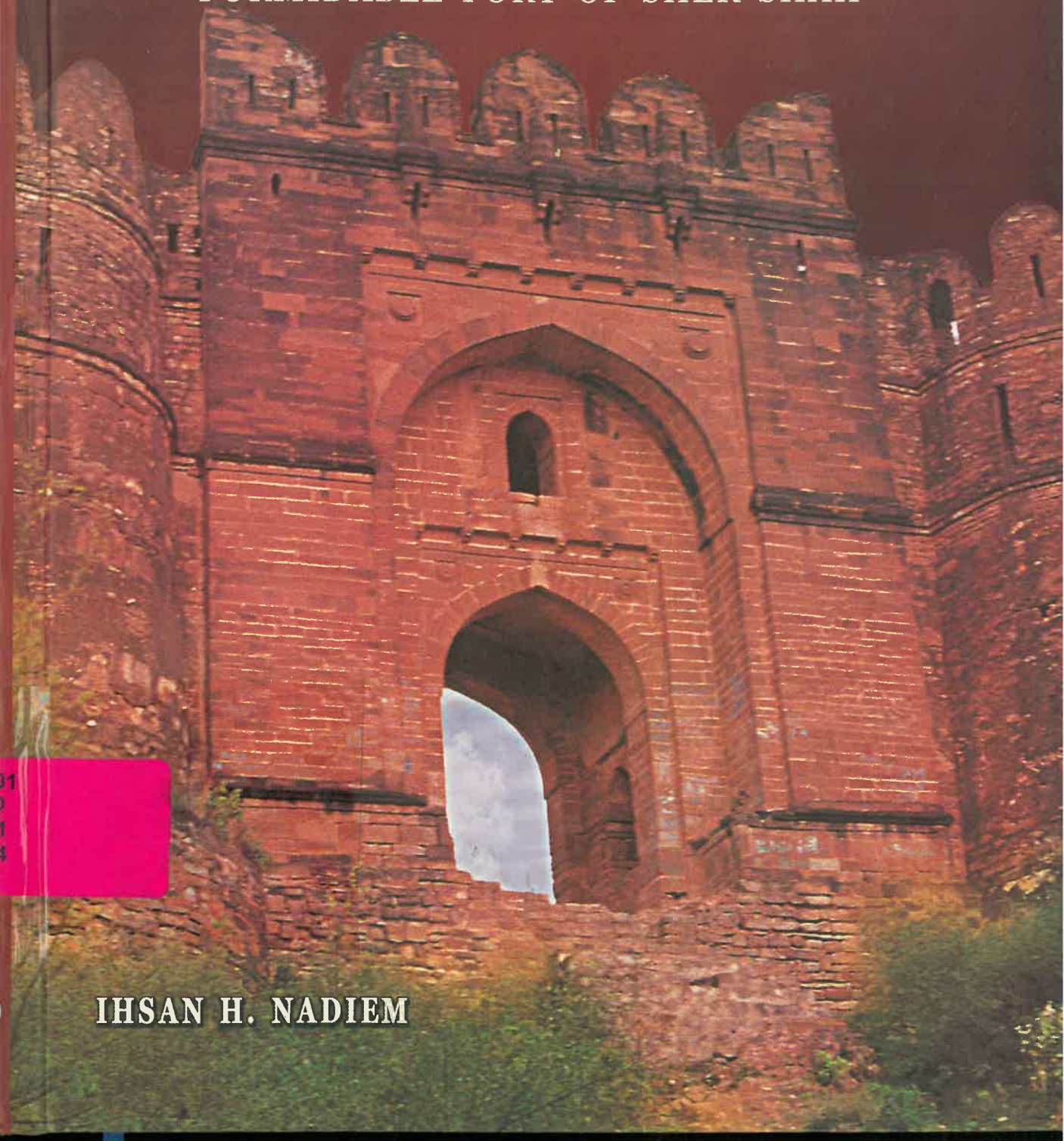


ROHTAS

FORMIDABLE FORT OF SHER SHAH

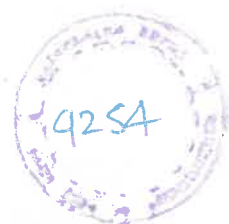


IHSAN H. NADIEM

ROHTAS

FORMIDABLE FORT OF SHER SHAH

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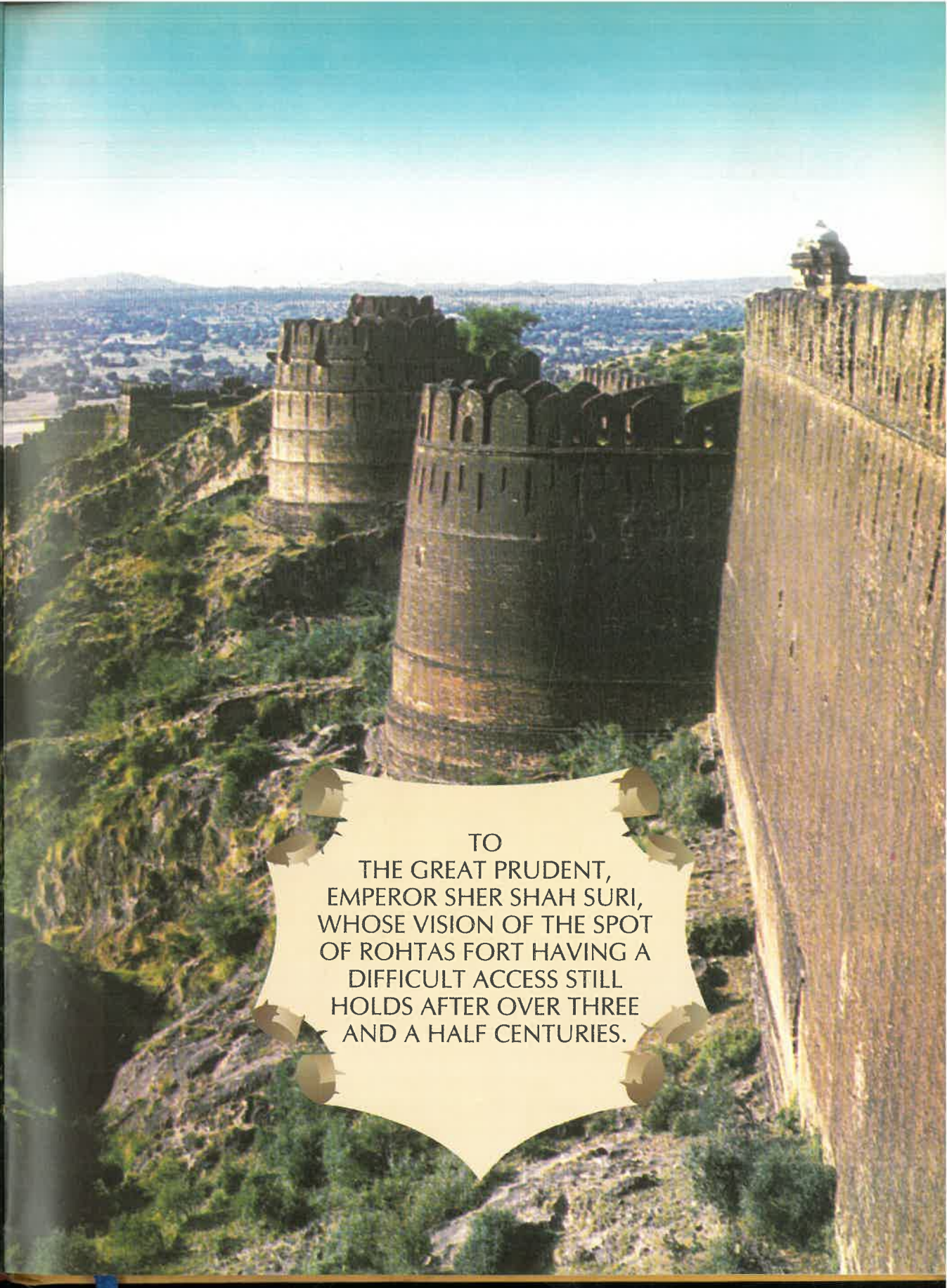
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TO
THE GREAT PRUDENT,
EMPEROR SHER SHAH SURI,
WHOSE VISION OF THE SPOT
OF ROHTAS FORT HAVING A
DIFFICULT ACCESS STILL
HOLDS AFTER OVER THREE
AND A HALF CENTURIES.



Sohail Gate: General view.



Preface

to the 2011 Edition

It was back in the year 1968 when I had a chance to visit the Rohtas Fort for the first time. I was on an assignment to make a detailed study of the monument and write a treatise, which would amply throw light on the history and architecture of the only specimen of Military Fort of the Suri period in this part of the world. The written word on this unique Fort was so scarce that I could lay my hands only on a couple of articles, which were hardly of help, and a half-page note in the otherwise voluminous book by Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)*. I had, however, gathered other relevant material and was now on my way to the site about which not many people then knew much. I was accompanied by a technical assistant who would help me in taking measurements and making rough drawings before they could be done fairly back in my office at Lahore.

We reached Dina from Lahore by bus. From there onward we had to traverse the bed of the storm water, for some 8 kilometres, thankfully dry towards the end of September, but nonetheless sandy and hard to walk on. There used to ply Gattoos (the World War six-wheelers with high body and fitted with odd wooden 'benches'). But we had missed the one that was scheduled for the morning and now were asked to wait till afternoon. It was not a feasible proposition, so I hired two horses to ride all through this dry bed and then cross the Kahan River, which though was expected to be low during this season.

The Fort was protected under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act-1904 (since replaced by the Antiquities Act-1975) against notification No.4757 dated 19th February 1919. A major change in the status of the Rohtas Fort came to its fate when it was inscribed on the World Cultural Heritage List of UNESCO vide its notice No. C ii, iv / 1997. The efforts to win its nomination for the prestigious List were being made for several years but the representatives of the department of archaeology could not satisfy the World Heritage Committee on certain requirements and queries. It was during the early part of the year 1997 that I, in his capacity as Director of Archaeology, Northern Circle, Lahore, fulfilled all these requirements. For the purpose I personally conducted UNESCO monitoring experts, Dr. Neils Gutschow from Germany and then Dr. Ilhan from Turkey, to the site. The basic objections were met by presenting research papers, coloured visual aids for presentation and artistically produced posters and flyer. However, the latter expert's another pertinent query, which had always was a major obstacle in the way of its successful inscription, been left unattended. He opined that experts at UNESCO were of the view that such a large number of gates negated its utility to



defend hence the Rohtas Fort treated as monument lacking true importance to be recognised as a World Heritage Site. In the light of my research and the physical studies on the site I explained that this very feature was the strength of the Rohtas Fort. It was built with an idea of launching offence, rather than going on back foot in defence, against the impending armies of the fugitive emperor Humayun from Iran and his brother from Kashmir joining him in the region of the Pothohar plateau. The large number of gates afforded easy mobility of the forces stationed at this Military Fort to come out and assault the advancing army before it could come near the walls. This action, of course, could not be conducted with a Fort built with defensive strategy in mind and having just one or two gates in its walls. The experts were fully convinced and thought that this point alone could call for its being so important in the architectural feats of the whole world. This last impediment in taking it to the World Cultural Heritage List was thus removed with imminent results coming in just months.

The visitors then to Rohtas were obliged to take the direct route from Dina through the course of the storm-water and the Kahan till the early 1980s. A new approach to the place was then carved out, (as detailed in the text of the book elsewhere) branching towards south on the Grand Trunk Road from near the Rest House two kilometres from Dina onward to Rawalpindi. It was a good metalled road but left the traveller about three kilometres short of the Fort, still to brave the live Kahan through its waters. With the growing consciousness about its importance, especially from tourism point of view, the need for an all-weather road, with bridge on the River Kahan, had been felt for a long time. In fact the work on the construction of the bridge started round the mid-nineties but seemly abandoned after building the pillars, probably for want of political will or financial resources. The completion of this project became all the more necessary in view of the monument having been inscribed on the World Heritage List. The major change has now occurred in the access to the Fort. With the completion of the long-awaited bridge on the River, in the north-eastern direction of the Fort, a visitor is now saved 'braving the Kahan', which used to become quite dangerous with flash floods during the rainy season. While going from Jhelum to Rawalpindi a fairly good road now branches off towards left from the G. T. Road, about two kilometres short of Dina. From this point the Rohtas is only six kilometres. The bridge on the River on way has aptly been named the Sher Shah Suri Bridge.

Lahore
September 2011.

Ihsan H. Nadiem,
Former Director of Archaeology, Pakistan
& University Professor of Architecture.
Email: inadiem@yahoo.com



Preface

The day Early man on the earth raised a defense against beasts of jungle, he unwittingly had laid the foundation of fort architecture. After passing through its evolutionary stages it took roots in sun-dried or burnt bricks, stone etc. and not only served its military purpose but also came about to create an awe for the visitor and quite often a luxurious life for the royal inmates.

Throughout history it gave a sense of security, perhaps more than providing security. No wonder then that the site of a fort is not unfamiliar anywhere in the world. In Pakistan, too, one finds a number of forts scattered over the whole length and breadth of the country. Not only that they are spread over a vast area, their span in terms of time covers more than five thousand years. They, however, do not find their due share of space in the compendia on forts and fortifications of the South Asian Subcontinent. It was perhaps one of the many reasons of taking a concerted step to make a detailed study of the Rohtas Fort which is one of the most outstanding building feats of the Suri period. The results of this study were first published in the 'Journal of Central Asian Studies' in 1984. The professional journals, as always, have their inherent limitations and so it was decided to publish a treatise which would communicate without getting into technical jargon hence this publication.

In my study and writing of this treatise on the Fort many a scholar, friend and colleague proved helpful in a number of ways. However, the late Haji Waliullah Khan was the most impressive with his background of long conservational experience and first hand knowledge of comparable architecture in India (Bharat). In my studies I also made use of the material so lovingly and painstakingly collected by the connoisseur enthusiast, the late Mr. Hamid Ali.



About six of the photographs appearing in this publication have been taken from the colour-slides collection of my friend Dr. Saifur Rehman Dar, Director-General of Punjab Archaeology. I am thankful to him and his photographer Imtiaz, for this special favour. The rest of the pictures are my own love's labour. As to the other illustration, they were either prepared or redone by myself to suit the publication.

My thanks also go to Iram Nadiem who assisted me in preparing the final type-script and to Asef Nadiem for helping in the selection of most of the illustrations.

My friend Niaz Ahmad of M/s. Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore, deserves special thanks for idea of bringing out a really presentable publication, for the first time, on this unique fort which still awaits, although squarely deserving, proper presentation by the concerned quarters.

