

Foundation of the city of Hissar Firuza

Kaynat

Research Scholar, Department of History, AMU, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

In this paper we discussed the foundation of the city of Hissar Firuza. The word 'Hissar' meaning is siege warfare [1]. The district's name is derived from its headquarters town, Hissar, founded by Firuz Shah Tughlaq in about 1354 A.D. [2] According to V.S. Agarwala, a beautiful and prosperous city of Kuru Janapada referred to by Panini, was the ancient name of Hissar [3]. However, the antiquity of the area can be established based on the discovery of pre-historic and historical sites at a number of places in the district [4]. Some of the most prominent sites are Banawali, Rakhigarhi, Seswal, Agroha, and Hansi.

Keyword: Hissar firuza, firuz shah, road from khurasan

Introduction

The new ruler came to have a somewhat unusual fancy for the tract. Being on the direct road from Khurasan, Multan, and the Western Punjab, which ultimately reached Delhi, it had great importance from military and trade points of view. Besides, the place was admirably adapted as a starting point for the hunting expeditions in which the Sultan frequently indulged [5]. Quite understandably, therefore, Firuz did many good turns to the district. It is a great credit to him that he established the new towns of Fatehabad and Hissar and built two canals. One takes off from the Ghagghar at Phulad and follows the course of the Joiya up to the new town of Fatehabad, and the second from the Yamuna to the towns of Hansi and Hissar is known as Western Yamuna (Jumna) Canal. The headquarters of the *shiq* or division of Hansi, which included the tract comprising the present Hissar district, was shifted from Hansi to Hissar.

With God's grace, after his return to Delhi, Firuz Shah remained there for several years. After the return from Lakhnauti, the Sultan spent two and a half years in the direction of Hissar Firuza and provided relief and contentment to his subjects through his favours [6]. During this period, the Sultan founded the fortress town Hissar Firuza. Whenever the Sultan returned to the capital, he would stay there for some time and then return to the fortress city of Hissar Firuza. The Sultan had decided to build the city of Hissar Firuza. At that time, two big villages were at the site where Hissar Firuza was to be built. One was called big Laras [7], and the other was called small Laras [8]. In the big Laras, there were fifty animal sheds of bamboo, and in the small Laras, there were forty bamboo sheds for animals. There was no village without such bamboo sheds. When the Sultan saw the ground and earth of big Laras, he liked it and said, "How nice would it to be found a city here." The land there, as destined by God, was always short of water, and when the travellers from Iraq and Khurasan reached there during the summer, they paid four *Jitals* for a glass of water on account of such shortage. The Sultan remarked, "I am hopeful of God's kindness and mercy as I am laying the foundation of a new on this spot

for the benefit of Muslims, God, the merciful, would surely provide enough water for this land through his kindness and mercy [9]."

Foundation of the city of Hissar Firuza

Firuz Shah encamped at that spot and laid the city's first foundation stone with great effort. He remained busy in this job along with his nobles (*Khans* and *Maliks*) for several years. The stones were brought from the mountain range of Narsai. Mixing with the hard lime, the stones were used for the construction, and at last, a huge fort-palace with sufficient height began to be erected. The Sultan allotted portions of the

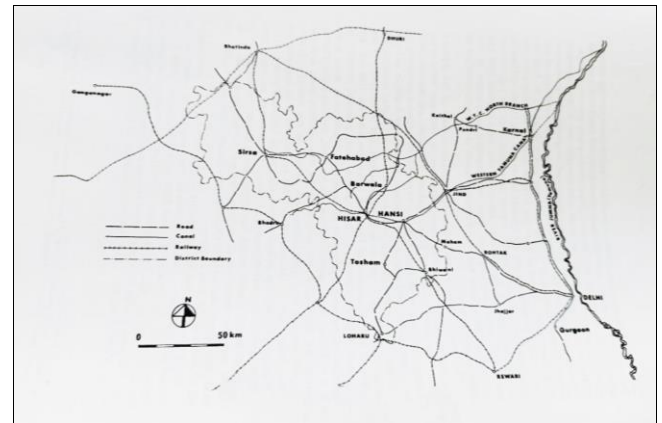


Fig 1: Map of Hissar Firuza (Courtesy: Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy)

Projected city to his *Amirs* for building their palaces. Every noble began to build his quarters. When the fortress palace was ready, the Sultan named it Hissar Firuza. After the completion of the fortress, ditches were dug around it. The ditches were so dug that plaster was removed from the bottom to sideways, and a rich battlement was provided. An illustrious *Hauz* (tank) was constructed inside the fortress, from which water was brought to the ditch. The water, so stored in the ditch, lasted from one year to another year. A palace was also built inside the fort, the like of which did not exist in any part of the world. Several halls were built in

the palace with immense ornamentation and decoration. Numerous puzzling (confusing) devices were put in ^[10]. On such puzzle was that if any intelligent and wise individual could enter the palace in the fort and roam about in some of the halls, he would reach the centre of the palace. The lower portion of the palace was exceedingly dark, and no one could come out of the dark chamber unless guided by the watchman ^[11].

