

**'GATEWAYS OF ERSTWHILE FORT OF MEERUT'**

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In the pre modern period Meerut was essentially a fort oriented city. A strong surrounded it from all sides<sup>1</sup>. Towards this fort a strong and high wall was constructed. From the view point of security a deep and wide moat was created, which was always filled with water. In this way a double security was provided to the city of Meerut. This extensive wall surrounding the city was made up of eight entrance.<sup>2</sup> Over the passage of time this high wall and the entry archways were destroyed, with bare remnants existing and baring a few entrances, all other entrances have been reconstructed, or new ones replacing the old. A detailed study of these remnants will be able to establish the veracity of the period during which these entrances were constructed. In due course of time the chasm of the moat was filled up with sand completely obliterating all evidence of its existence, new forts and monuments were constructed over these moats, on account of which any scope forwards its exploration or discovery was rendered void.

The remnants of this fort wall can be traced, which may be either attributed to the monuments built in the modern period, or may be buried under these monuments, but even these few remnants are strong enough to throw light upon the technique, material and design, of its very structure, on the basis of an investigative analysis it has been proved that this fortified wall was made up of brick and mortar and limestone. The initial phase of the construction of this fortified wall started in the medieval period. The use of limestone attests to this fact, as it clearly observed that the use of limestone came into India with the advents of the Muslims into the country. In the ancient period, monuments were built chiefly with brick of mud or clay. Owing to the scarcity of stone as a building medium, the fort built in this part of western U.P. was made up of bricks. The fortified wall was made up of small sized bricks which were treated and produced in a Kiln. The technique of making bricks in this way was prevalent since the ancient period to the extent that the city of Alamgirpur was situated in the district of Meerut.<sup>3</sup> The monuments of this city were built on the Kiln treated bricks which testifies to the fact that the wall could have been built during the medieval period. The external part of this had a battlement surrounding it.<sup>4</sup> The shape of this parapet was pointed made up of small peep – holes to assist in the release of fire, arrows or inflammable material through it. The soldiers could easily stand behind these battlements and could also parade around with all their protective arms and ammunition.<sup>5</sup> This fortified wall of Meerut comprised mixture of lime and mortar plastered both within and without, which reinforced the strength and stability of the wall. The Pre modern Meerut was spread in a radius of a few kilometres<sup>6</sup> on account of which the wall was of considerable length. To ensure the strength and tenacity of this wall, every corner or circular portion was made up of a minaret, which served as a security measure. There is no evidence available of the existence of these minarets but the study of the technique of such minarets of pre modern India reveals that strong, rigid and semi circular minarets were built along the extensively long wall to ensure its tenacity and firmness. Consequently such technique and its implementation have been used in the fortification of Meerut.

In its initial phase the fortified wall constituted eight entrances or doorways<sup>7</sup> In due course during the medieval period, one additional entry was built which brought the number of fortified parts to 9.<sup>8</sup> The Entry gates area named as follows : Delhi Gate, Shorab Gate, Shahpeer

Gate, Budhana Gate, Lisari Gate, Chamar Gate, Khair Nagar Gate, Kamboh Gate and Baghpat Gate.<sup>9</sup> In so far as the names of these entrances are concerned, investigations have revealed that the names of these entrance gates have been acquired over a period of time. The ancient names have either changed or been forgotten. This has been ascertained through archeological survey that all the entrances have either been reconstructed or have been completely changed in the course of its re-establishment. However, the location of these entrances remain exactly where they were built. Certain Entrances such as – Khairnagar Gate, Kamboh Gate, Shahpeer Gate and Shorab Gate, endorse the medieval architecture, which reflects the fortified entrances as a façade based on the knowhow of monument construction. The Primary investigation and analysis involved the study of Khair Nagar Gate, Kamboh Gate, Shahpeer Gate and Shorab Gate, endorse the medieval architecture, which reflects the fortified entrances as a façade based on the knowhow of monument construction. The Primary investigation and analysis involved the study of Khair Nagar Gate that brought forth the following result-

The Khair Nagar Gate is a structure of the medieval period. This gate was constructed by Nawab Khairandesh Khan,<sup>10</sup> whose very introduction reserves a special place in History.