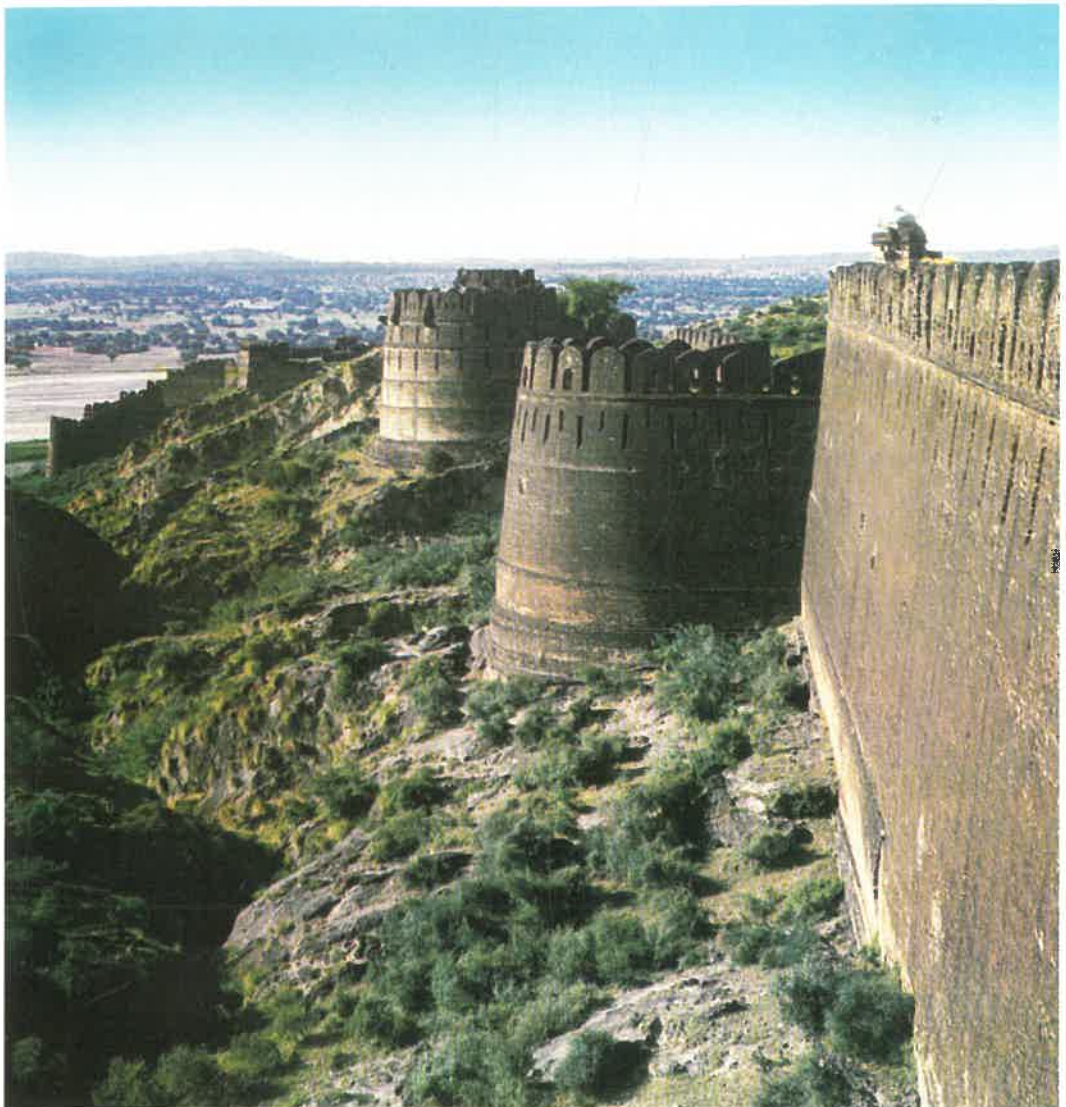
IHSAN H. NADIEM
Director of Archaeology
Southern Circle,
241, Fatima Jinnah Road,
Karachi-75530

Preamble

Situated in a gorge some sixteen kilometres north-west of Jhelum, the great fort of Rohtas is a symbol of strength and determination of its builder, Sher Shah Suri. The fort which lies 32° 58'N and 73° 34'E is about 4 kilometres in circumference. This gigantic stronghold is so strategically positioned that it commands the old route from north to the plains of Punjab. The main purpose for which Sher Shah had ordered the construction of the fort at this point was to block the possible re-entry of the Mughal Emperor Humayun who after his defeat at Chausa, had fled to Iran. His second object was to 'punish and defeat' the turbulent Gakkhars who held the control of the valley and were the old friends of the Mughals. To defeat both the imminent threats, he could not have chosen a better place than the gorge where the tiny River Kahan turns its way eastward of Tilla Range.

The Rohtas fort can now be reached from Dina, a railway station and a very busy bus stop some 12 kilometres north of Jhelum on the main Rawalpindi route. From here a metalled road branches off towards north to reach Mangla while on the opposite direction a small blacktop runs for about five kilometres before turning westward to Baghanwala, a few hundred metres short of the fort. One has to brave through the shallow waters of the Kahan which, while in spate after rains, renders its crossing extremely dangerous.

The Builder of Rohtas Fort





The solidity and massiveness of the Rohtas Fort speak high of its builder, Farid Khan who is known in history as Sher Shah Suri. He belonged to the sturdy stock of the Pathans inhabiting the highland home of Roh amidst the Sulaiman Range. Half-way between



Solidity and massiveness in building art.

Ghazni and Chaman by the side of lake Ab-i-Istada there live even today the Bhattani tribesemen regarded as the parent stock Suris.

Abbas Khan Sarwani tells in his *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi* that it was during the time of Bahlul Lodhi that the grandfather of Sher Shah, Ibrahim Khan Suri, with his son, Hasan Khan, migrated to the subcontinent. There are no authentic records of the journey of Ibrahim. He, however, finally settled in the Pargana of Narnaul when he was in the service of Jamil Khan Sargan-Khani of Hisar Ferozah. Ibrahim's son, Hasan, took over the profession of



soldiering from that of trading. Farid Khan was born in his house some time in the last quarter of 15th century. The exact date and place of his birth is still shrouded in mystery.

Sher Shah had got only elementary education when he ran away from home. After leading a disturbed life for some time he entered the service of the Mughals in 1527 A.D. The Emperor Babar saw the marks of royalty on his forehead. Sensing the hostile looks of the Emperor he betrayed his master in favour of Afghans. During later years, he conquered the fort of Rohtasgarh and was able to give a complete defeat to the Mughal Emperor, Humayun, at Chausa from where the latter fled to Iran by way of Sindh.

With Humayun in Iran and his brothers, Kamran and Mirza Haider, in Kabul and Kashmir respectively, Sher Shah was naturally perturbed over their possible joining hands in Peshawar valley from whence they could put pressure to regain the lost throne of Delhi. To contain such a threat from all these three Mughals it was necessary for Sher Shah to occupy the country of the Gakkhars in the Salt Range and the sub-mountainous region north of river Jhelum. The control over this tract seemed all the more important due to the fact that the semi-independent and turbulent Gakkhars who had occupied these areas, were the old friends of the Mughals and would have gladly helped Humayun to recapture his lost empire.

On reaching the Jhelum area, Sher Shah sent for the Gakkhar chiefs. They, however, openly refused their allegiance to him. Under the circumstances Sher Shah decided to give a hard blow to Gakkhars along with blocking the possible re-entry of the Mughals from north. He devastated the country of the Gakkhars, surveyed the area circumjacent to it to take stock of the situation and to select a suitable place for building a check post against the possible invasion from north. He finally selected the site and ordered to build a Fort called Rohtas on the hillock by the side of Kahan river.

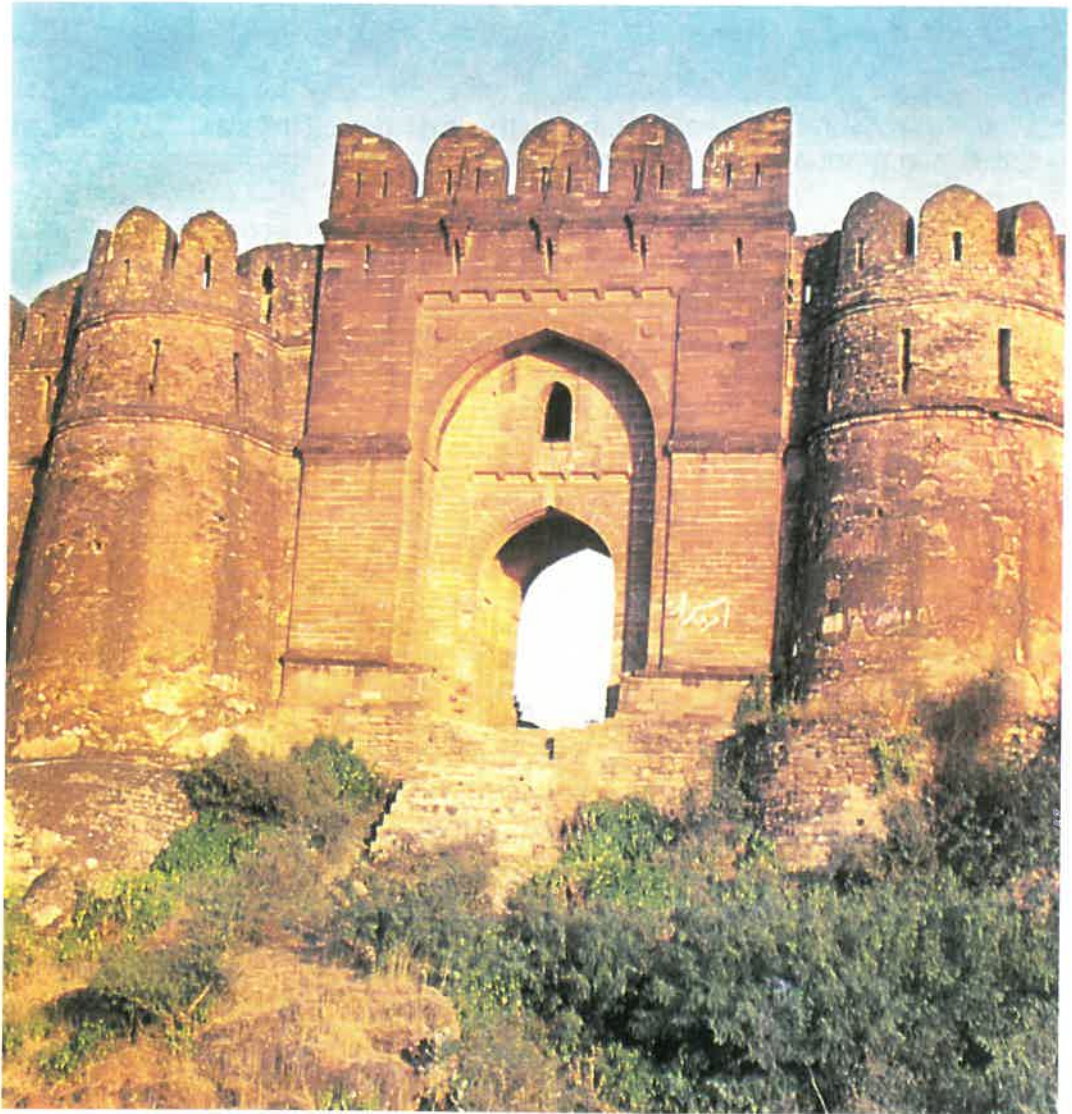
Sher Shah named this stronghold after Rohtasgarh Fort in Shahabad district, which he captured from a Hindu Raja in 1539 A.D.



Gate and wall with battlements

through his cleverness by introducing armed men in women's litters. Situated on the upper course of the river Son, $20^{\circ} 37'N$ and $85^{\circ} 33'E$, the Rohtasgarh Fort belonged to the period of Harish Chandra of the Solar dynasty and his young son Rohitasva from whom it derives its name and to whom the hill is held sacred. The possession of Rohtasgarh fort made possible for Sher Shah to overrun Bengal and give a decisive blow to Humayun resulting in the expulsion of the Mughal ruler from the subcontinent. Sher Shah being the first Muslim conquerer of this Hindu stronghold, developed a sentimental attachment to it. In addition to its importance it played in the life of Sher Shah the terrain of the spot in Punjab selected for building a new fort was also similar to that of the area where Rohtasgarh fort was located.

Cost of Construction





The work was started in 1541 A.D. with Todar Mal Khatri, his Revenue Minister, as incharge of the project. The Gakkhars were never happy at it and did their best to boycott the builders. They pledged that they would not work even as day-labourers.

Todar Mal Khatri faced with such problems informed Sher Shah about the difficulty in carrying on the work. Sher Shah wrote in reply, "I know you for a man of business, understanding and intelligence. I see now no work can be expected from you, because you consider money as your friend. When I have commanded you to do a thing you ought not to have cared for money in fixing the rate. Whatever be the expenses, shall be borne by my government."

The royal order was enough to encourage Todar Mal to fix one red Ashrafi for each slab on the first day. The rate, however, lowered gradually to one Paoli or Bahluli.

Under these difficult circumstances the construction of the Fort cost the Suri treasury a huge amount of money. Though the recorded evidence about the cost is very scanty yet Waqiat-i-Jahangiri works it out at about Rs. 34,25,000. It refers to an engraved stone over one of the doors of the fort which says:-

"The amount is 16,00,000 dams and something more, which is 34,25,000 rupees of Hindustan, 120,000 tumans of Iran, or 1,21,75,000 Khanis of Turan."

According to the Tarikhi-i-Daudi, however, its cost is estimated at eight crores five lacs five thousand and two and a half dams which means Bahlulls.

There is yet another reference in a Persian manuscript, which puts the amount of construction and maintaining an army at Rs. 11,01,07,975/6/3.



Formidable fort of Sher Shah

Plan





Rohtas

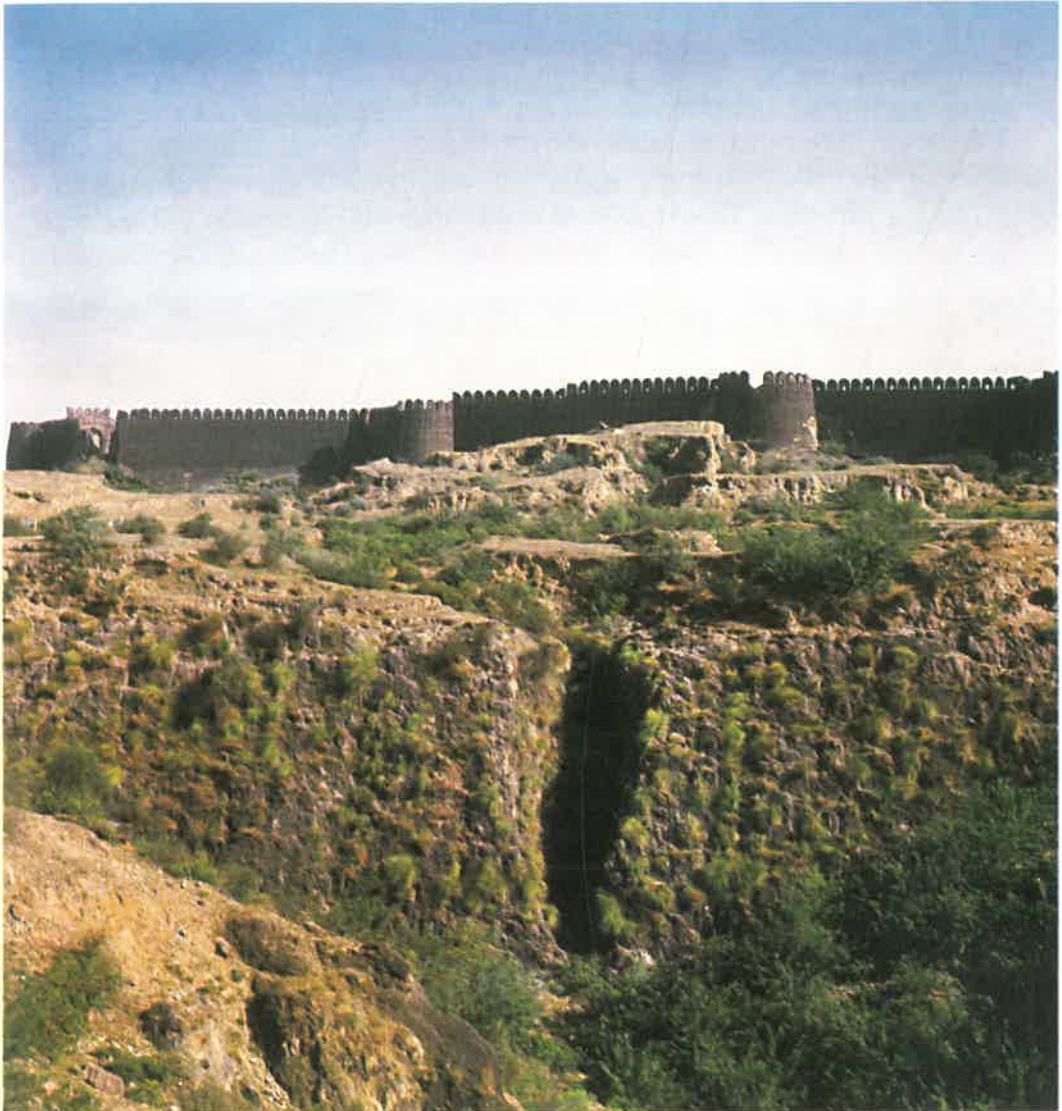
As the fort was basically meant to serve as a defensive post almost all provisions necessary for the purpose were made in it. From the selection of the strategic spot to the erection of strong and massive walls, trap-gates etc. everything tells of the concern its builder had for making it an invincible stronghold.

The fort is irregular in plan and covers a circumference of about 4 kilometres. The alignment of the fortification has been controlled by the difficult contour of the hillock on which it has been constructed. The interior of the fort is divided by a cross-wall which is about 533 metres long. This wall separates the citadel from the rest of the fort. It is in accordance with the traditions of ancient times of having a citadel for the chieftains.