It is related that a sweeper was once lost in that palace and remained absent for several days until the watchmen rescued him from the darkness. Briefly stated, like great kings, Firuz Shah completed the construction of Hissar Firuza with the wonderful and mysterious palace ^[12].

Like the Sultan, the *Maliks, Khans, and courtiers built their residences like beautiful, majestic houses*. Firuz Shah was conscious of the fact that the place was without water. He, therefore, decided to arrange for water and personal attention and saw to it that through canals, the water of two rivers, Setluj and Yamuna, was carried to the city. The canal from Yamuna was *Rajabwah*, while the other from Setluj was *Ulughkhani*. The mouth of both these canals was at the junction of Karnal, from where these were brought to Hissar Firuza, a distance of eighty *kos*. Afif's father, who was, in those days, holding the post of a scribe and was closely associated with the special court of the Sultan, had informed the humble author that honourable Firuz Shah spent two and a half years in building the township and along with him, the whole public cooperated in his effort ^[13].

Firuz Shah populated the city with great pleasure and joy and planted trees and gardens which produced all varieties of dry fruits. Oranges, all-season fruits, Sugarcane, Indian cane, flowers, etc., were also produced in the garden. Soft Sugarcane, black and white, was of such a variety that if one tried to remove its skin, the whole of it would get removed, and the thinner roots would also pass into the mouth. The *Kharif* crops were very good in the area, but *Rabi* crops were not so good because wheat cannot flourish without water. Because of the two canals for the region, both the season crops began to flourish ^[14].

Before Firuz Shah's reign, under the previous Sultan, this region was placed under the *Shiq* (district) Hansi. After the foundation of Hissar Firuza, it began to be recorded in the official records as *Shiq* of Hissar Firuza. Hansi, Fatehabad, Sarsuti, Salora, Khizrabad, and other *Iqtas* henceforth became parts of the *Shiq* (district) of Hissar Firuza. In short, it became a majestic city with sufficient agriculture and habitation. Malik Dalyan was appointed as its *Shiqdar* (Collector). With more water through canals, enough water became available for irrigation. Wells could also be dug. With the abundance of water-soaked, finding the water within four yards of digging the well was possible ^[15].

The Hissar District is located in eastern Haryana, bordered on the North by Punjab and on the South by Rajasthan. The district is densely packed with historical structures, many of which are concentrated in Hansi, the region's ancient capital, and Hissar, which replaced Hansi as the region's capital in A.H. 757/1356 A.D.

The town of Hisar (modern name), historically known as Hissar Firuza, is located 29° 10N 75° 44E ^[16] at a tactical point where the old Delhi-Multan route branches to Khurasan. Firuz Shah established the settlement in response to the difficulty of restoring this area of desert. Numerous other towns, including Fatehabad, Firuzabad, Jaunpur, Tughlaqpur of Kasna, Tughlaqpur of Sapdam, and a third

Tughlaqpur in the Makut region, were also built by this monarch. In contrast to the other cities, Hissar Firuza was situated in the desert and encircled by hostile terrain. During Firuz Shah's fourth year of rule and three years after his successful campaign to Bengal, the town was founded in A.H. 757/1356 A.D. ^[17] The Sultan's historian Shams Siraj ^[18] vividly records the town's construction.

His Majesty King Firuz completed the town's construction with joy and glee. He created a lot of gardens and planted a lot of saplings, which led to the presence of various kinds of fruit in those gardens, including citrus trees, grains (*junhari*), and fruit-bearing trees (*sadaphal*), ^[19] and a variety of flowers in addition to a lot of Sugarcane, including both the red (*Punda*) and the black varieties. The Sugarcane was so delicate that if someone tried to peel the skin off with their teeth, they would simply cut straight through it. The Hissar region had an autumn crop in the past, but the spring harvest was unpredictable since wheat needed water to thrive. Harvests for both seasons were entirely dependable when Firuz Shah used canals to transport a plentiful water supply from a significant distance to Hissar Firuza.