Nawab Khairandesh Khan was the son of Idris Abdul Ujjah who belonged to the Quresh family and a descendent of Janab Ibn-e-Jubain, Ibn-e-owam, Ibn-e-Asad. The forefathers of the Nawab travelled from Mecca to Medina and from there settled in the “Kanb region” of Afghanistan. This fact has been described in the book “Misbahul Arafeen” by Maulana Sheikh Jain-ul- Abdeen and in the chronicles of Maulvi Mohammad Hussein Azad. Because of the name Kanb these are called Kanbvi, then Kanbi and eventually came to be called as Kambohs and are recognized in contemporary times by the same name.<sup>11</sup>

The Nawab Khairandesh’s grandfather and father Nawab Dadan Khan was a Subedar of Lahore. Nawab Khairandesh’s father was the Wazir in the court of Emperor Jahangir and Shahjahan.<sup>12</sup> Nawab Mohabbat Khan had five sons who were appointed to high ranking positions in the Mughal court. Nawab Khairandesh was one amongst these five brothers like his forefathers and his father, he too was a compassionate and religious man. He was appointed general in the reign of Aurangzeb. He was a subedar at Rohilkhand and in many other sub areas. Khairandesh Khan built many small but beautiful mansions for himself and his relatives. He also founded a market, which is still popularly known as Khairnagar Market. The Havelis were constructed like a fort. Therefore the Royal Gazette Chronicles the ‘interior art of Khairnagar (the inner part of the fort of Khairnagar)<sup>12</sup>

Besides this, the Nawab constructed another architecturally splendid archway as an exit door, the construction of which was completed in 1108 Hijri. This door is named as the Maqujal Khair, and is currently known as the Khairnagar gateway.<sup>14</sup>

This Khair Nagar gateway is not built as an entrance but as a doorway to a house. The door is double storeyed with a passage running right through its centre, the roof of which is based on semi- circular domes<sup>15</sup> and small rooms are built on either sides the access to<sup>16</sup> which on both sides is made with the help of stairs. The entrance to these stairs is situated on both side of the front of the doorway<sup>17</sup> and skylights were built for cross ventilation. This has been virtually destroyed but some remains still exist.<sup>18</sup>

The front and back of the central passage has an annexe running through and the domes are like staples,<sup>19</sup> with pointed ends, which is a chief characteristic of Akbar’s reign; the central dome has a three tiered alcove,<sup>20</sup> with the top most alcove being completely shut. The height of

this dome and the three tiered alcove exhibited the first storey of this imposing structure.<sup>21</sup> The second storey has three exit points<sup>22</sup> situated on the top of the central minaret, and there are sealed domes on both sides of it.<sup>23</sup> The front and rear of the Khair Nagar entrance is identical in structure.<sup>24</sup> There are pillars constructed at the corners of the entrance and it also has two storeyed like the main structure. The upper part is circular and the lower portion is octagonal.<sup>25</sup> The pillars built on the main structure are in the shape of a pyramid and is supported by a flower shaped capitals and circular abaks.

To ensure the separateness of each floor of this doorway,<sup>26</sup> there is an external protrusion of a cornice put to use.<sup>27</sup>

The main edifice of the Khair Nagar door way has been based on the trarbet and corwall technique and the way to the central minaret has been built with the use of the Islamic dome structure<sup>28</sup> the technique of which is not scientific but based on the technique of Indian corwall. In the construction of this entrance bricks and limestone have been used. After constructing the entire monument by bricks, It has been plastered by a thick layer of limestone. There are two small minarets on two corners of the roof.<sup>29</sup>

One can see traces of artistic designs and decoration adorning the central passage of the interior of the dome. This design bears close resemblance to the artistic style of Shahjahan's region.<sup>30</sup> The beautification is enhanced by the use of various colours, which have been virtually destroyed over a passage of time.<sup>31</sup> The main and central part of the dome is shaped octagonally<sup>32</sup> Along with this the central passage of the Central minaret is dome shaped in the making of which the scientific Islamic Techniques has not been used, instead the cornell techniques has been used. To acquire a rounded aess of this dome small graphics of the minarets have been made<sup>33</sup> the exit to which opens out into rooms built on both sides. The inner Central portion of the dome has some decorations made, which have been destroyed with time, but a few traces still remain.<sup>34</sup> The Khair Nagar entrance has two flights of stairs on either side, with a passage running like a consider, the roof of which is arched, and has three levels, but the shape of these arches are compressed<sup>35</sup> In order to provide reinforcement for its stronghold supporting wall have been constructed around it.<sup>36</sup>

A comprehensive survey of the Khairnagar gate attests to the fact that apart from being a main entry point, it also provided emergency shelter for the soldiers, who were on duty.