The fortification has 68 bastions or towers at irregular intervals and for self-sufficiency in water, there are three Baolis (stepped wells), one of them in the citadel and the rest, with one well and five tanks, in the other parts of the fort. The other interesting feature of the fort is the planning of the gates. It has as many as twelve gates, among them, the Langar Khani Gate which opens into the citadel is a trap gate for the enemy, which could come under direct fire from the bastions.

The Khwas Khani Gate is another example of a double walling. A small enclave on the western end is a citadel within a citadel and is well-defended with only one gate. Within this area, there is a very fine Baoli suggesting that this area was planned for the chief and his family while in camp here. On the western fringe of the inner citadel is a small but beautiful mosque known as Badshahi Masjid or the Royal Mosque. Built on the highest spot in the citadel is the Haveli of Man Singh, a general of Akbar's period.

Fortification Wall





Rohtas

The most striking feature of the fort is its majestic and solid wall strengthened with 68 massively constructed bastions. Sher Shah's builders possessed a natural faculty for producing buildings according to need, and at the same time making them into stately works of art. Besides providing strength to the wall these bastions give a touch of elegance and grandeur to the fort. The wall, usually composed of two or three terraces, varies in thickness at different points, the maximum being 12.5 metres near the Mori Gate. The terraces are interlinked with each other by way of staircases. The topmost terrace is the line of the merlon-shaped battlements. These battlements are generally one metre thick varying in height from 2.45 to 3.35 metres. The battlements are provided with machicolations for musketry and pouring molten lead or hot water on the enemy. The middle tier meant for soliders to stand against the battlements has a thickness varying from 1.37 to 2.13 metres while the third terrace varies from 1.98 to 2.51 metres in thickness.



Different tiers of fortification wall.



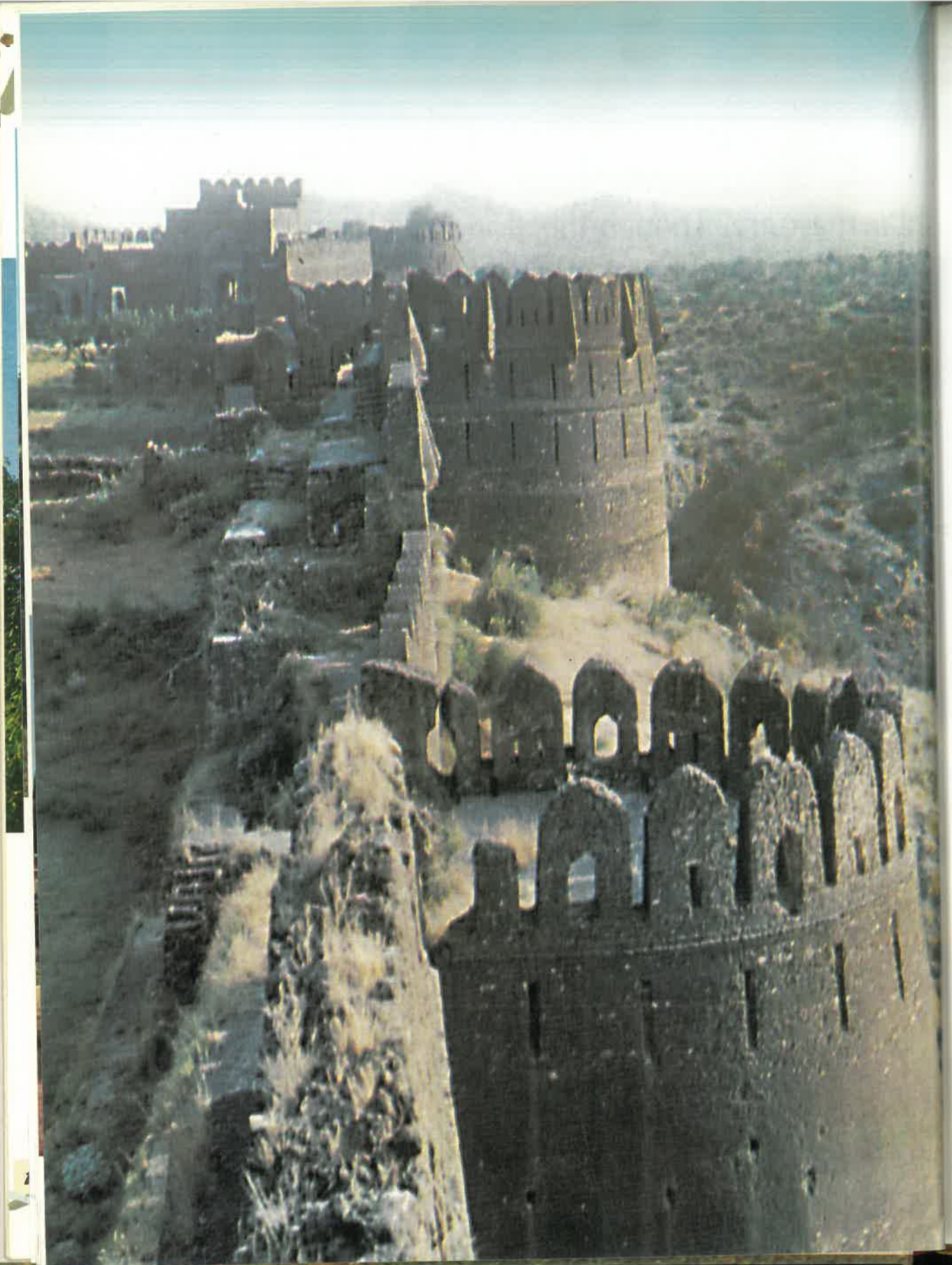
The height of the fortification wall ranges from 10.05 to 18.28 metres. A considerable number of galleries have been provided in the thickness of the wall for the soldiers and to use as storage space. The plans of these galleries or storage chambers are not similar, some of them being square while others rectangular. The roofing of these chambers is mostly with vaults.

As the fort is irregular in plan following the natural contour, the wall stands on rather steep foundation. The formation of the rock on which the huge wall was built is of sand stone which is not much suitable to carry the load. At some places, due to passage of time, it has developed large and dangerous cracks. Still at some other places, long slices of the wall have fallen down not fulfilling the dreams of its builder who thought it to be as durable as eternity.

The wall is built in sand stone coarse rubble masonry laid in lime mortar mixed with granular brick grit. The gates are, however, in ashlar masonry. Though the stone has been used throughout the wall yet a rare use of burnt bricks is also evident.



General view of the fortification wall.



The Gates





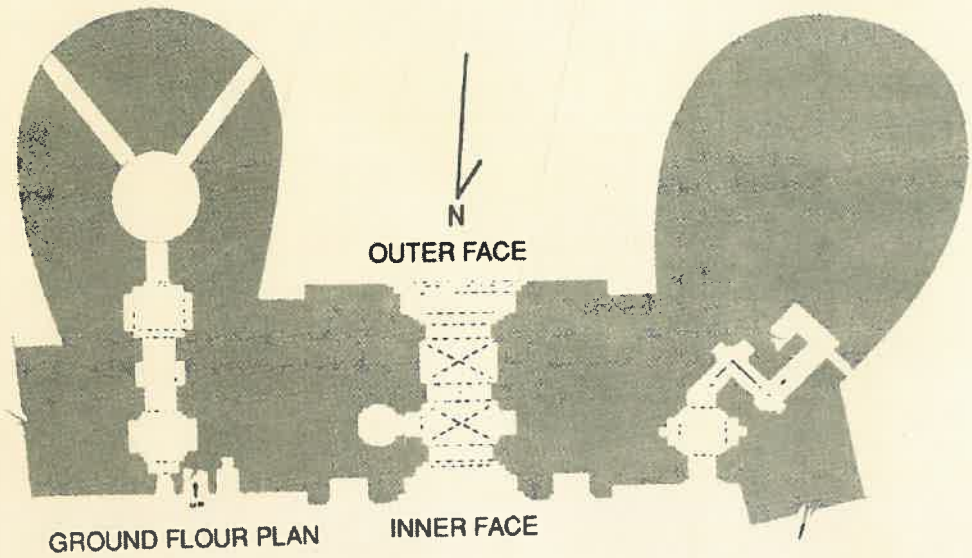
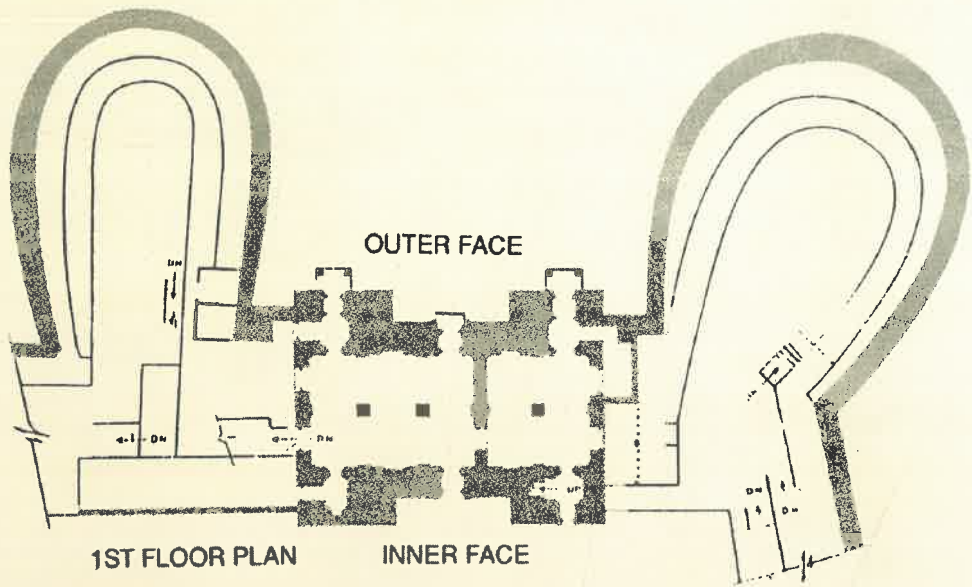
Rohtas

The fort has twelve gates constructed at strategic points. Standing in the massive walls these gates are imposing with elaborate architectural features. They are named as Sohail Gate, Shah Chandwali Gate, Kabuli Gate, Shishi Gate, Langar Khani Gate, Talaqi Gate, Mori Gate, Khwas Khani Gate, Tulla Mori Gate, Gatali Gate, Pipwala Gate and Sar Gate. They are built in sand stone masonry combining strength with grace in a manner that was to characterize the coming Mughal architecture. The following is the detailed description of these gates:

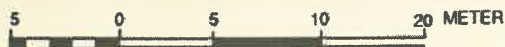
1. Sohail Gate:



Sohail Gate



SOHAIL GATE





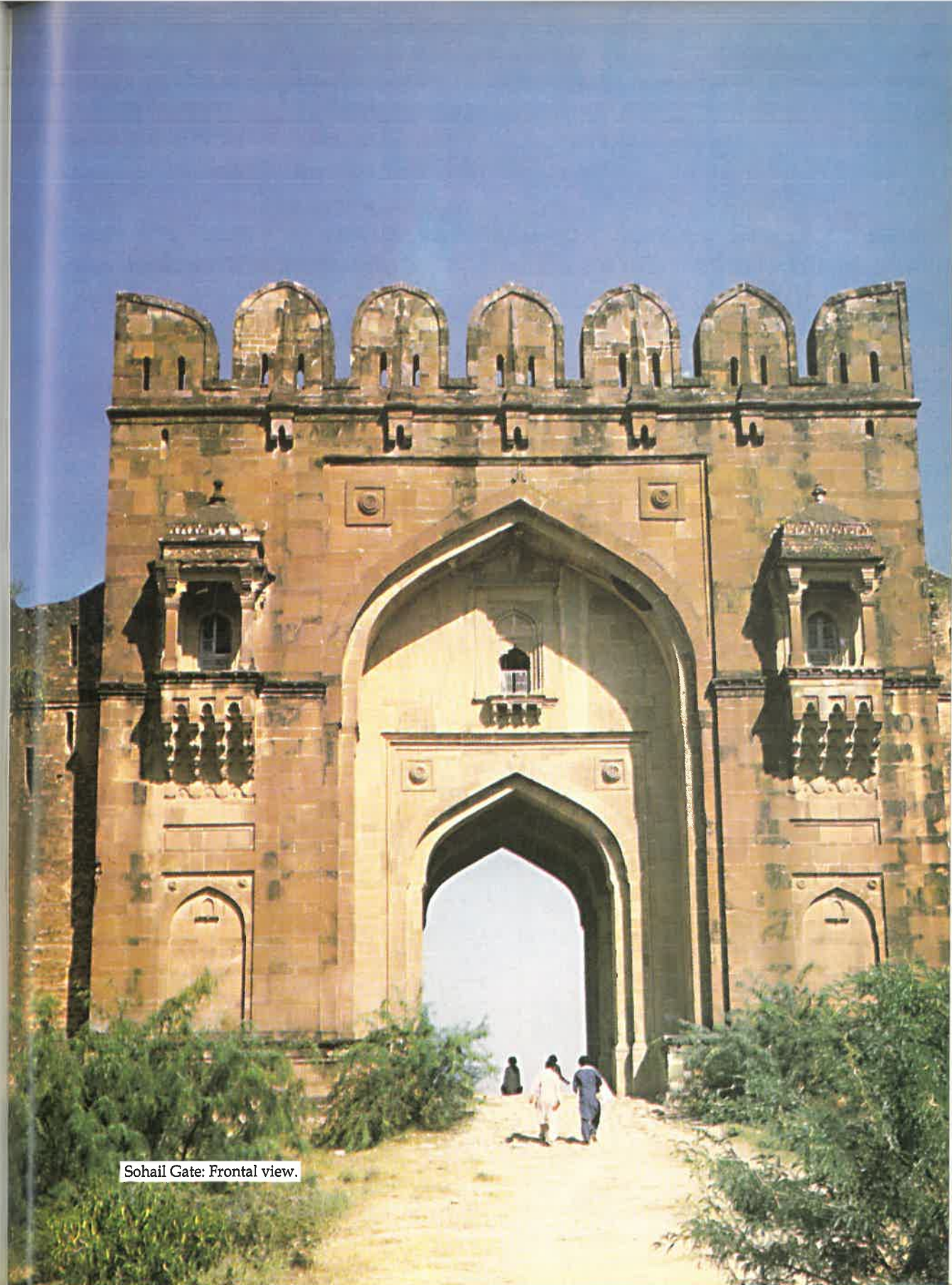
Rohtas

This gate is the finest specimen of the work of Sher Shah's time. Traditionally the gate derives its name from a famous saint named Sohail Bukhari, buried in the south-western bastion of the gate. To some others, however, its name appears to have been taken from the Sohail star which rises on this side of the fort.

It is a double gate and its plan is rectangular with offsets. It rises nearly 21.34 metres high from the ground and is about 20.73 metres wide and nearly 15 metres deep. The central archway is about 4.72 metres wide. Both the outer and the inner arches are the



Sohail Gate

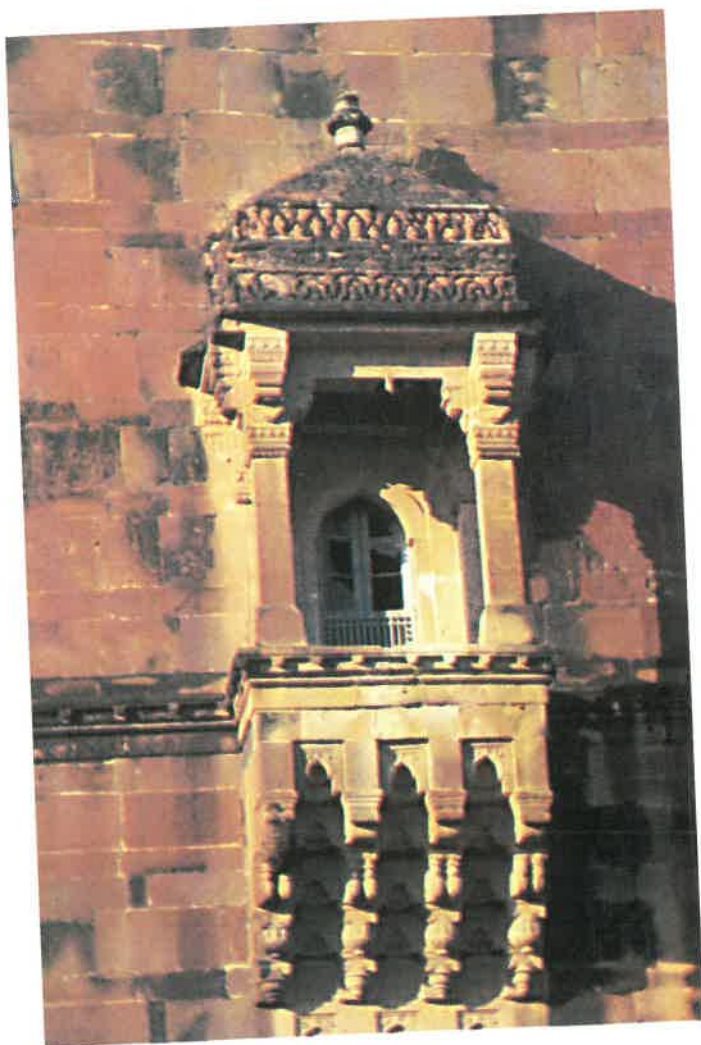


Sohail Gate: Frontal view.

