Delhi no longer commanded a state of any size. The North Indian empire of the Khaljis and Tughluqs shrank under the Sayyids to an area around Delhi of about two hundred square miles. Khizr Khan (1414–21), founder of the dynasty, defeated the last Tughluq ruler and established himself in the imperial palace in Siri. He spent most of his reign battling his neighbors, defending, and trying to enlarge, the boundaries of his small kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

Mubarak Shah (1421–33) succeeded his father and spent the early years of his reign putting down rebels and rejuvenating Lahore, a city which had yet to recover from the effects of Timur's attack. On 1 November 1433 Mubarak Shah laid the foundations of a new city called *Mubarakabad* (Home of Mubarak) in the Delhi area. Mubarak was assassinated just over three and one-half months later and, as a result, not much work appears to have been done on the new capital. Since no archeological remains have been found at the site (south of Shahjahanabad along the banks of the Jamuna), there is good reason to suppose that the city was never finished.<sup>25</sup>

The building activities in the Delhi area of the Lodis, the Afghan dynasty that followed the Sayyids, were confined almost entirely to tombs. Bahlul Lodi (1451–89), founder of the dynasty, ruled his small

<sup>22</sup> *List of Monuments*, 2 pp. 69–80; Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 25–6, 129–30; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 pp. 218–20; Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 258; Habib and Nizami, *Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 585–9.

<sup>23</sup> Habib and Nizami, *Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 120–3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 630–5. Some writers state that Khizr Khan built a city named Khizrabad on the banks of the Jamuna. See Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 258 and Thakore, "Sixteen Sites," p. 100. Since, however, there is no reliable literary or archeological evidence of the city, I have not included it in the table. See Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Habib and Nizami, *Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 643–56 and Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 29. Other authors assume that a city was built and populated. See Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 258; Thakore, "Sixteen Sites," p. 100; and Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, 1 p. 134.

North Indian principality from Delhi. Like his Afghan predecessors, Bahlul had to contend with insubordination and rebellion among his tribal followers and with attacks and invasions from the rulers of surrounding kingdoms. In 1506, in order to govern more effectively, Bahlul's successor, Sikander Lodi (1489–1517), decided to shift his headquarters to Agra. From there the Afghan leaders could deploy their forces to greater advantage in dealing with predatory Mewatis, rebellious zamindars, and ambitious rajahs.<sup>26</sup>

The Mughals (1526–1739), the dynasty that succeeded the Lodis, displayed an intense interest in architecture. The emperor Babur (1526–30) laid out several gardens during his short four-year reign while Akbar and Shahjahan erected some of the most magnificent examples of Muslim architecture in India. Humayun (1530–56), Babur's son and successor, founded a modest city called *Din Panah* (Refuge of Religion) on the banks of the Jamuna in 1533. Using bricks and stone from the remains of Siri, the walls and gates of the city were put up in about ten months. No trace of Humayun's city remains, however, since Sher Shah Sur (1540–5), his successor, plundered and razed the settlement.<sup>27</sup>

In 1540, having defeated Humayan and driven him and his Mughal followers from India, Sher Shah began a new city. Called *Shergah* (Sher's Place) or Delhi Sher Shah and located near the site of Din Panah, this city appears to have covered a considerable area. Sher Shah's palace-fortress, known later as Purana Qila, contained a mosque and the tower from which Humayun, after he had defeated the Surs and captured the city, tumbled to his death.<sup>28</sup> Islam Shah (1545–54), Sher Shah's son and successor, built a palace-fortress called *Salimgarh* (Residence of Salim) for his family and retainers on the banks of the Jamuna north of Shergah. Erected sometime between 1546 and 1550 and only three-quarters of a mile around, the fort was intended, it seems clear, as a residence for Islam Shah and not as the nucleus of a new city.<sup>29</sup>

In 1639 the Mughals began work on another city in the Delhi area. In the northern sector of the triangle, on a piece of ground overlooking the river, the Emperor Shahjahan founded a completely new city called *Shahjahanabad* (Abode of Shahjahan). When finally completed in 1648,

<sup>26</sup> Habib and Nizami, *Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 666–95; Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 30–2.

<sup>27</sup> I follow Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 37, 122–3 and *List of Monuments 2* pp. 85–7 here. Both Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, pp. 221–2 and Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 259 differ slightly in their accounts of the relationship between the cities of Humayun and Sher Shah.

<sup>28</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 34–6, 122–3; Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 259; and Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, p. 221–3.

<sup>29</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 36, 148; Cunningham, *Archeological Survey: 1862–65*, p. 223; and Burton-Page, "Dihli," p. 259.



this new center contained two imposing structures of red sandstone – the imperial palace-fortress and the Jami' Masjid – and a number of very fine but smaller buildings of marble, sandstone, and brick. Shahjahanabad served as the Mughal capital from 1648 until the effective demise of the empire in 1739.