The roof of this gate was built in such a way as to provide a far reaching range of Vision for the soldiers who at the time of enemy attack could retaliate in an offensive manner<sup>37</sup>, with their weapons immediately. At present the second floor has become a residential complex.

Thus it can be stated that the Khair Nagar gate occupies a prominent place in the annals of medical history and carries an indelible impression of itself.

In the series of such historic monuments, the Kamboh gate also occupies an important role.<sup>38</sup> The construction of this gate was supervised by Nawab Abu Muhammad Khan Kamboh, belonged to aristocratic royalty.<sup>39</sup>

Nawab Abu Muhammad Khan too, was an advisor to both Emperors Jahangir and Shahjahan. It has been mentioned in page 308 of the royal Chronicle that Nawab Abu Muhammad Khan Kamboh was bestowed with special favours.<sup>40</sup> During his life time the Nawab built a dam which bound the Kali river to Meerut, to provide facility of water to the entire city, but due to lack of Maintenance, it was closed down, and the British used the dam for the

outflow of sewage water from the city, which exists even today and is more familiarly known as Abu Nallah.<sup>41</sup>

This besides the Nawab Saheb also renovate the Shahi Idgah and built a small fort for himself which has been referred to in the royal gazette, and is presently known as Kotla Mohalla.<sup>42</sup>

Along side the Kotla habitat the Nawab also constructed an elaborate and exquisite Royal gate which is referred to in history as the Kamboh Gate.<sup>43</sup>

During the British rule, the Kamboh gate was built by Fateh Muhammad Khan, which was in the shape of a clock tower. What was known as Kamboh Gate came to be familiarly addressed as "Ghanta Ghar".<sup>44</sup>

Though this gate has lost much of its original identity, It has a very special place in history as the Ghanta Ghar of the city, by which it is popularly known.

So far as Shahpeer Gate and Sohrab gate are concerned the forts have been renovated and new edifices were constructed at the time of the British rule, and the gates are an illustration of English architecture.<sup>45</sup>

Meerut is one of the main bastions of Western Uttar Pradesh with a vast populace, which increases with each passing day. Much of the desecration and vandalise these ancient monuments, ramparts and gates are on account an ever burgeoning population. An exhaustive survey confirms that a wide moat may have been built around the fortified rampart, with a view to maintain security, the evidence of which has completely disappeared but the ground floor around these entrances are a testimony to the fact that there might have been a water filled moat in that place.

#### References :

1. H.R. Navell : Gazetter of Meerut, Lucknow, 1922, pg. 272
2. Same, pg. 272
3. Vighnesh Kumar : Meerut ke Paanch Hazar Varsh, pg. 2
4. See Plate No. 1 B.
5. Same
6. H.R. Navell : Gazetter of Meerut Lucknow (1922), pg. 1-2.
7. Same, pg. 272
8. Same
9. Same
10. H.R. Navell : Gazettier of Meerut, Lucknow (1922), p.g. 272 & Maulana Faiz Ahmad Sahab Kamboh : Alam Shahir, Nami Press, Meeurt (1900)
11. Same, pg. 17-18
12. Same, pg. 150-152

13. Maulana Faiz Ahmad Kamboh : Alam Shahir, Meerut (1900), pg. 150-152 & Shamsul Hasan Khan Kamboh (1964), pg. 8-11
14. Same
15. See, Plate No. 1 A,B
16. See, Plate No. 2A
17. See, Plate No. 2B
18. \* This royal document is of Badshah Shahalam's time & on this 21<sup>st</sup> Date, mongh – Jamadi Usani; 1214 Hizri is written & Andruni Kalaiyem Khairnagar, is written on this document & Qazi of that time was Ghulam Jainul Abdeen. It is enclosed here, pg. 43
19. See, Plate No. 1 A & Plate No. 3B
20. See, Plate No. 1A & Plate No. 4A
21. Same
22. See, Plate No. 1AB
23. Same
24. See, Plate No. 1AB & Plate No. 3B
25. See Plate No. 1A & Plate No. 4AB
26. Same
27. See, Plate No. 1A & Plate No. 4A
28. See, Plate No. 1A & Plate No. 3B
29. See, Plate No. 1AB
30. See, Plate No. 5A & Plate No. 6A
31. Same
32. See, Plate No. 5B
33. See, Plate No. 6A & Plate no. 7AB
34. See Plate No. 6 A
35. See Plate No. 8 A B
36. See Plate No. 1 A
37. See Plate No. 1 A B
38. H.R. Navell: Gazettier of Meerut, Lucknow (1922) Pg – 272 & Maulana Faiz Ahmad Sahib Kamboh: Alam Shahir Meerut (1900)
39. Maulana Faiz Ahmad Sahib Kamboh: Alam Shahir, Meerut (1900) Pg. 146-148.
40. Same, pg. 146-148