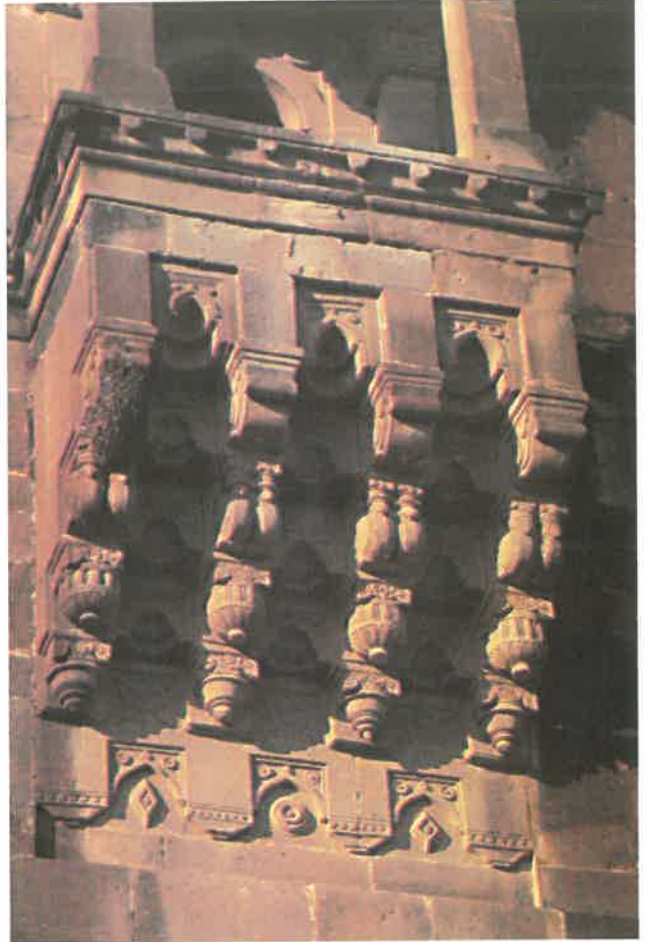
Rohtas

most beautiful three-centred ones which were later on decorated with conspicuous bosses of sunflower motifs raised and encased in squares.

On either side of the main arch at the level of its haunches two beautiful balconies project in the form of oriel windows. They are carried on four brackets made in the conventional shape of Garuda. The top of the balcony is crowned with a polygonal domelet with a pinnacle and is carried on four sand stone columns and cross beams. The front and the side neck of the domelet is decorated with merlon design in relief.



Sohail Gate: Balconies.



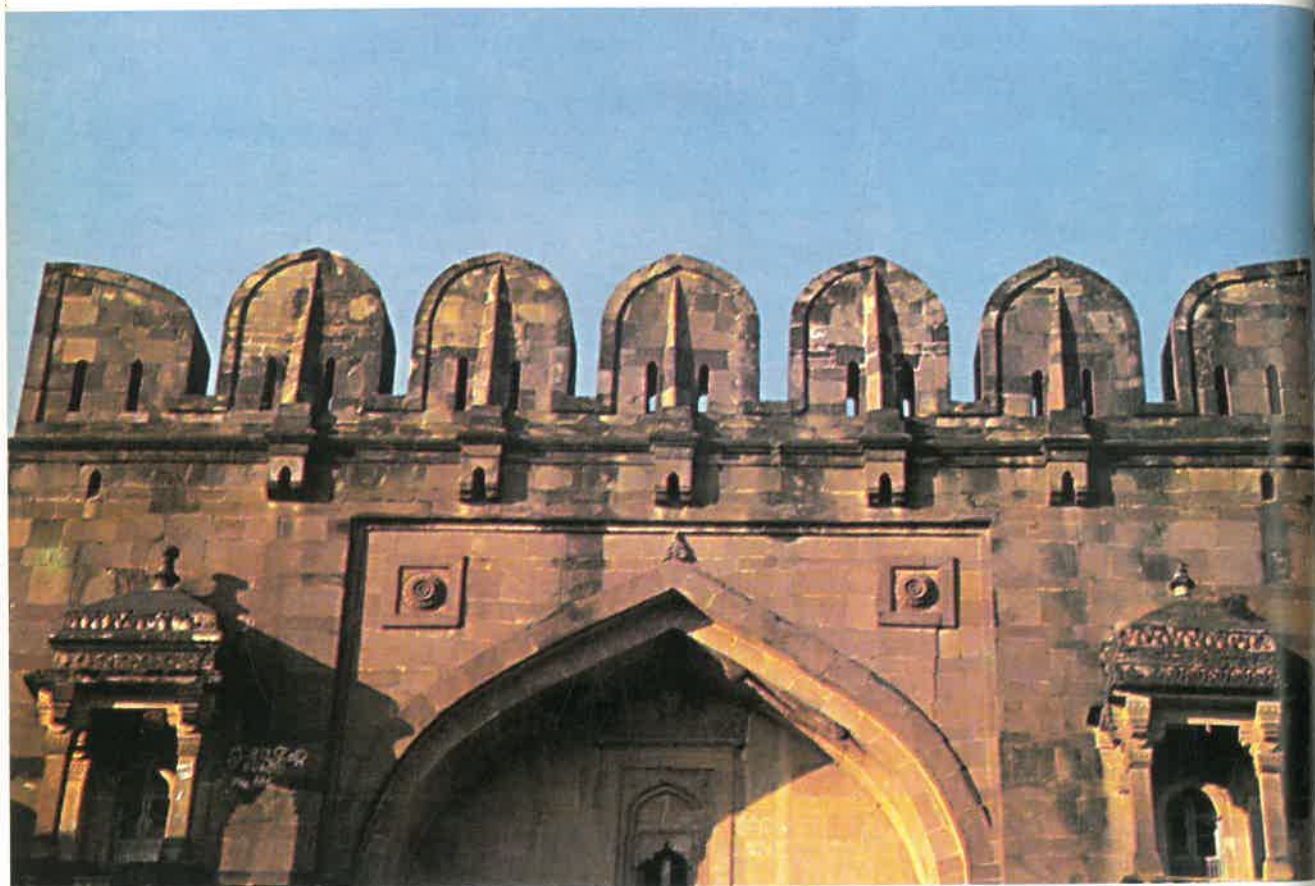
Sohail Gate: Detail of brackets.



Sohail Gate: Sunflower motif.

On the apex of the inner central arch is a miniature oriel window, made probably to balance the view. On the crest of the gate there are very solidly constructed seven merlons, two of them in halves. The central five merlons bear machicolations of conical shape with loop-holes on either side.

The two bastions which are of formidable shape are with full battlements. To break the monotony, loopholes and machicolations are provided alternately on the battlements.



Sohail Gate: Solidly constructed merlons.

Despite massiveness and all the provisions of military use this gate can be taken as a fine example of refined work which is not usual feature in a secular building. The artful look and the solidity of this very gate is enough to tell about the two sides of the character of the man and warrior, Sher Shah Suri, who built it.



Inner Facade

The central arch of the inner facade is like the one mentioned above but a bit drop at the apex. The gate has been divided into three registers horizontally, the central one bears the big arch.

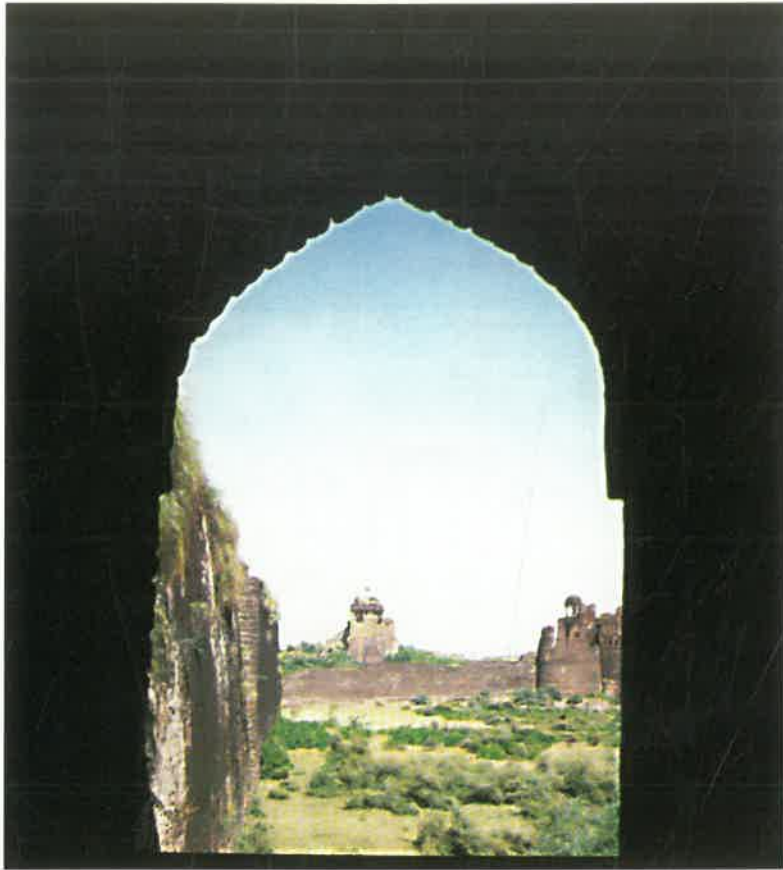
On either side of the main arch in the two jambs there are blind windows in the form of *mihrab* with its soffit of a half circle which is sufficiently deep. In the upper tier smaller windows provide light and air to the rooms of the upper storey. The windows, like the gate, have shafts and bosses with sunflower motifs in their spandrels.

2. Shah Chandwali Gate:



Shah Chandwali Gate.

This is the link gate between the citadel and the main fort. It is named after a saint Shah Chandwali who, as the myth goes, refused to get his wages for working on the construction of this gate. In recognition of his services the gate was named after him. The saint is believed to have died while still on work and was buried just on the side of the gate where his *mazar* stands to this day.



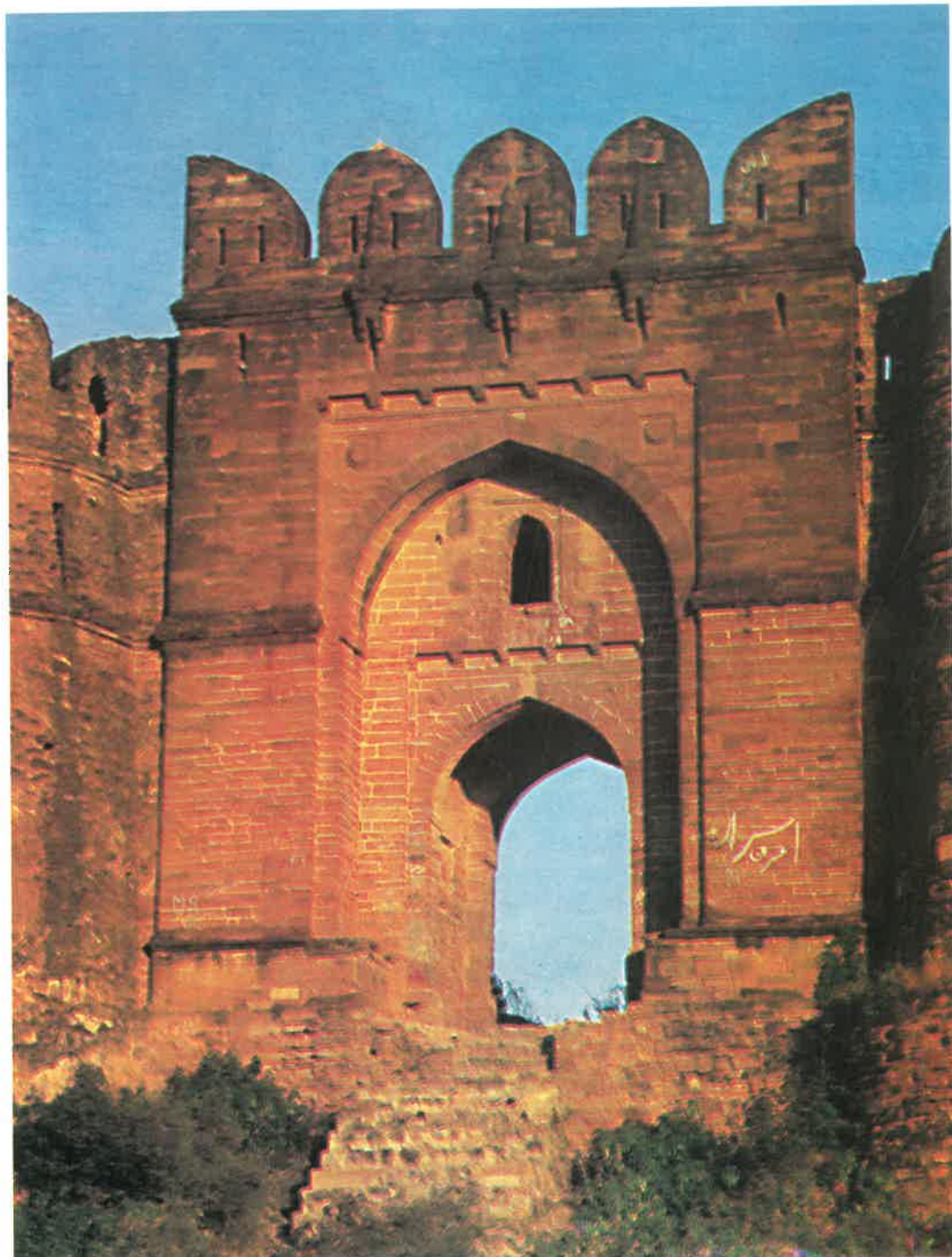
Distant view of Shah Chandwali Gate and Haveli Man Singh.

Like others it is also a double gate. The outer gate, the entrance of which is from the citadel, is a fine specimen of architecture. It is now almost in ruins but the remains still speak much about its architectural features. It is 13.3 metres wide and its depth is about 8.23 metres. The arches and upper portion have fallen down but a beautiful pavilion still exists.

The pavilion, though built on column-beam-and-brackets system is like the Hindu chhatri without dome and has a polygonal soffit inside and a flat roof on the exterior with the crest of incised merlons on the top.

The inner gate which is a later addition, is a simple structure with an arch opening 3.66 metres. In between the two gates is the open courtyard.

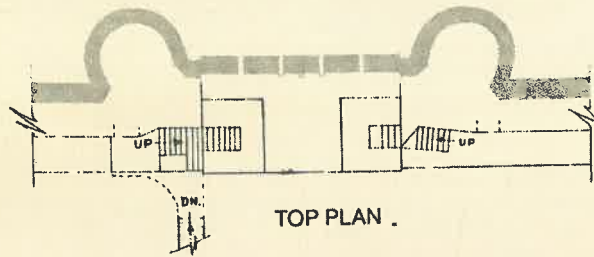
3. Kabuli Gate:



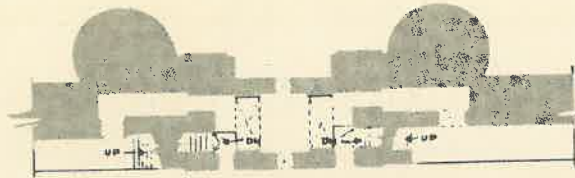
Kabuli Gate.