According to Shams Siraj's account, Firuz Shah recognised the site's strategic importance and suitability for city construction. The Sultan's initial attempt to provide water for the town by digging large tanks to collect monsoon rain proved insufficient. It should be noted that large tanks of this type are common in India and serve as the primary source of water for many desert towns, particularly in Rajasthan. Because the rainwater reservoirs were insufficient, Firuz Shah devised a more ambitious plan to dig the Suttlej and Jumna canals. Shams Siraj ^[20] continues by saying that the water of these canals was also used by the nearby towns and villages, including Jind ^[21] Dahatarhata, Hansi, and Tughlaqpur of Sapdam.

The use of the word *alang* in Shams Siraj's description of Firuz Shah's method of operation to build the fortified town wall is an interesting point. The term is used to denote the areas of the site that each of the nobles will oversee. *Alang* is a military term that designates the garrison or camp of a battalion as well as a protective wall used as an entrenchment. The term implies that Hissar's building was a military project. The town site was apparently divided into multiple camps, each with a nobleman in charge of constructing a particular part of the fort. To make sure that the building work completed by several groups fit together and appeared as a whole, a master plan and detailed drawings with exact measurements would have been necessary. Shams Siraj claims that Firuz Shah appointed himself a chief engineer and put himself in charge of the town's construction and canal excavation. Everyone may agree that Firuz Shah was a talented architect and engineer. For instance, he designed and built a canal and other buildings for Firuzabad, his new capital in Delhi, including the complex now known as Firuz Shah Kotla, on the top of which he re-erected an ancient column, renaming it the Golden Minaret. Firuz Shah also designed all the equipment connected with the column's removal, transportation, and re-erection. Firuz Shah's palace complex is illustrated in miniatures in a 16th-century copy of the *Sirat-i-Firuzshahi* ^[22]. They show the plan- not the usual type of perspective drawing- of Firuz Shah Kotla and the Jami Mosque of Firuzabad. The Jami Masjid's plan is particularly intriguing because it resembles a modern architect's drawing. Because

a representation of a building's plan is not seen in any other miniature, it can only be assumed that the illustrator of the *Sirat-i-Firuz Shahi* copied it from the original manuscript, which was written during Firuz Shah's reign and included drawings of the royal buildings. It is not unlikely that similar pictures were produced for the fortification of Hissar Firuza and the town's main buildings.

Malik Daylan, mentioned by Shams Siraj as the first governor of Hissar, was a nobleman in Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq's court in Delhi at the time of Sultan's death in A.H. 752/1351-2 A.D. [23] Soon after Firuz Shah declared himself the new Sultan and challenged Khwaja Jahan and other Delhi court nobles, he joined Firuz Shah's camp. Malik Daylan was the Master of the Sultan's Hunt (*mir shikar* or *amir-i-shikar*) and played an essential part in the decisive battle of Ikdala during Firuz Shah's campaign to Bengal.

[24] Malik Daylan, as governor of Hissar, may also have been associated with Sultan's passion for hunting, as Hissar was well known for its game, particularly cheetah, and was one of the kings of Delhi's main hunting grounds [25].

An inscription of Malik Daylan has been found in Ladnun in Rajasthan [26]. Historically, Ladnun was part of the Nagaur district. Nonetheless, the inscription, which originally belonged to the town's Jami Mosque, indicates that during Firuz Shah's reign, Ladnun was included in the newly established district of Hissar Firuza. The inscription also gives Malik Daylan's full name and title as Malik-i-Muluk al-Sharq Jamal Khan Daylan, which Shams Siraj did not record.

After the Firuz Shah's death and the subsequent power vacuum, Hissar became the site of a battle between the remaining Tughlaq commanders. The town was captured by the Tughlaq Sultan Muhammad bin Firuz Shah in Ramadan A.H. 791/August-September 1389 A.D. The Sultan ordered the execution of the rebellious nobles and many innocent people [27]. When Timur invaded north India, the people of Hissar suffered once more. It is unclear whether the town of Hissar was raided, as Timur mentions in his memoir [28], that he passed Hissar Firuza on the 4th of *Rabi I*, A.H. 801/14th November 1398 A.D., apparently without capturing it, but Shams Siraj [29], who witnessed the invasion, implies that Hissar was attacked, the houses were plundered. Many people were massacred, except those who fled to Hansi, which Timur spared because it was the residence of the descendants of Shaikh Jamal al-din Hansawi. After the departure of Timur, the power struggle continued in the region. Hissar finally fell into the hands of Khizr Khan in A.H. 811/1407-8 A.D. [30], the Multan governor, who eventually succeeded to the throne of Delhi in A.H. 817/1414-15 A.D., and founded the Sayyid dynasty.