41. Same, pg. 147

42. Same, pg. 147

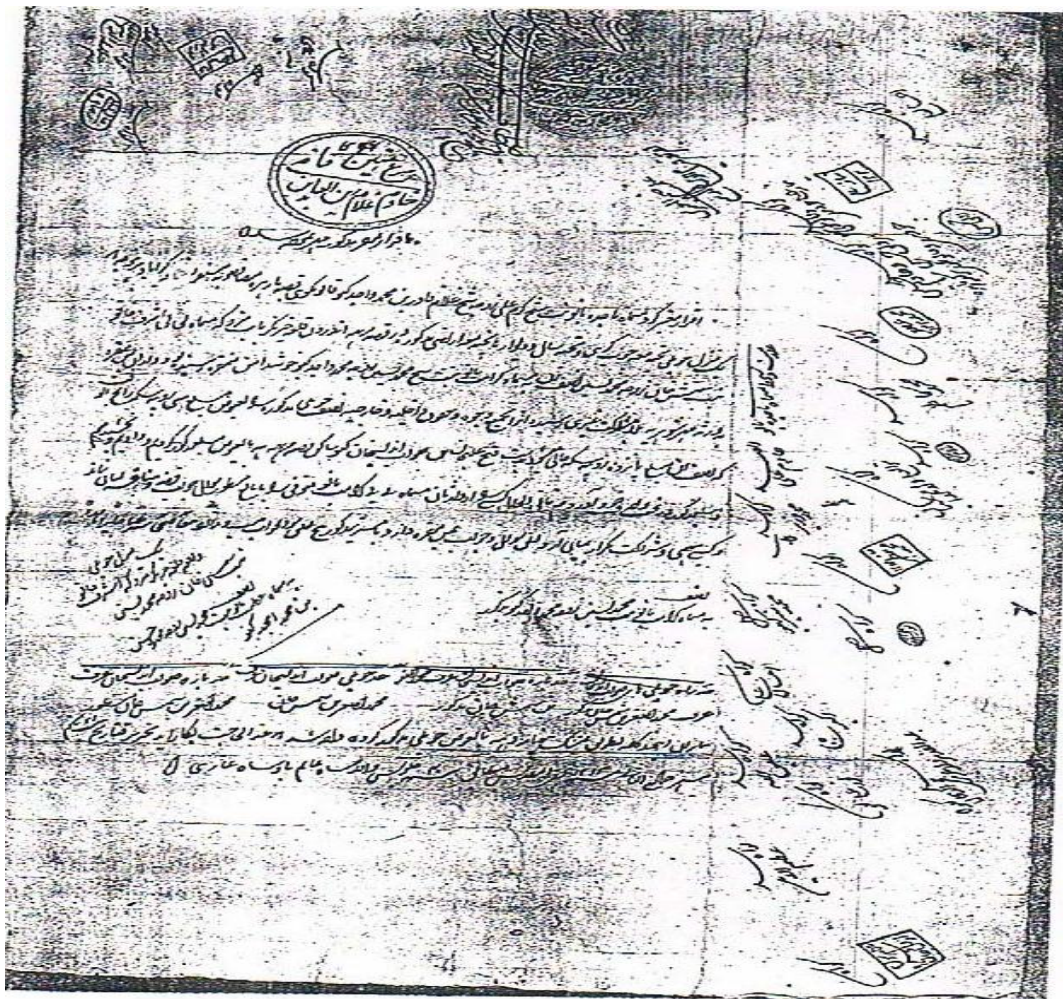
This Gazette is of 1179 Hizri of Shah Alam’s time & related to Kamboh Gate. This Gazette is of Mohd. Hashim Kamboj of Meerut City. It is written in this “Kotla Sheikh Abu Mohd. Kamboh” see enclosed copy pg. 44.