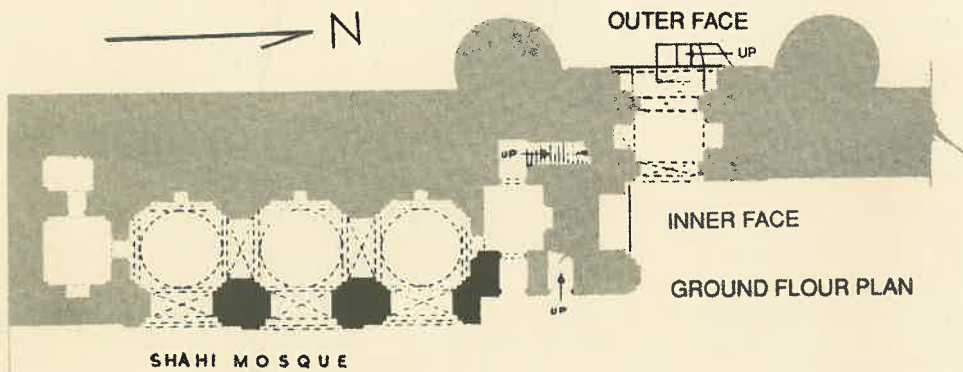
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TOP PLAN .



INTER FLOOR PLAN



SHAHI MOSQUE

KABULI GATE





Rohtas

The gate opening towards west derives its name from the fact that it faces the direction of Kabul, and is still another example of rectangular double gate with off-sets in plan. Its central arch opening is 3.15 metres. It has two bastions on both sides though they are not so massive and strong as we see in the case of Sohail Gate. They, however, have other architectural features making its study interesting.

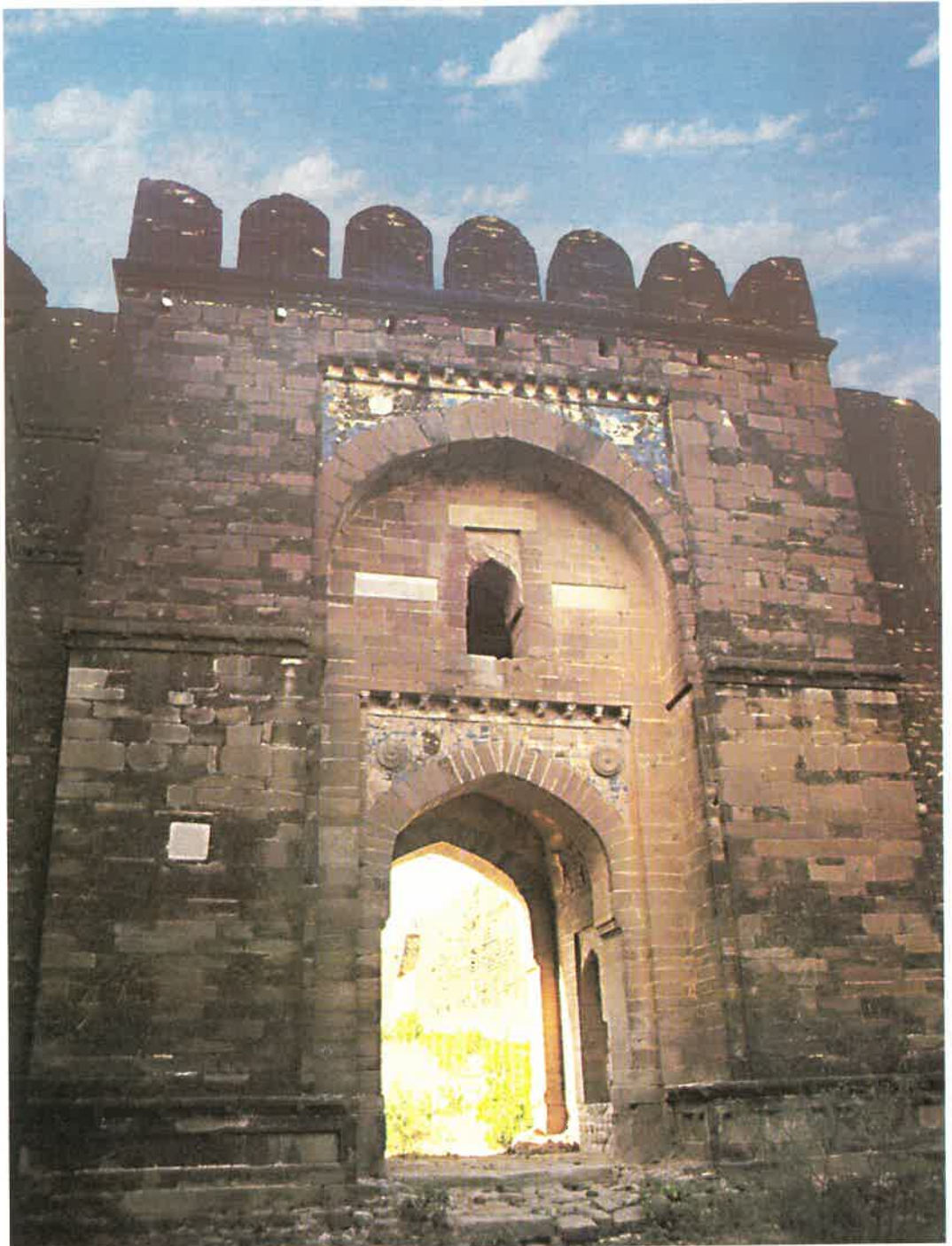
They are decorated with diamond-shaped brick fret masonry work. The gate has five battlements, including two in halves, with loopholes. The three inner battlements also have machicolations. The spandrels of the arches are decorated with calligraphic designs.

On the southern side of the gate there is the Royal or Shahi Mosque tempting many to call the gate as 'Shahi Darwaza' or the Royal Gate. Just close to the gate is a baoli with big zig-zag steps.

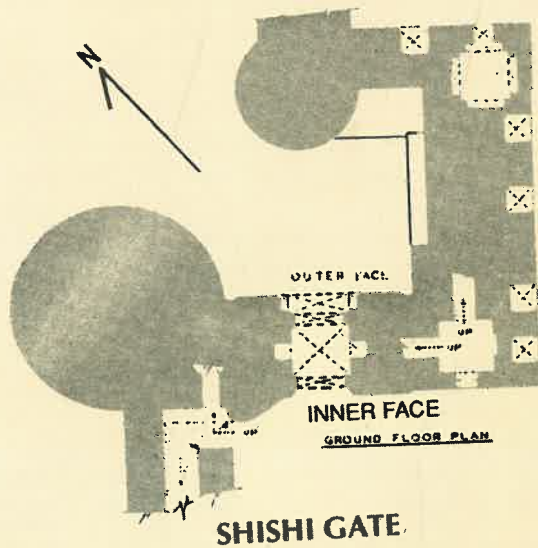
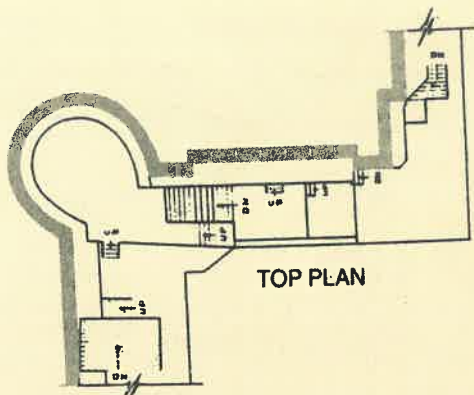


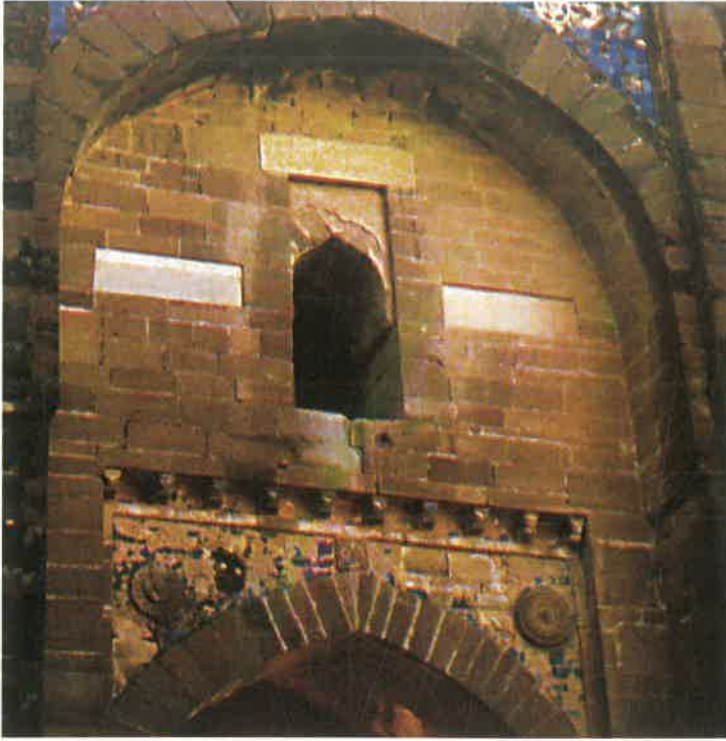
Crossing the Kahan during low seasons.

4. Shishi Gate:



Shishi Gate.





Closer look of Kashi Kari on Shishi Gate.

The gate derives its name from the glazed tiles used in the spandrels of the outer bigger arch. These tiles, set on the plaster base, are the earliest example of this technique which later on developed highly at Lahore. The glare and reflection of the tiles having Persian blue colour gave it the common name of Shishi or Shisha Darwaza meaning the Glass Gate.

Unlike the other bosses in the spandrels of the bigger arch there are star-shaped motifs encased in a circle. There are also lotus flowers in relief and a few religious inscriptions. In addition, an inscription which gives the date of the construction of the Fort, is in a marble slab fixed on the left side of the gate.

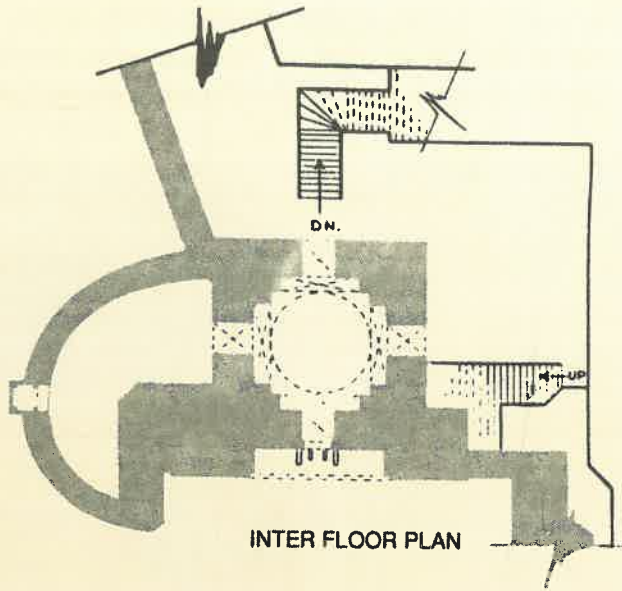
There are two bastions, one on each side of the gate. The battlements on these bastions are plain. Two stair-cases, one on either side of the gate, lead to the upper storey. The octagonal room in outer bastion has a double row of inscriptions carved in 'naskh' over the stone slabs of the four openings and the four niches alternating the doors.

5. Langar Khani Gate:

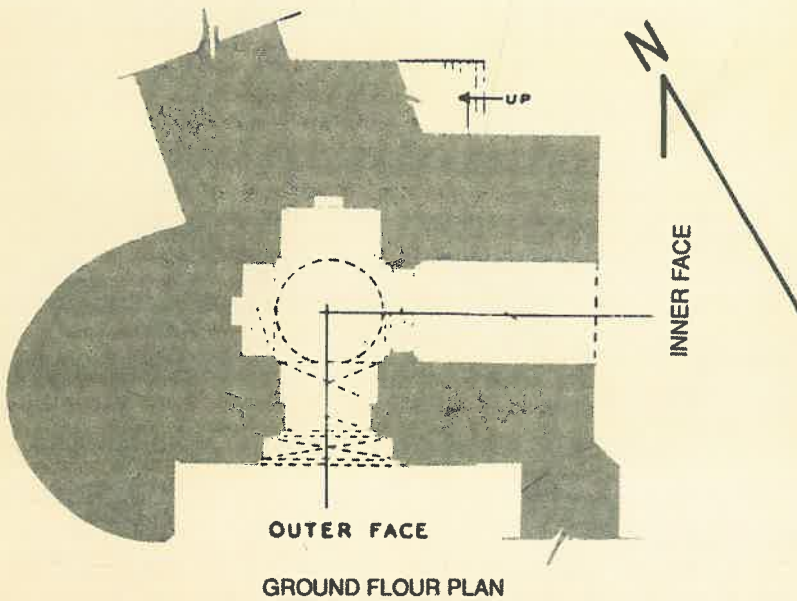


Langar Khana, three-tiered defense wall and bastions. River Kahan is in the background.

It is a double gate 15.25 metres high, 3.5 metres wide with a central arched opening. The outer central opening leads to a chamber 4.65 metres square which opens into the *Langar Khana* (the mess) through a long chamber 7 metres deep, having vault roofing. On the apex of the outer arch of the Langar Khana there is



INTER FLOOR PLAN



OUTER FACE

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

LANGAR KHANI GATE





an inscribed sand stone slab fixed in the wall. This gate has got a projected oriel window on four projected Hindu type brackets. This window or balcony opens out from the room on the upper storey. There are two bastions on either side of the gate. Inside the gate are kitchen, store rooms and a well with twin access for drawing water.



Langar Khani Gate.

6. Talaqi Gate:

The word Talaq after which the gate is named, means divorce. The word as such is also used in the meaning of 'condemned'. It is said that this name stands in memory of the mishap to Sabir Suri, who, according to a common story, entered the gate and had an attack of fever. Thus regarding it as a bad omen the gate came to be known as Talaqi.



This is a single gate 15.25 metres high and 13.8 metres wide with two high flanking bastions. The depth is approximately 6.7 metres. It has beautiful decorative motifs on the spandrels, on the bastions and on the recessed windows inside the gate.

The roundels are just above the apex of the central arch. On three sides of the window of the room in the upper storey there are star-shaped bosses, of which only one exists to this day. The spandrels of the small arch have two lotus flower roundels.

The recessed arched windows which are encased in the rectangular panels have beautiful decorative motifs. There are four brackets with five roundels in between them having floral and calligraphic motifs. The upper side of the rectangular panel has got beautifully carved floral design in relief.

7. Mori Gate or Kashmiri Gate:

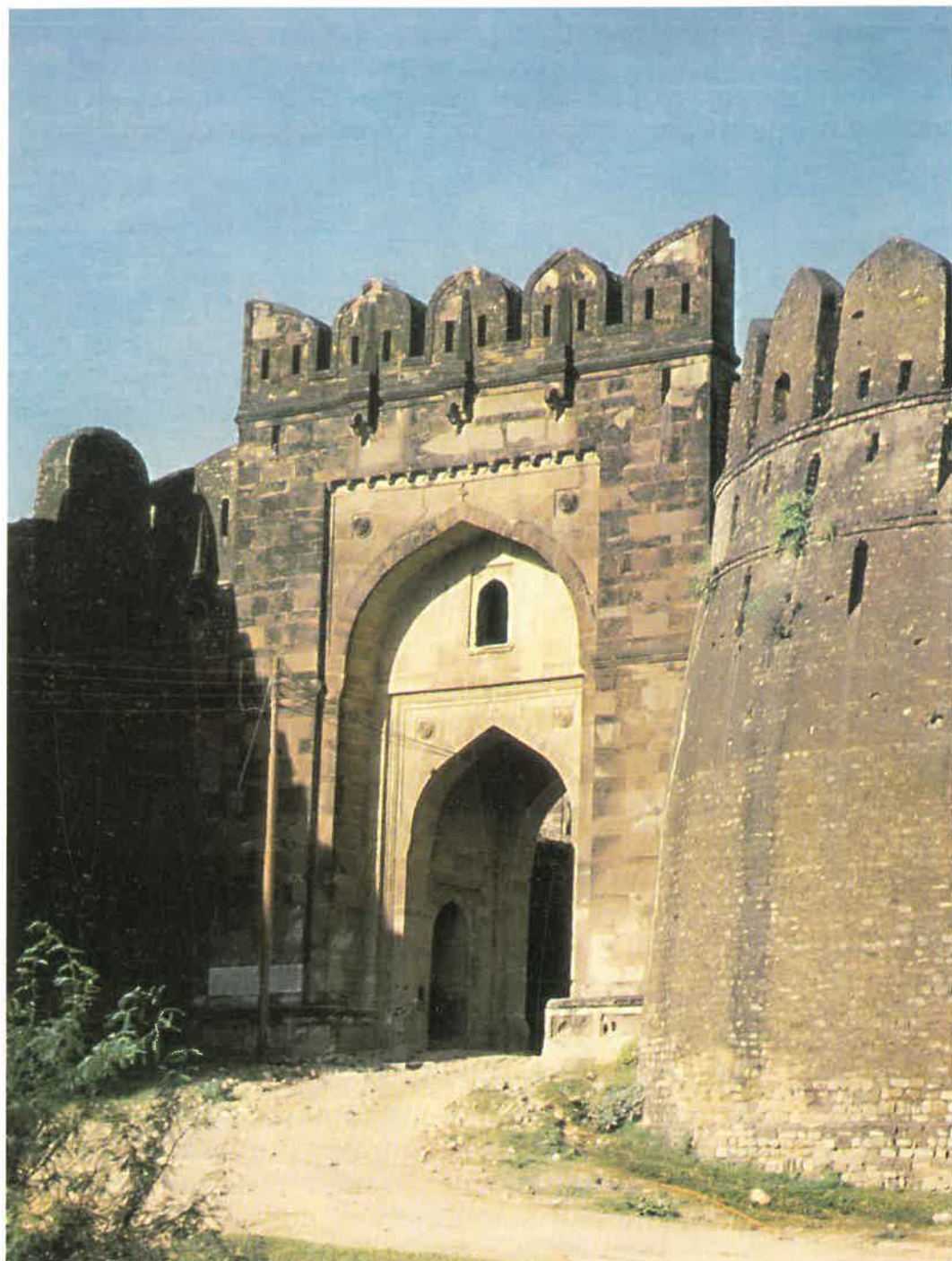
The gate, opening on the northern side, faces roughly towards Kashmir hence the name Kashmiri Gate. Because of its crooked plan like a drain (Mori) it is also known as such.