The tract is now included in this district, and parts of the Rohtak district are better known in history as Haryana. People attribute the name's origin to a Raja named Hari Chand, said to have come from Oudh and settled in this country at some unspecified time. Others attribute the name to the word *hari* (slain), in reference to a legend about Paras Ram slaughtering Khatris on 21 different occasions in a village a few miles west of Jind. The Settlement Officer, Munshi Amin Chand, derives the name from *hariaban*, the name of a wild plant with which the country was formerly said to be overgrown. A more likely derivation is from *hara* (green), in reference to the expanse of brushwood that once covered the majority of the district and still covers portions

of it at certain times of the year, giving the entire country a green appearance. The closest approach to the history of the period preceding the Muhammadan conquest of Hindustan is to be found in certain vague traditions of the settlement in the district of various branches of the Royal Tunwar Rajput race of Dehli, followed, after the fall of that house, by fresh immigrations under Chauhan leaders. One thing is certain: from the beginning of time, the town of Hansi was the seat of the local government and the capital of Haryana.

Soon after the fall of Delhi under Shahab-ud-din, Muhammadan rule was extended to Hansi [31]. The city of Hissar had not yet been founded, and Hansi continued for many years as the seat of local administration. In the 14th century, however, the attention of Emperor Firuz Shah Tughlaq was drawn to Haryana, and this monarch founded a new town naming it after himself, Hissar Firuza, or the 'fort of Firuz'. An interesting account of these incidents given by Shams-i-Siraj Afif, one of Sir H. Elliot's historians, 'Sultan Firuz', we read, "passed several years after his campaign in Bengal (1352-53 A.D.) in riding about Delhi, and finding himself in the neighbourhood of Hissar Firuza, he exerted himself actively and liberally in endeavouring to provide for the needs of the country." The site of the future city was at that time occupied by the two villages, called the little and large Laras. The neighbourhood of this village, 'continues the historians,' greatly pleased Sultan Firuz, and it had a severe water shortage, and during the hot season, travellers from Trak and Khurasan had to pay up to four Jitals for a pitcher full. He thought it would be wise to establish a city there. So, with the belief that if he constructed a town for the benefit of Muslims, God would supply it with water, the Sultan decided to create a city." Finding however, when his city was completed, surrounded by a wall and ditch, and adorned with a palace "which had no equal," that his expectations with regard to water remained unfulfilled, he "resolve in his munificence to bring a supply of water thither," - a resolve which resulted in the construction of the canal now known as that of the western Jamuna. The secret of Firuz Shah's choice of Hissar Firuza as a favourite residence is likely to be found in his passion for sport, which found ample outlet in the district's wild *jungle*. In those days, the Ghaggar, or Saraswati as it was known, carried a much larger volume of water into this part of the country and was a renowned hunting ground. Firuz Shah's hunting expeditions went as far as Divalpur (now in the Montgomery district), 130 miles northwest of Hissar. Another interesting fact from Shams Siraj's account is that in the 14th century, travellers between Delhi and Khurasan frequently used the now-deserted route through Montgomery, Sirsa, and Hissar. Whatever truth there may be in Shams Siraj's fulsome account of Firuz Shah's treatment of Haryana, it is undeniable that the monarch did much to promote the welfare of the country, both by constructing a canal and by providing the incentive always afforded by the residence of a court to the country's industries. In addition to Hissar, he established the town of Fatehabad in this district, naming it after his son, and built a small canal from the Ghaggar to supply it with water—a canal still in use today [32].

An interesting account of Taimur's march through Bhattiana and Haryana will be found in many sources [33].

As mentioned in the Haryana district gazetteer, the village of Firuz still exists; it was one of the smaller forts founded by Firuz Shah, some 12 miles from Sirsa. The position of

Rajabpur and Ahroni is doubtful, but at Dasul, some 12 miles north of Tohana, there are remains of an old fort called Kol, which perhaps Marks the site of Ahroni. The local tradition states that Taimur marched from Fatehabad to Kol and attacked the Pachchadas of that place, driving them out with a great loss and forcing them to retreat to Tohana and take up a position on the banks of the Ghaggar between the villages of Himmatpur, Puri, and Udaipur, where they were again attacked next day by Taimur's troops. When Taimur passed on to Kaithal, they resettled at Kol. The architectural remains of this period are largely unremarkable. Old mosques and other religious and secular monuments can be found throughout the country, but the town of Hissar is particularly rich. Firuz Shah's two stone pillars at Hissar and Fatehabad must be accepted. These pillars, 30 and 20 feet tall, resemble the well-known monolith known as the *lat* of Firuz Shah in Delhi. They are probably imitations^[34]. The pillar at Fatehabad bears an inscription that is said to be now quite illegible. There are some ancient inscriptions on the rocks of the hill above Tusham. Copies of them have been sent to General Cunningham, who finds one of them to be about A.D. They bear the same standard which characterises the coin of Ghalot Kacha, father of Chandra Gupta I, whose most probable date is 78 A.D. The body of the inscription is a record of a family of religious teachers or Acharjiyas, worshippers of Vishnu^[35].