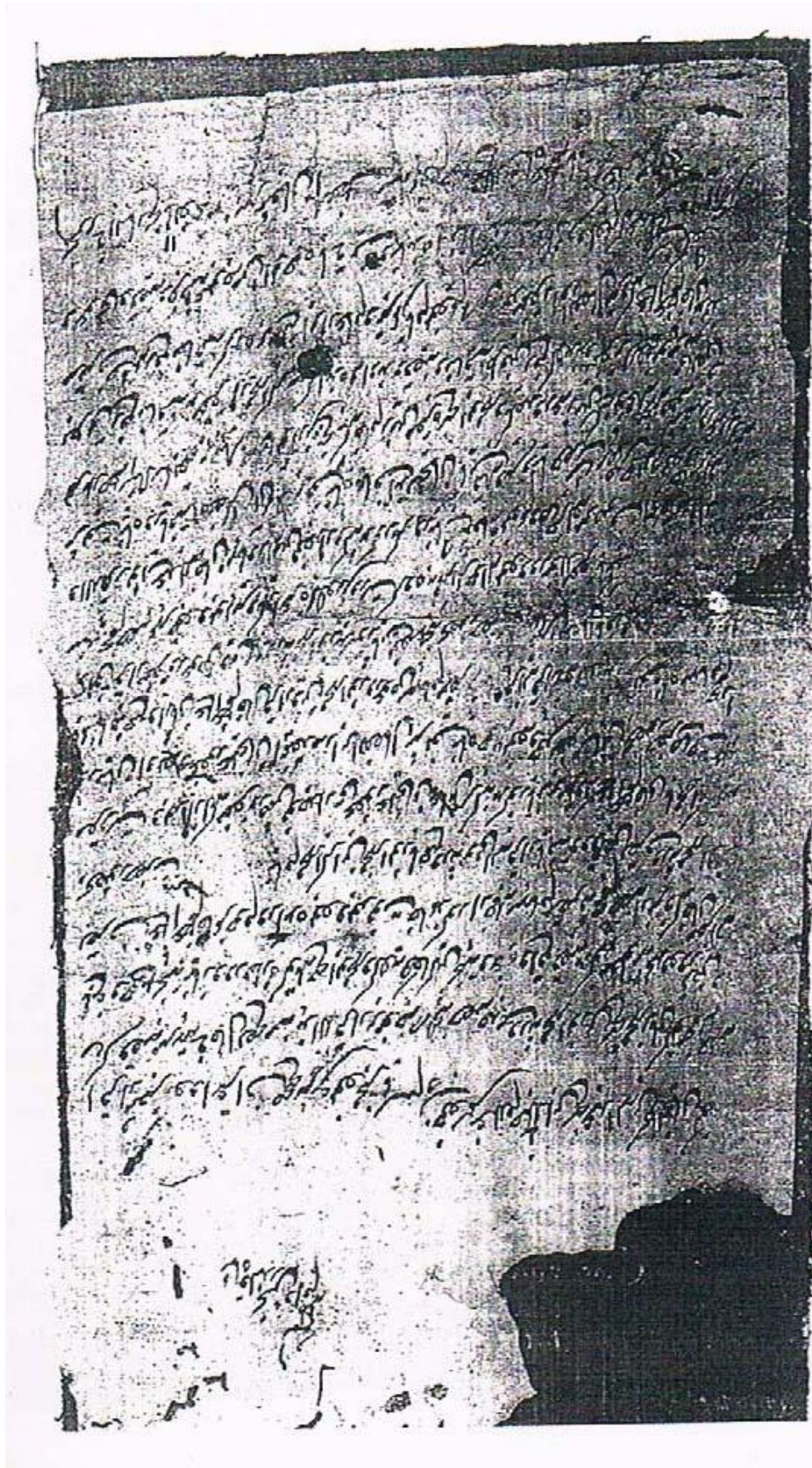
11<sup>th</sup> Date month Shaban, 1190 Hizri, This Gazette is also of Badshah Shah Alam’s time. This is also of Mohd. Hashim and in this Darwaza Kotla, Shaeikh Abbu Mohd. Has written. See enclosed pg. 45