The gate has an arched opening leading to a rectangular chamber which in turn leads to another chamber through an archway. The second chamber which opens into the interior of the Fort is similar in shape and dimension to the first one.

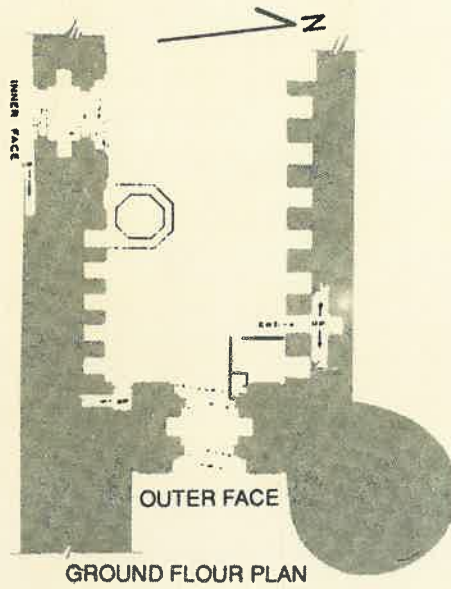
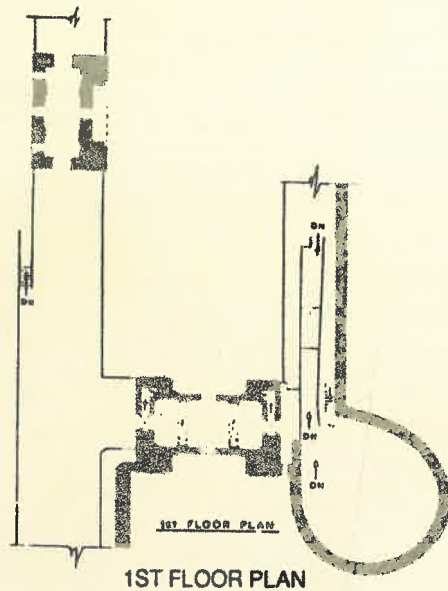
Both the chambers have low squat roofs in domical shape. The roofing is on pendentives supported by recessed arches on each side by which weight of the dome is reduced gradually. The roofs have been made flat on the top and no domical structure is visible from outside.

The spandrels of the arches have roundels, bosses or different architectural motifs like sunflower, lotus flower and calligraphic inscriptions. The outer facade is with lofty bastions on either side while the inner gate is very simple.

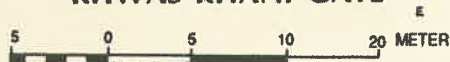
8. Khwas Khani Gate:



Khwas Khani Gate.



KHWAS KHANI GATE



The gate named after the loyal and trusted Commander of Sher Shah, opens towards northern side. The present route from Dina Railway Station to the Rohtas town passes through this gate. Outside the gate lies the Sher Shah's old Grand Trunk Road which is no more in use.

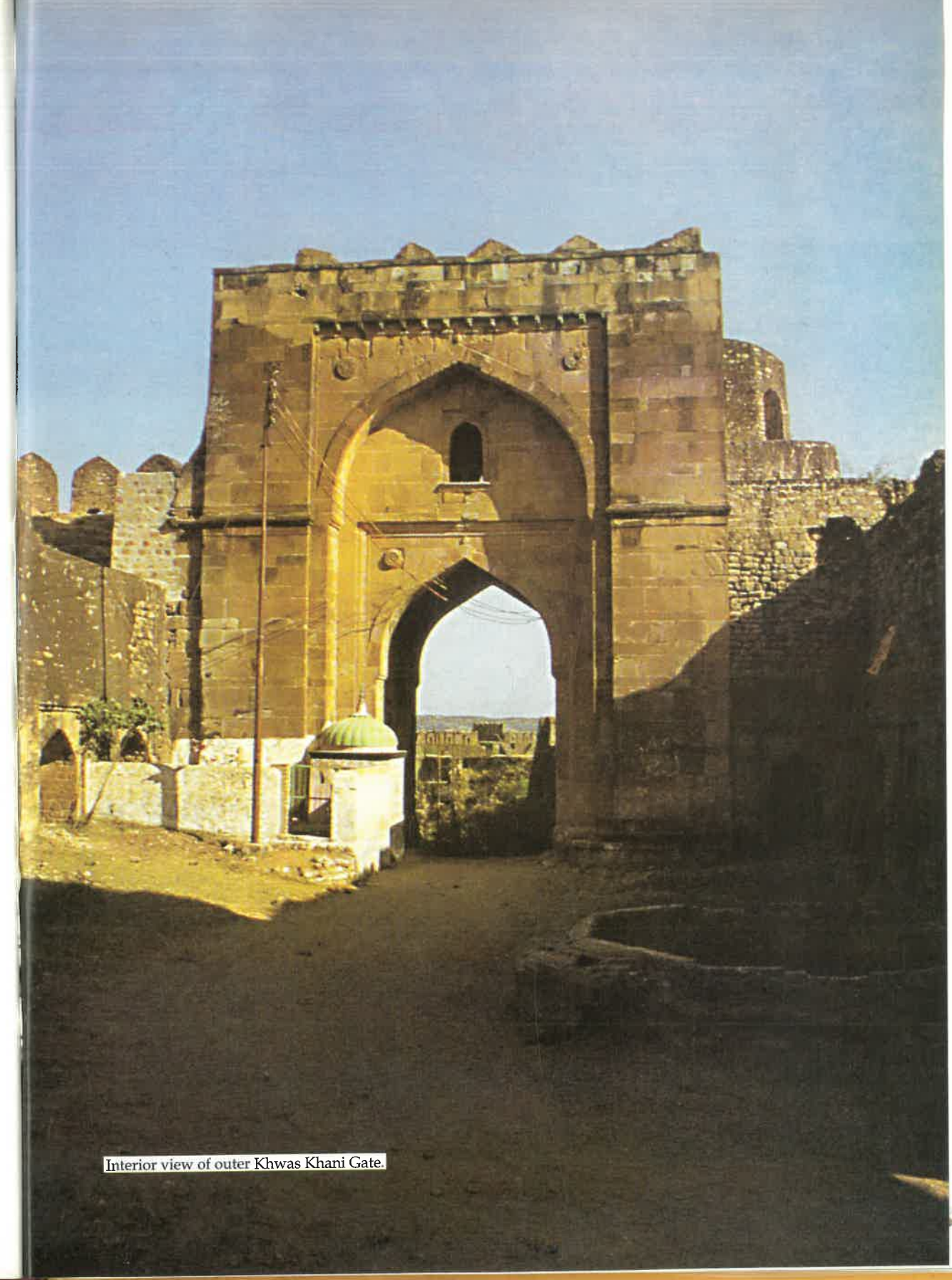
It is a double gate. The plan of the outer as well as of the inner gate is rectangular with offsets. Both the gates are in fair state of preservation.

The outer Khwas Khani gate is nearly 12.8 metres wide and 8 metres deep. There are four beautiful arches like the ones of the Sohail Gate. Entering the Fort one finds only a massive bastion on the right side of the road while on the left there is the high defensive wall. The bastion is provided with battlements with loopholes and considerably large *mihrab*-shaped openings to deploy canons to check the advance of the enemy by keeping under direct fire.

The arches are set in the rectangular panels with the soffits of the outer and inner ones measuring 1.45 metres and 1.1 metre respectively. The spandrels of the arches have roundels with sunflower motifs. The gate has been provided with a room on the upper storey with a window opening on the outside.

At the crest of the gate there are five battlements two of which at the sides are in half style as in the case of Sohail Gate. All the battlements have loopholes but the central three have machicolations as well. This gate, though not richly decorated, looks very elegant and graceful mainly due to its positioning.

The second, inner gate opens into the Fort. It has five battlements, two in halves, with loopholes. In design as well as decorations it is similar to the outer gate with the only exception of the religious inscription fixed over the rectangular panel of the bigger gate.

A photograph of the interior of the outer Khwas Khani Gate. The gate is a large, weathered stone structure with a prominent arched opening. To the left of the main arch, there is a smaller, white-washed structure with a green dome. The ground is dark and uneven. In the background, through the archway, a view of a city or town can be seen under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is one of historical architecture in a dry, sunny environment.

Interior view of outer Khwas Khani Gate.

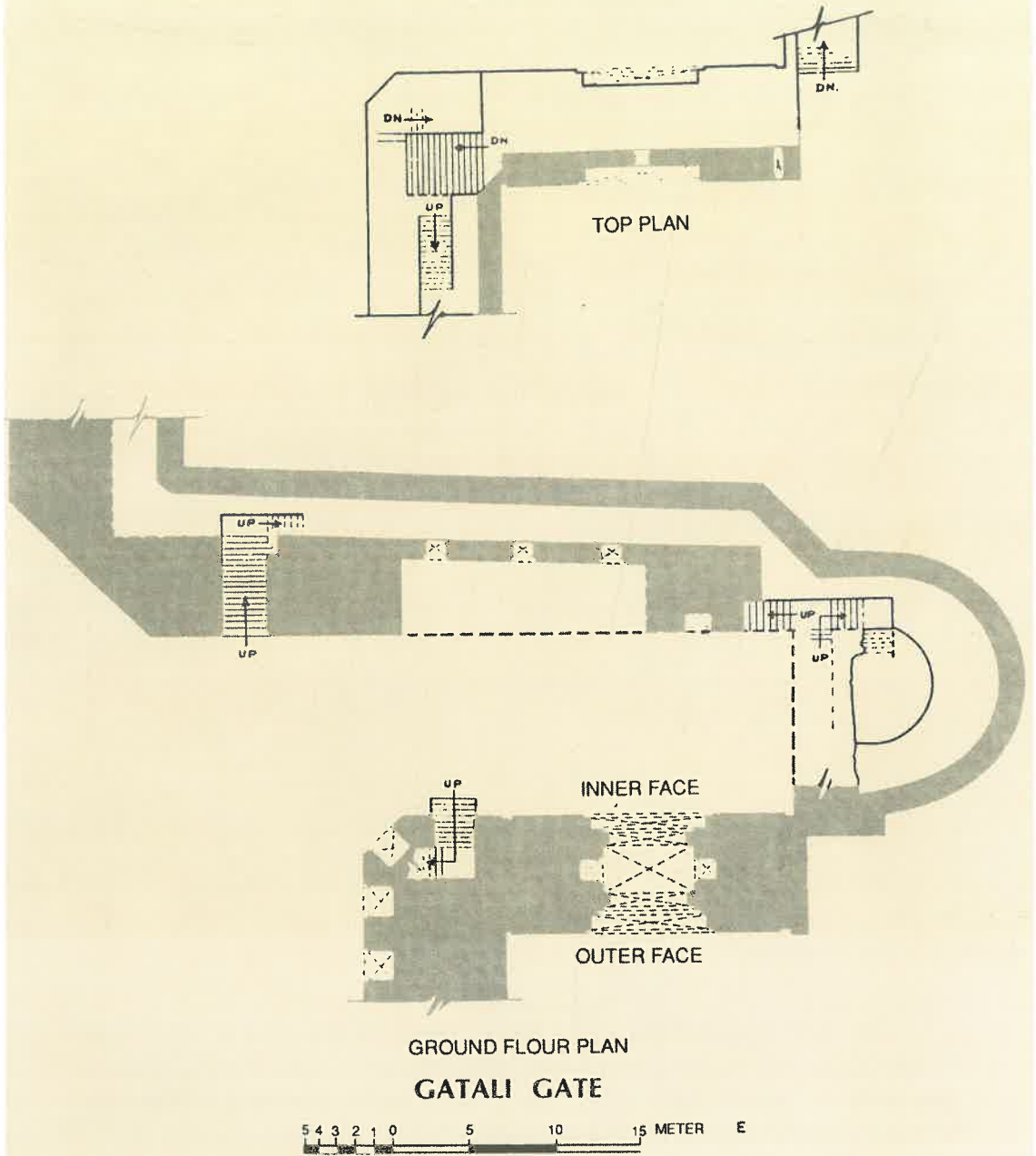
9. Gatali Gate:



Gatali Gate.

It is a single gate, in plan rectangular with offsets. The gate is nearly 9.15 metres high and 6.1 metres deep. The arches have sunflower bosses in spandrels. The crest of the gate is decorated with seven battlements.

As the gate faces towards the Gatali Ford it is named as such.

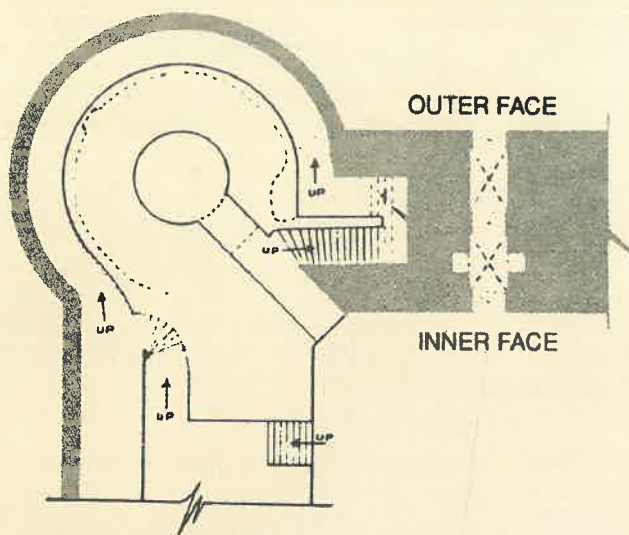


10. Tulla Mori Gate:



Baoli with Tulla Mori Gate in the background.

The gate which lies on the eastern side of the Fort is small and simple in architectural details. It is rectangular in plan having offsets. The gate is about 10 metres deep with outer opening measuring nearly 2 metres and the inner approximately 1.95 metres.



TULLA MORI GATE



PIPALWALA GATE

11. Pipalwala Gate:

This is a small gate with a central opening 2.13 metres in width. The soffit of the main arch measures 70 centimetres. The inner facade has got two recessed arches with doors on either side of the main arch. The arched door on the right side has stairs. This gate is also provided with battlements of very irregular shape, some of them are *mihrab*-shaped while others in half design.