Conclusion

At last we conclude that from the time of Firuz Shah, Hissar continued to be a city of some importance and the headquarters of a *Sarkar* or revenue division. In the time of Akbar, the *Sarkar* of Hissar Firuz embraced the whole of the present district together with Sirsa, as far as the river war, and parts of the modern Rohtak district, and the territory now included in Bikaner to the west, and the protected Sikh States to the east.

References

1. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, by H. Iram, new edition, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1960:3:469.
2. Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi*, hindi tr. S.A.B. Rizvi, Tughlaq Kalina Bharat Aligarh, 1957:2:73-5, also see Haryana Gazetteers Organization Revenue Department Chandigarh (India) 1987, 25.
3. V.S. Agrawala, Panini Kalina Bharatavarsha, hindi SaM, 2012, p. 86; Panini's Ashtadhyayi, Motilal Banarsidas Publ., 1989.
4. A. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Reports*, Vol. V, 1872-73; Calcutta, 1875. Also see Archaeology of Rohak and Hisar Districts, Haryana, Ph. D. Dissertation, 1972, MSS. Banawali, A Look Back into the Pre-Indus Civilizations, Special Board of Archaeology Government of Haryana.
5. *Haryana District Gazetteer*, 'Reprint of Hisar District Gazetteer', Gazetteer Organisation Revenue Department Haryana, Chandigarh, 1915, 21.
6. Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, Eng. tr. R. C. Jauhari, as *Medieval India in Transition: A First Hand Account*, Sundeep Prakashan, New Delhi, 2001, 90.
7. Ferishta calls the village *Abasin* or *Raisin*, while in the *Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi* it is named *Araman*, and in the *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* called *Laras*, cited from *Archaeology Survey of India Reports*, 5, 142.
8. Afif, *Tarikh*, p. 24.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, 92-93.
16. Map of Hissar Region, Army Map Service, Washington D. C., 1968, map no. NH43-11; *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, New Edition, 1908:13:155.
17. Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, ed. Muhammad Hidayat Husain, Asiatic Society Calcutta, 1931, pp. 125-6, Eng. tr. K.K Basu, Karanchi, 1977, Eng. tr. Beveridge, Delhi, 1992, Shams Siraj does not give the date of the foundation of the town.
18. Afif, *Tarikh*, pp. 124-8. This translation is from the published Persian text and varies in many points with the abstract of Elliot, see Elliot, III, 298-300.
19. Awl may be arum campanulatum but so far we have not established the precise meaning of Sikandar awl. Elliot does not translate this passage.
20. Afif, *Tarikh*, p.129.
21. The text reads Junayd, but it seems to be a reference to Jind, a town shown in Figure 1, 60 km east of Hissar, n the road to Karnal.
22. J. A., Page, *A Memoir on Kotla Firoz Shah: Delhi*, Memoirs of the Archaeology Survey of India, Vol. LII, Delhi, 1937, pl. 6 and colour pl. IV d. s
23. Afif, *Tarikh*, p. 120.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 115-17.
25. *Ibid.*, 318-20; Barani, 599; Ibn Mubarak, Abul Fazl, *Ain Akbari*, Vol. I, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873, p. 207.
27. M.A. Chaghtai, Some inscriptions from Jodhpur State, Rajputana, *EIM*, 1949-50, 18-19; *Rajasthan I*, 62.
28. Sirhindi, *Tarikh*, p.147.
29. The authors did not have access to a complete text of the *Malfuzat-i-Timuri*, and had to rely on the translation in Elliot, III, 427.
30. Afif, *Tarikh*, p. 133.
31. Sirhindi, *Tarikh*, p.177-9.
32. *Haryana District Gazetteer*, 'Reprint of Hisar District Gazetteer, 1883-84', Gazetteer Organisation Revenue Department Haryana, Chandigarh, 1999, p. 8.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
34. Elliot's *History of India*, III, 428ff, 92ff; David Price, *Chronological retrospect, or memoirs of the principal events of Mahommedan history*, J. Booth, London, 1921, III, 247ff, and Brigg's *Ferishtah I*, 489ff.
35. *Archaeological Survey Reports*, Vol. V, pp. 140-142.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-40.