43. Same, pg. 147

44. Noor Ahmad Meeruti : Shaksiyate Meerut : (2003) Karachi, Pakistan, pg. 197-198

45. See, Plate No. 9AB & Plate No. 10AB





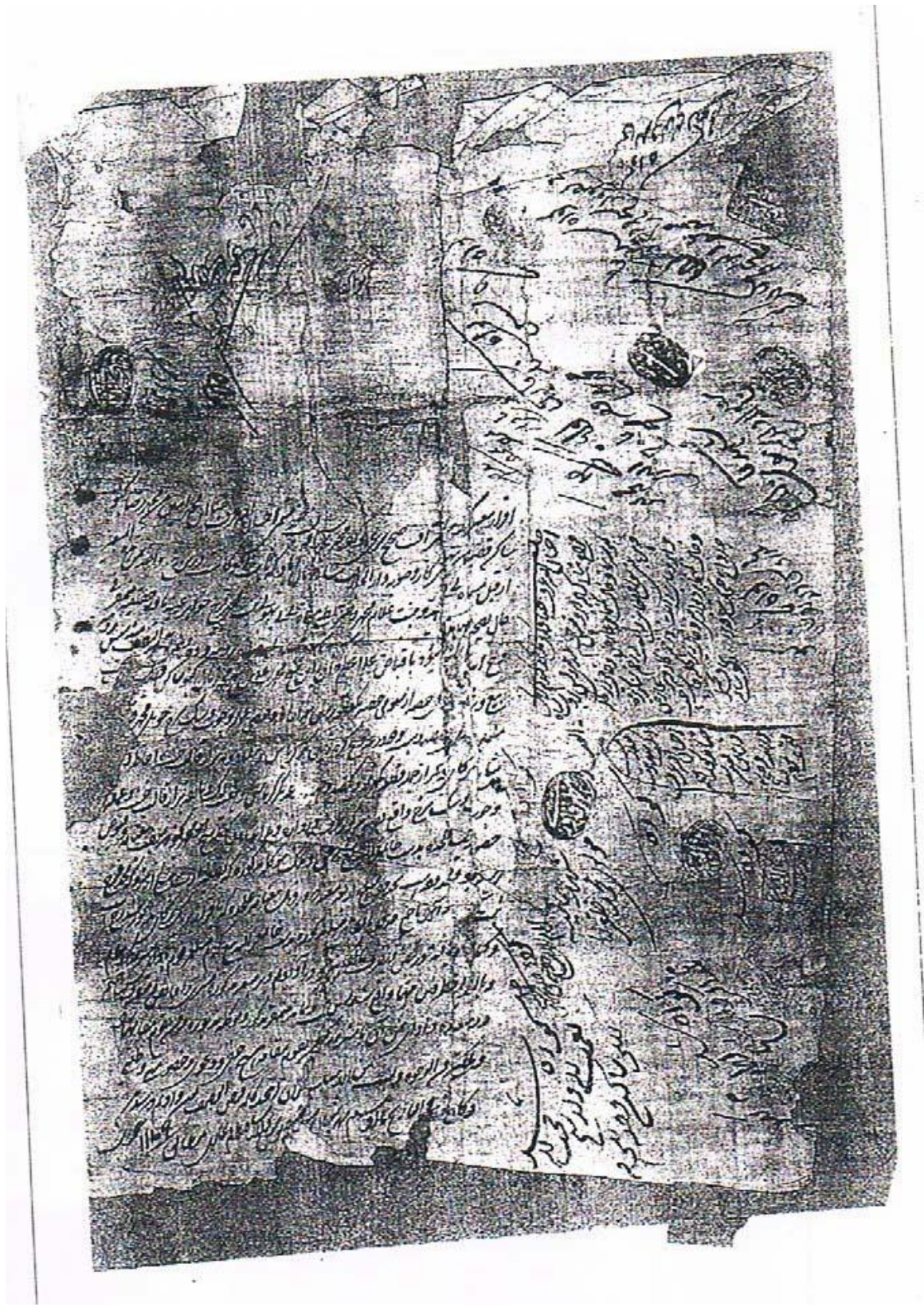
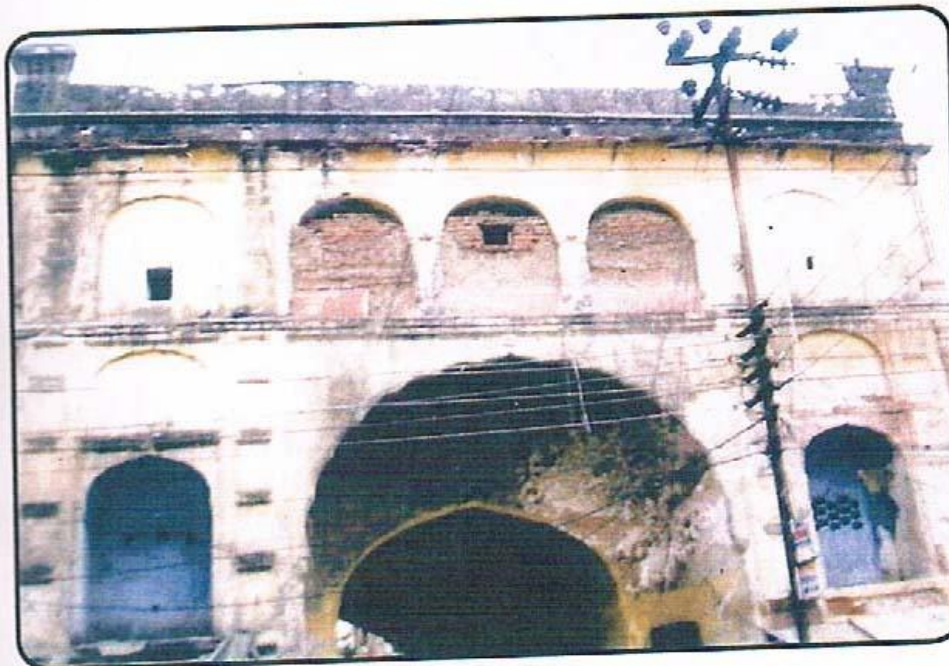