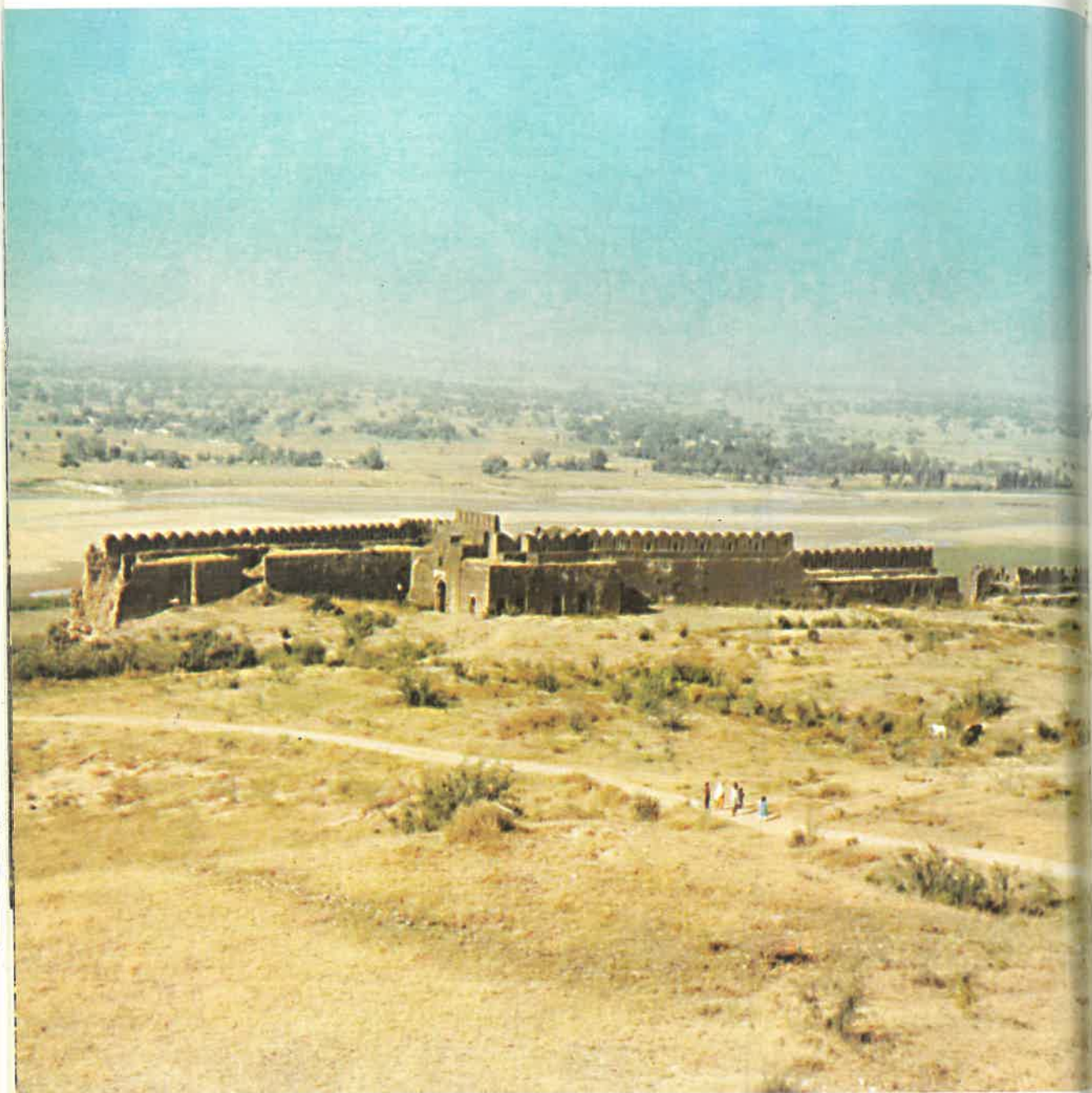
Sar Gate.



Sar Gate.

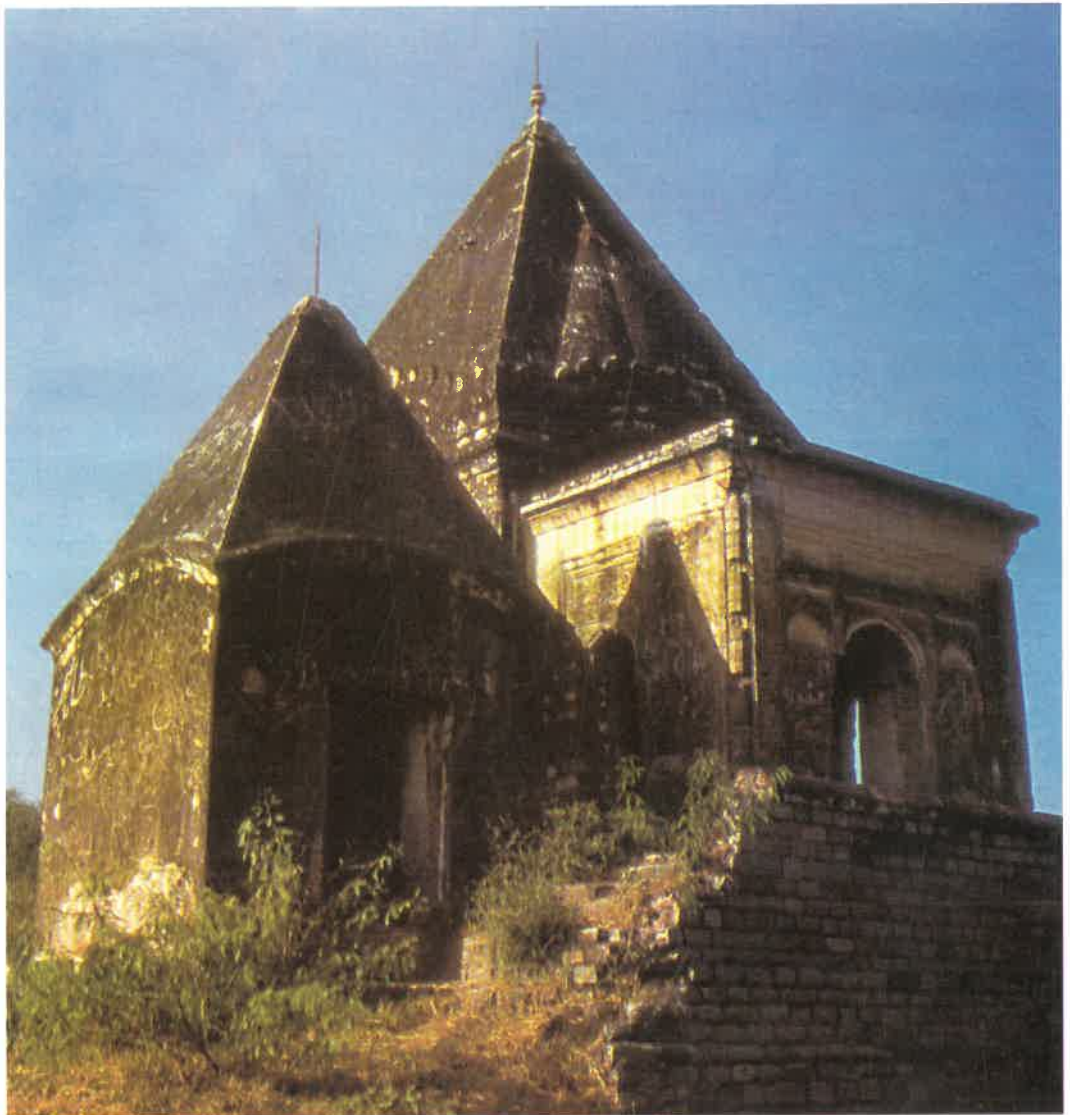
12. Sar Gate:

This is a small gate of no architectural significance whatsoever. Close to this gate inside the Fort, a water-reservoir still exists. It is because of its nearness to the reservoir that it is known as SAR (meaning water) gate. (see page 79)



General view with the Kahan beyound

Other Buildings





Rohas

It is very strange that in such a large fort only very few buildings were constructed. Among these buildings there is one mosque known as Shahi Masjid, a few Baolies and a Haveli added later by Man Singh. In the absence of lofty palaces the Mughal emperors, while passing through the area, used to stay in the fort in tents. As the fort had only strategic position, no later ruler thought of building any luxurious structures for stay here.

The buildings of the fort are described in the following lines:

(a) Shahi Mosque:



Shahi Masjid: A part of the Shahi/Kabuli gate appears on right side.

This small but beautiful mosque is situated near the Kabuli Gate. It consists of only a prayer chamber and a courtyard. The prayer chamber which is 19.2 metres long and 7.3 metres deep is divided into three bays with arched openings. The central chamber is 5 metres square. The face of the sanctuary has three arched openings. Although the roofing of the prayer chamber is domical from inside yet it has no domes on the outer side. The outer defensive wall serves as its back.



Interior view of Shahi Masjid.



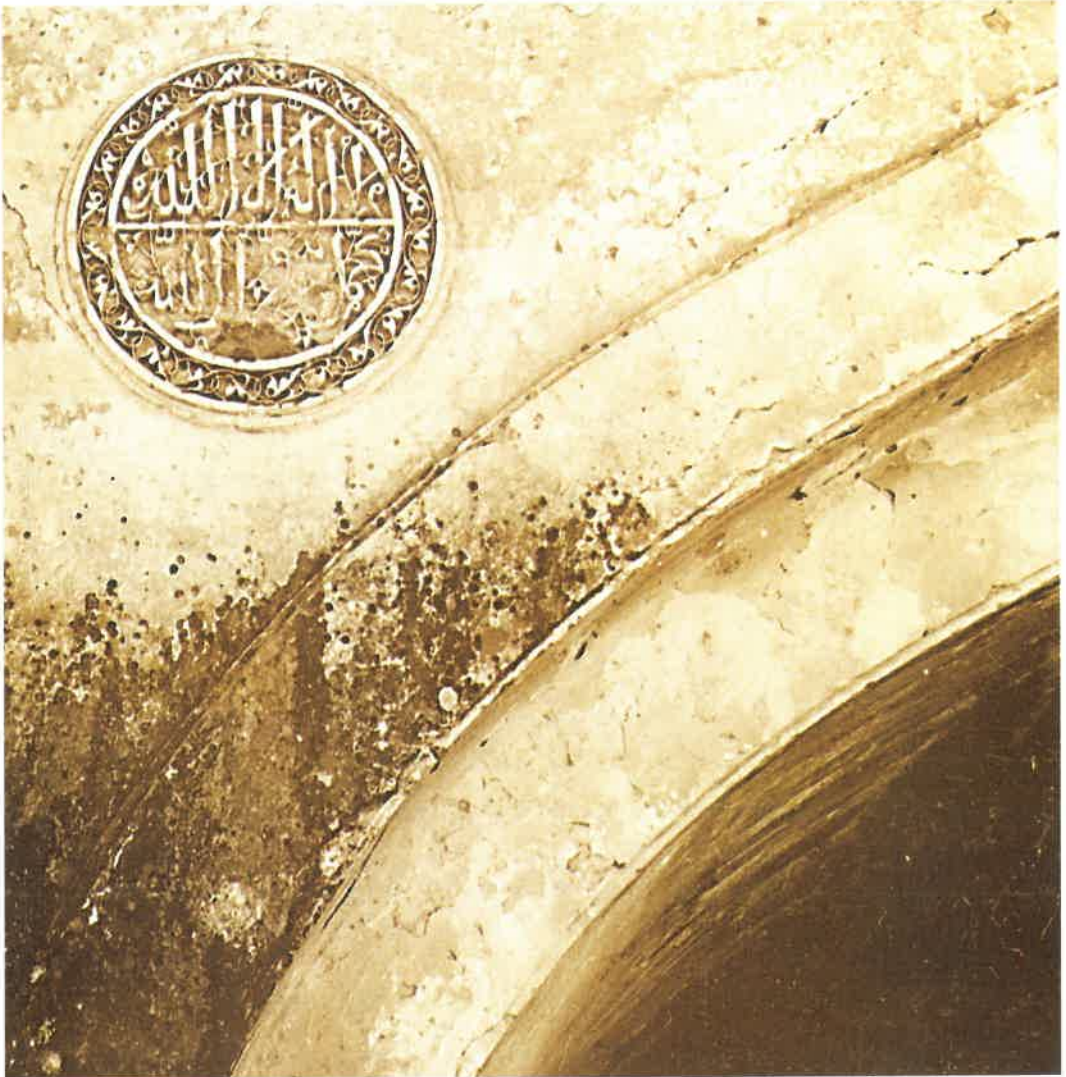
The facade of the sanctuary of the mosque has a projected *chhajja* over the brackets. There are six recessed niches in the facade just below the string course. Thirty-three miniature battlements decorate the crest of the sanctuary. These merlon-shaped battlements are further decorated with simple Shamsa design, bearing the word "Allah" in circle, and other floral design.



Lily design boss in spandral of the arch of Shahi Masjid.



The spandrels of the outer arches have bosses in which the border is decorated with lily design which was later adopted by the Mughals to use at the Jahangir's and Nur Jahan's tombs, and in the Shah Burj Gate in the Lahore Fort. On the central arches the area inside the lily border is divided into three registers by straight lines in relief. The top one bears *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* in beautiful nashk script; the middle register, now mostly worn out, reads *لا اله الا الله* and the third one is with *محمد الرسول الله*. This roundel which is termed as Shamsa design, though without rays on the outer circle, is a remarkable innovation used in the architecture in this area. The idea seems to have been taken from the coinage.



Shahi Masjid: Lily design with Kalma Sharif.

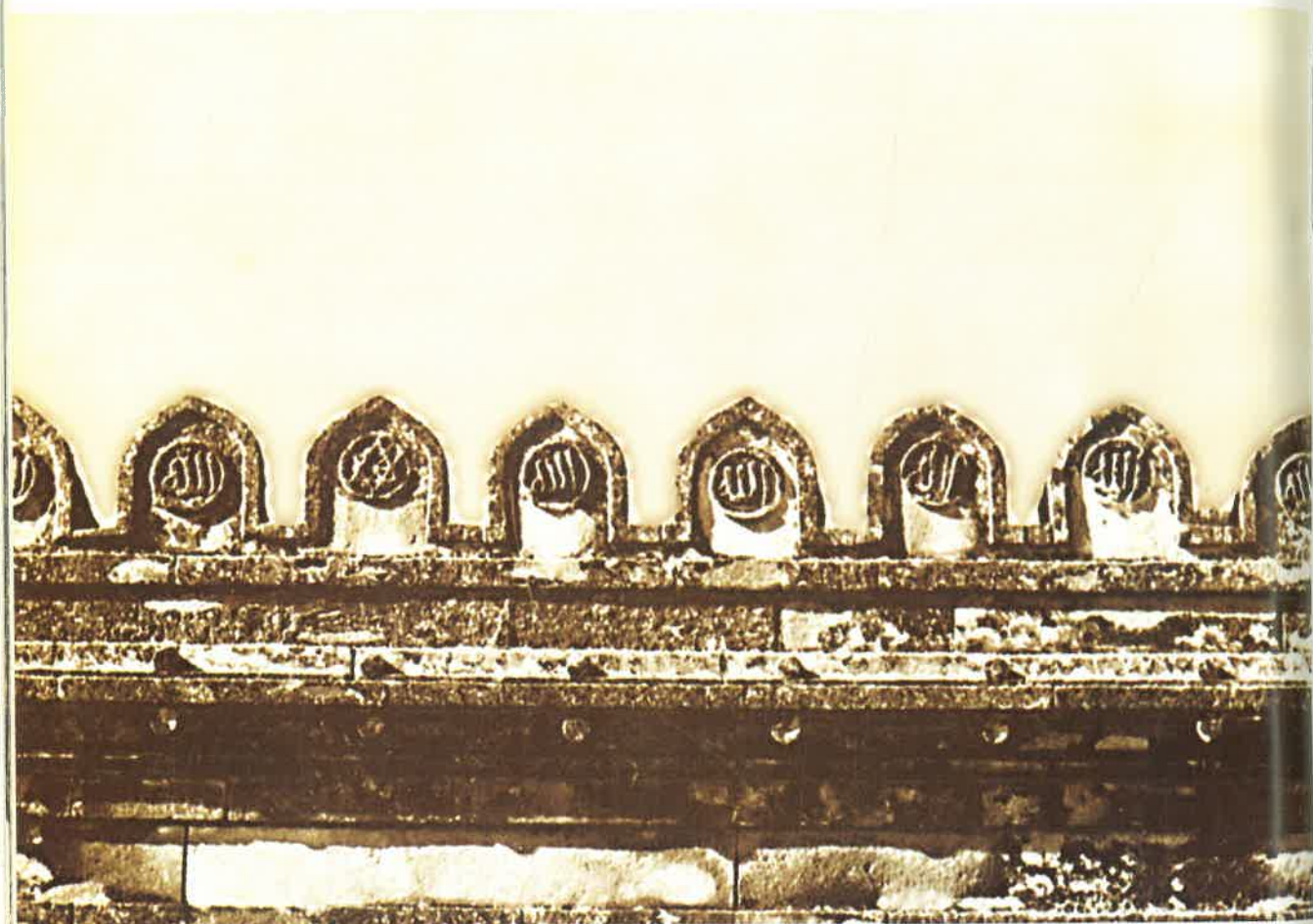


Rohtas

On the other arch the area inside the lily border is divided into two, only for Kalma Sharif. The roundels on the southern arch seem to have withered with the time and are not found at present.