The last city in the area was built by the British. On 12 December 1911 King George V announced that the center of government would shift from Calcutta, longtime capital of British rule in India, to Delhi. Lord Hardinge (1910–16) chose a site to the southwest of Shahjahanabad, and Edward Luytens and Herbert Baker drew up plans for a magnificent city that took years to complete. The wide, carefully planned streets of New Delhi, the great monuments, and the imposing government buildings spoke eloquently of the imperial impulse to dominate and order.

### **The Mughal Empire**

Muhammad Zahir al-Din Babur, a Chaghtai Turk from Ferghana in Central Asia, was the founder of the Mughal Empire (1526–1739). Although Babur could trace a connection to Chaghatai Khan, the second son of Chinghiz, through his mother, it is by no means accurate to call him or his successors Mongol. Mughal, the name of the dynasty, is a variant of Mongol and was used in India to distinguish immigrants or the recently immigrated from local Muslims. It was applied to Persians, Turks, and Arabs as well as to descendants of Chinghiz Khan. European travellers, who misunderstood the meaning of the word, thought it denoted the descendants of Babur exclusively. This meaning gained currency in Europe and soon Mughal became the accepted name of the dynasty. However, since Babur's father, Umar Shaikh Mirza, had been fourth in a direct line of descent from Timur (the great Central Asian empire builder), it is more accurate to call the dynasty Timurid, the name by which it was known to Indians of the period.

In 1526 Babur, at that time ruler of a city state centered on Kabul, was invited to the Punjab by a group of Afghan nobles dissatisfied with the rule of their chief Ibrahim Lodi. Meeting Ibrahim at Panipat, Babur decisively defeated the Afghans and inaugurated Mughal rule in the subcontinent. Following his victory Babur and his men moved quickly down the Ganges, capturing Delhi, Agra, Gwalior, Kanauj, and Jaunpur in the space of a few months. In 1527 he defeated the massed armies of the Rajput ruler, Rana Sangha, and by 1529 was master of the Indo-Gangetic Plains all the way to Patna. In 1530, at the height of his power, he died.

Humayun, Babur's son and successor, faced a difficult task. He had to mold territories in Afghanistan, Punjab, and the Gangetic Plains into a

functioning state, and he had to do it against the opposition both of his own followers and of the recently defeated Afghans of Ibrahim Lodi. It is no wonder that he failed and was forced to seek refuge with the Safavid ruler of Iran. From 1540 until Humayun's return to India in 1556 Afghans ruled North India. In 1554 succession quarrels opened the way for Humayun. Several years before, he had defeated his brother Kamran and had collected a substantial fighting force in Afghanistan. With these men he quickly overran Lahore and Delhi and seemed on the verge of reconquering the territory left him by his father. In 1556, however, he died in a freak accident and bequeathed his young son Akbar a situation fraught with uncertainty and danger.

At the age of thirteen, and newly crowned, Akbar was hardly prepared to assume command of the Mughal armies. In a time of peace the task would have been difficult; in the uncertain period following Humayun's return to India the task was simply too much for an inexperienced adolescent, even one of genius like Akbar. On Humayun's death the Mughals held only Punjab, Agra, and Delhi. Under the Hindu general Hemu, the Afghans quickly reconquered Agra and Delhi and soon threatened to drive Akbar and his men from the subcontinent altogether. At this juncture Bairam Khan, one of the most loyal and successful of Humayun's generals, took over direction of the Mughal forces. He defeated Hemu at Panipat near Delhi in late 1556 and over the next four years gradually reestablished Mughal supremacy in Hindustan. In 1560 at the age of eighteen, Akbar dismissed Bairam Khan. He had grown increasingly impatient of all restraints and in 1562, having rid himself of the influence of his foster-mother and her family, became his own man entirely.

For the remainder of his reign Akbar sought to extend the boundaries of the empire; his goal, like that of so many Indian rulers before and after him, was to make the boundaries of state and subcontinent coincide. In 1560 he conquered Malwa and in 1564 Gondwara, both in Central India. In 1567 Akbar began a campaign to subdue the Rajputs, the Hindu warrior caste of North Central India and the most formidable threat to Mughal hegemony. Several years before he had taken a Rajput wife, had abolished the tax on Hindu pilgrims, and had accepted several Rajput chieftains into Mughal service. These inducements, however, were not enough. Some Rajputs remained recalcitrant, and it took several years of hard fighting to reduce them. In 1573 Gujarat was annexed and in 1574 campaigns against Bengal, a stronghold of Afghan influence, were begun. In 1585 Akbar moved to Lahore. Babur's old enemies, the Uzbeks, the warrior tribesmen who had driven him from his homeland over fifty years before, threatened Mughal possessions in the Northwest. From his