PLATE- 1

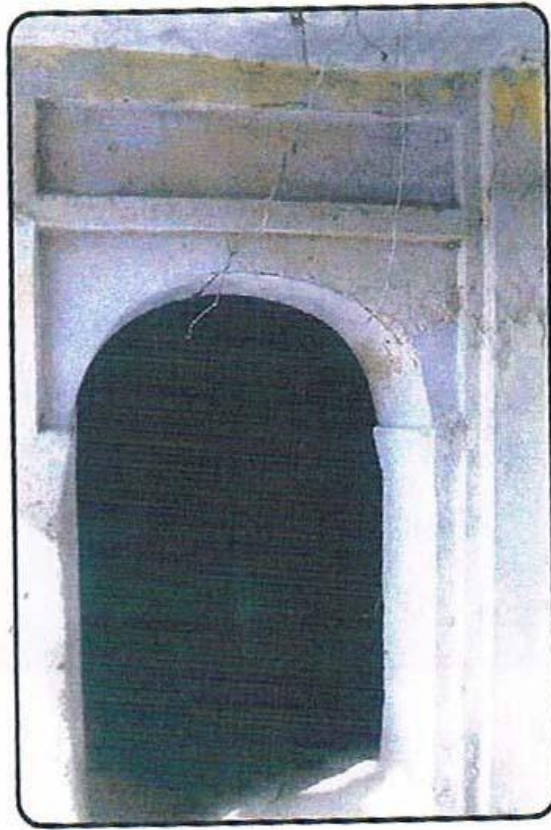


(A)

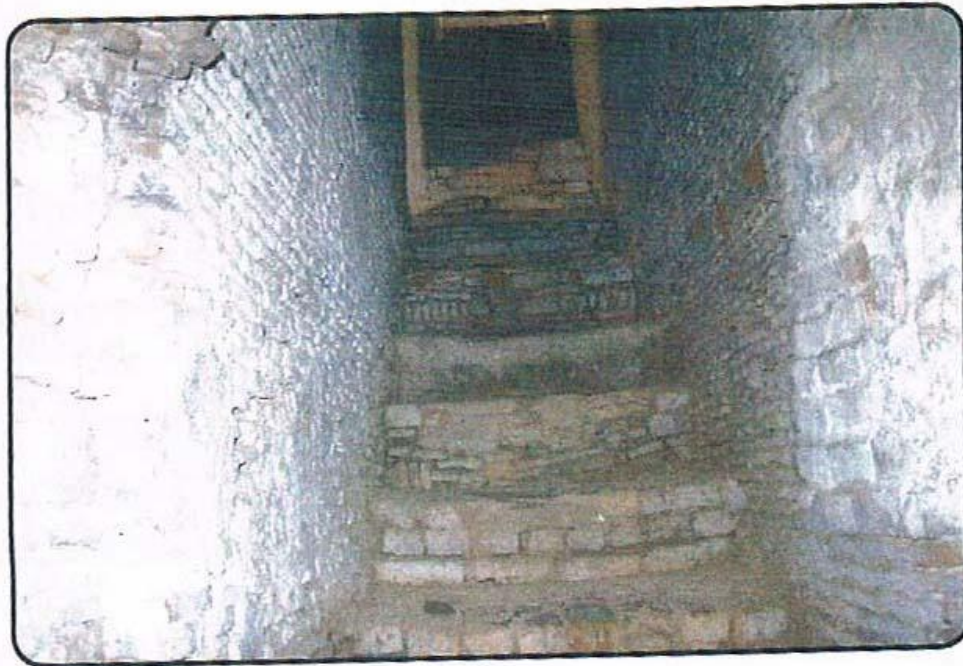


(B)