Interior of the Mosque

The prayer chamber has two rooms or *hujras*, one at either end. The room on the left is 3.8 metres by 3.5 metres with another adjoining room. The size of the other room, at the right, is 3.45



Shahi Masque: Merlon-shaped battlements with Shamsa design bearing the word "Allah"

metres by 3.65 metres. The doors are in the shape of archways, encased in rectangular panels. The spandrels have got roundels with the word "Allah" written in relief.



Trefoil arch design in blind niche in Shahi Mosque.

There are three *mihrabs* in the sanctuary. The central *mihrab* measures 2.25 metres in height and 1.32 metres wide. The arch is a bit narrow, raised over nook-shafts of sand stone. It is two-centred stilted arch encased in a rectangular frame with sunflower designs in the spandrels. It is encased, in turn, in another rectangle which is topped with a crest of merlons, seven in number, containing word "Allah" in a circle in *naskh*. A trefoil arch design in a blind niche has been provided on either side to balance the central *mihrab*.



The most interesting decoration is in the front wall of the *mihrab* where there is a tree and sun design. Apparently such a design has been taken into the Muslim architecture from the symbolism practised in Hindu temple architecture.

The mosque on the whole presents a fine specimen of compact decorative and elegant religious architecture of the Suri period.

(b) Baolis:

To meet the need of self-sufficiency in water, Baolis were made by cutting deep the lime rock. One of these lies near the Kabuli Gate and the other near the Tulla Mori Gate.

The Kabuli Gate Baoli has about 60 steps leading down to the water. There are small chambers around the Baoli presumably to be used as baths for the royal family. The other Baoli in the Fort proper is with 148 steps of about 20 cm. width leading to the base. The natural lime rock bed had been cut to a considerable depth to reach the water level. The upper portion of the Baoli is built in stone.

(see page 74)



Baoli near Shahi/Kabuli Gate.



(C) Haveli Man Singhs:



Haveli Man Singh

The Haveli named after the trusted general of Akbar's court, who died in 1614 A.D., is the most conspicuous structure built on a rock at a very uneven site. It is a double-storey building and unlike the fort, has been constructed in bricks and plastered neatly.

The Haveli seems to have consisted of four rooms out of which only one exists. The remains of the other three rooms are, however, visible; two being on the north-western and one on the south-eastern sides. The room which is still in good shape is about



Another view of Haveli Man Singh.

5.5 metres square. The one on the north-eastern side was probably bigger as is clear from the remains. A boundary wall also existed around the above-mentioned four rooms.

The room which is still in comparatively good state of preservation bears the shouldered type dome on its second storey. It appears that it had a pinnacle of Hindu origin, the lotus of which still exists.

The south-western corner has a turret type of buttress to face the great thrust of the double-storey structure with a dominating dome.

The remarkable feature of the Haveli is its balconies, one each on the eastern and southern faces. Either of these balconies is



Haveli Man Singh, view through Shah Chandwali Gate.



carried on four columns with four brackets of garuda design. The balconies are surmounted by a three tiered canopy as a roof. The first and second tiers are oblong in form while the one at the top is a fluted dome. The balconies command the view of the whole fort and could well be used as watch-spots.

The Chhajja is provided below the parapet of the roof. The Chhajja starts in consonance with the level of the roof. The string-course making the level between the upper and the lower storey is just in level with the base of the brackets supporting the balconies.

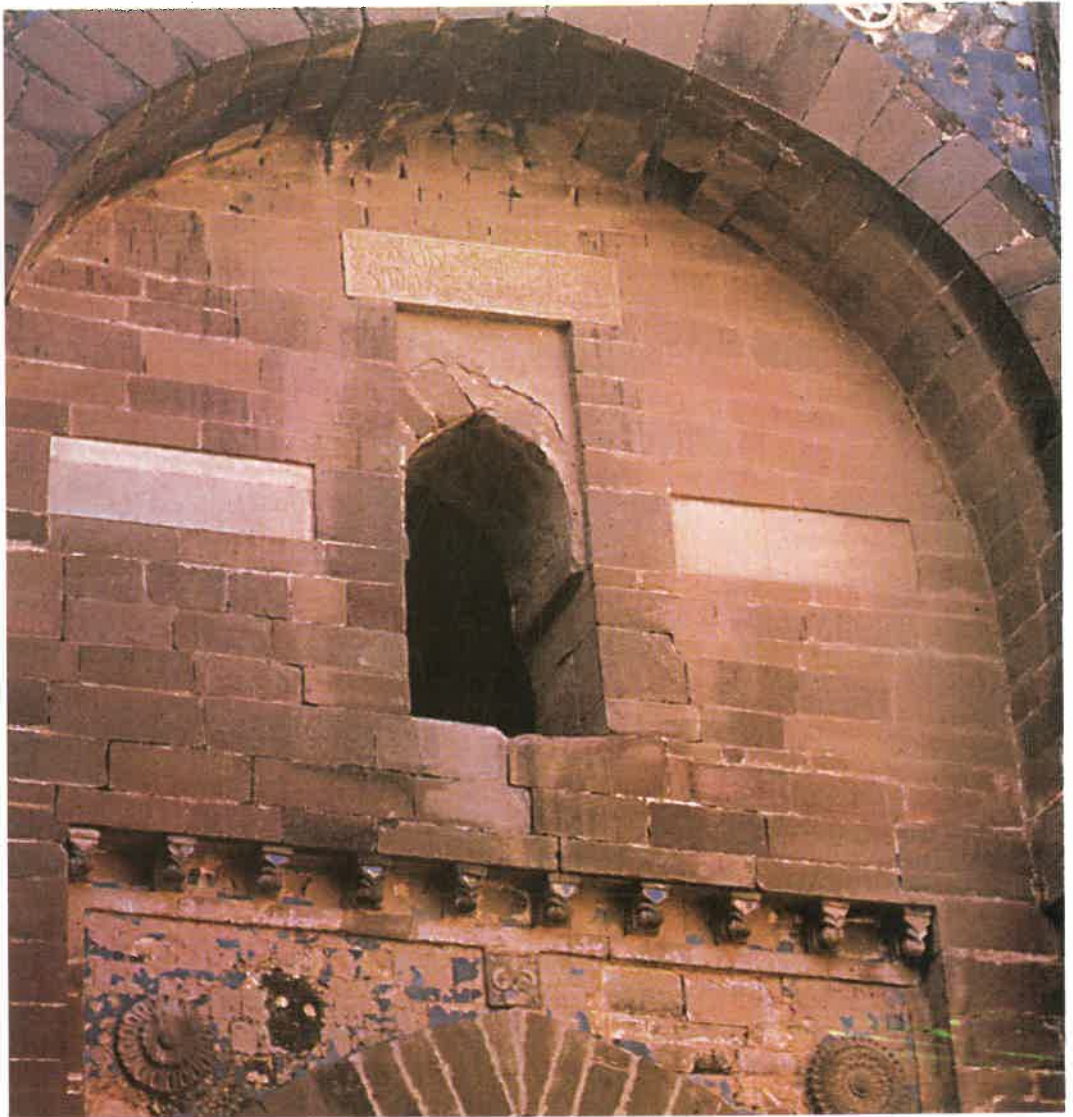
The Haveli in it has another interesting feature in the form of decorations. The projected cornice has beautiful roundels in-between the brackets. Every roundel is placed in a square with bead and reel design. The roundels are with lotus flower, sunflower and star-shaped decorative motifs.

The Haveli with its building style and decorations is a good example of Hindu architecture of the period.





Architectural Decorations





Sher Shah Suri, while making the fort as solid construction, did not forget using in it the refined and descriptive decorative motifs. The gates and the Shahi Mosque were the most suitable places to express his aesthetic urge. The decorations can be grouped in four for the purpose of study:

1. Stone carvings in low and high relief;
2. Calligraphic inscriptions in marble and sand stone;
3. Plaster decoration;
4. Glazed tile decoration.



Patterns in stone carving.



Sohail Gate: Closer look.

Stone carving has been used extensively to decorate the gates and the mosque. Almost every arch in the fort has got bosses in its spandrels, in sunflower or lotus flower designs. On the inner Khwas Khani Gate these designs of Hindu origin have been improved skilfully and aesthetically with the inscription of the word "Allah" in the centre of the bosses. The miniature battlements on the crest of the facade of the mosque also bear the word "Allah" in low relief. Besides, there are beautiful geometric and floral patterns on the soffits at the base of the arches.

The use of Hindu type brackets is common. They appear in some of the most beautiful places like Sohail Gate.

The calligraphic inscriptions on the sand stone and marble are religious in character and are in naskh. The inner Khwas Khani Gate



bears two panels one with the Kalma Sharif and the second with other inscription.

The inscription on the Shishi Gate is in Persian and gives the date of the construction of the fort as 948 A.H., that comes to 1541 A.D. This inscription, carved on a marble slab, measures 50 cm x 49 cm and is set on the left side of the gate. It reads:



Persian inscription at Shishi Gate.

ز	ہجرت	گذشتہ	تواریخ	سال
نہصد	چھل	ہشت	آمد	جلال
نصب	شد	درآں	وقت	قلعہ کبار
شہنشاہ	شیرات	عمر	قرار	
زنجب	سعادت	عیان	نیست	ثانی
تمامت	کنانید	شاہو		سلطانی

Translation:

"In the Hijri year 948 came the exalted.
At that time constructed the great fort.
The emperor is Sher (Shah), with long life.
There is no match to his good fortune.
It was completed by Shahu Sultan."

The same text is repeated in the inscription over the Talaqi Gate where it appears at a height of 4.25 metres. This inscription is also on the square marble slab measuring 46 cm x 46 cm.

There are yet other inscriptions at the following places in the fort:

- (i) *Langar Khani Gate*: The inscription is in *naskh*; carved on sand stone slab measuring 50 cm x 39 cm. It is set on the right side at a height of 12.5 metres.
- (ii) *Langar Khani Tawaila*: Fixed in the middle of the facade at a height of 3.35 metres the inscription is in *naskh*.
- (iii) *Khwas Khani Gate*: The Quranic inscription in *naskh* is set on the right side of the inner gate. Yet another inscription in similar character is also set on the left side of the inner gate.



Rohtas

- (iv) *Catali Gate*: The inscription on sand stone slab measuring 30 cm x 22 cm is fixed at a height of 10 metres on the right side of the gate.
- (v) *Corner Burj, north-west of Shishi Gate*: There are sixteen inscriptions in double row of stone slabs set over eight entrances. These inscriptions which are in *naskh*, are not in a good state of preservation.

Gutch plaster has been used for the roundels on the spandrels of the mosque arches. The enamelled tiles have been used to decorate the Shish Gate. As mentioned earlier, the use of these tiles is believed to be the earliest example of its kind in the subcontinent. The Mughals in later years improved upon the technique and used this decoration in their own buildings.



Interior view of Baoli near Tulla Mori Gate.



Epilogue

It is a pity that the Rohtas Fort which had cost Sher Shah Suri a huge sum and came out to be a formidable structure could never serve the purpose for which it was built. Sher Shah died even before the completion of the stronghold. Ironical as it is, ten years later Humayun was returning to the subcontinent by way of Kabul which had always been anticipated by Sher Shah. The Governor of Rohtas, Tatar Khan Kasi, made no resistance and fled. The old friends of Mughals, the Gakkhars, once again joined hands with Humayun.

During the later years the fort never remained favourite with the Mughal rulers. Emperor Akbar the Great rested here for a single night. Jahangir while on some of his pleasure marches to Kashmir visited Rohtas for a few times. In his diary he appreciated its strategic location and said: "This fort was founded in a cleft and the strength of it cannot be imagined."

The later Mughal rulers seem to have made no use of the fort but the Durrani invaders of Punjab who held power for a short time kept a garrison and a Governor here. In the following years the Sikhs held power and except staying once on way from unsuccessful expedition to Kashmir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh never used the Rohtas Fort. The Maharaja bestowed the fort upon Sardar Mohar Singh who was succeeded by Gurmukh Singh. It was subsequently leased out to different persons and the last Chief who managed Rohtas was Raja Fazal Din Khan who joined Sher Singh in rebellion. Sher Singh bestowed Rohtas district upon him as a reward of his services.

The fort which is now a protected monument under the Antiquities Act, 1975, contains in it a small town with its flourishing



bazaar and some other amenities of life. The rooms on the Sohail Gate serve as Rest House for the visiting personnel. The Fort being of great tourist attraction has yet failed to get its share mainly because of the absence of an all-weather road which could connect it to the National Highway at Dina.

In addition to the hazard of crossing through the river to reach the Fort, the monument or the modest town in it, is unable to cater for the basic eating or drinking requirements - not to speak of other facilities - of the visitors. Even the safe drinking water is not easily available. The official tourism development organizations, therefore, advise to take along packed lunch etc. and, preferably bottled, water.





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The Baoli near Tulla Mori Gate.



About the Author:

Born at Sahiwal, Ihsan H. Nadiem got his higher education at the Government College, Lahore. He was trained as archaeologist on scholarship by the Government of Pakistan. At a later stage, however, he did specialised studies in Museology, in addition to undergoing a Certificate Course in French Language, when he earned French government fellowship. In architecture, he benefited from the scholarship of Sir Bernard M. Feilden, Director Emeritus, ICCROM, (International Centre for Conservation of Cultural Property, Rome), Italy.

He joined the Department of Archaeology, Pakistan and excavated at Banbhore, Swat (Panr I, Saidu I & II), Moenjodaro and Tulamba. As a curator he kept the charge of museums as diverse as Harappa, Umerkot, Moenjodaro, Lahore Fort and Taxila. He commanded the Regional Offices of the Department at Peshawar and Quetta before being posted as Officer-in-Charge of the Publications Branch, which he successfully reactivated after it had remained dormant for over 13 years.

He raised the prestigious Pakistan Institute of Archaeological Training and Research (PIATR) at Lahore, from the scratch and co-ordinated specialised courses, symposia and seminars arranged at the international level. He has held the charge of Director of Archaeology of

both Northern and Southern Circles which posts entail with them the archaeological research and maintaining and administering the antiquity in the provinces of Punjab and N.W.F.P, and Sindh and Balochistan, respectively.

He has also served as Professor in the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, where he structured courses on "Conservation of Architectural Heritage" as full-fledged subject for Master's degree. In addition to teaching, he guided students in preparation and presentation of their dissertations.

He has also acted as University Examiner for the Master's Degree in Archaeology of the University of Peshawar, in addition to being External Supervisor for the dissertations submitted for M.Phil.

He has published about twenty Research Papers in different journals of international repute, over 250 popular articles on cultural heritage of Pakistan appearing in different dailies and periodicals, and an Excavation Report on Panr, in two volumes, from Rome. Four departmental brochures on Cultural Heritage - Lahore Fort, Shahdara Monuments, Rohtas Fort and National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi - have also been authored by him. In addition, he edited Pakistan Archaeology volumes 10-22, and has to his credit the preparation and publishing of numerous professional and technical reports.

He has rendered in to English the First Volume of Al Amin, a book on the life and times of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) written in Urdu by M. Rafique Dogar.

His other books include: 1) Moenjodaro - Heritage of Mankind; 2) Lahore - A Glorious Heritage; 3) Historic Mosques of Lahore; 4) Makli - the Necropolis at Thatta; 5) Thatta - The Great Pakistani Desert; 6) The Great Heritage of Pakistan; 7) Buddhist Gandhara; 8) Architecture, and 9) published by the Government of Lahore. He also has several poems have appeared in different publications as also two collections: 1) Illusory Trance, and 2) Golden Rays.

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