PLATE- 2



(A)

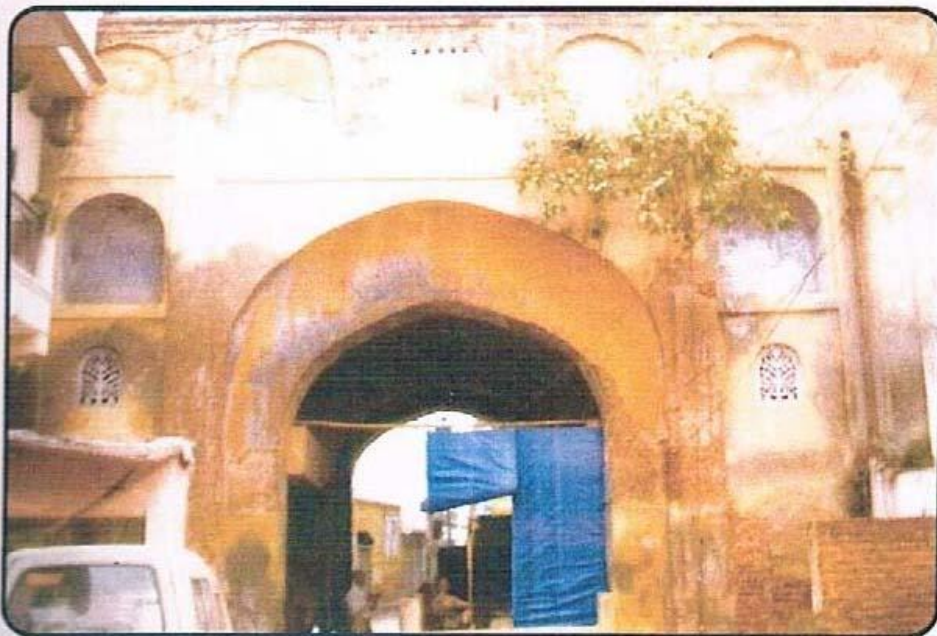


(B)

PLATE - 3

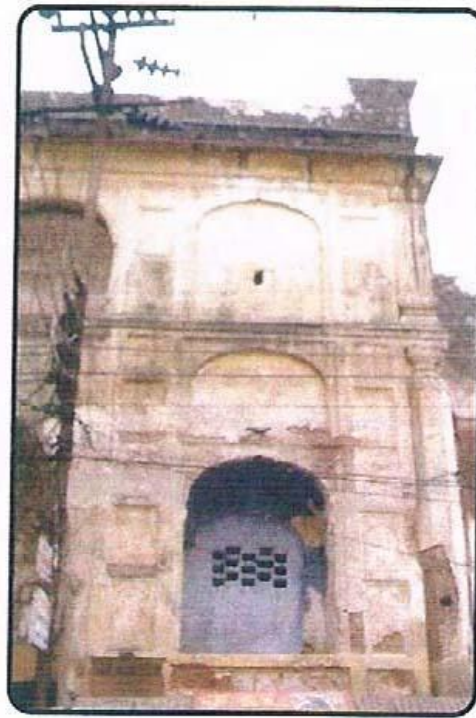


(A)

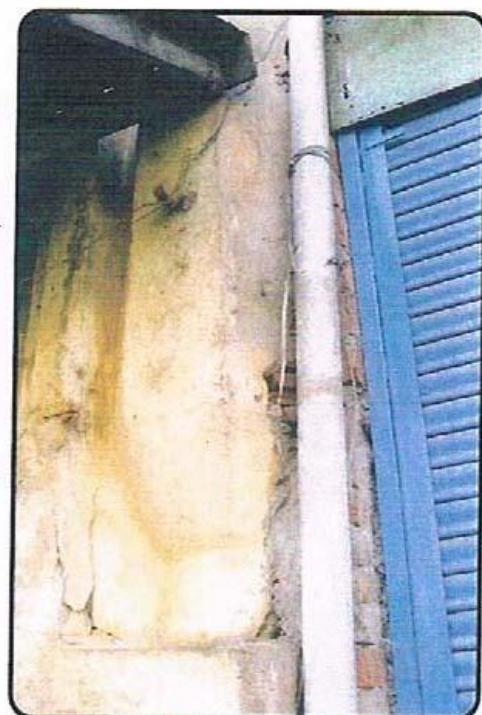


(B)

PLATE - 4



(A)



(B)

PLATE - 5

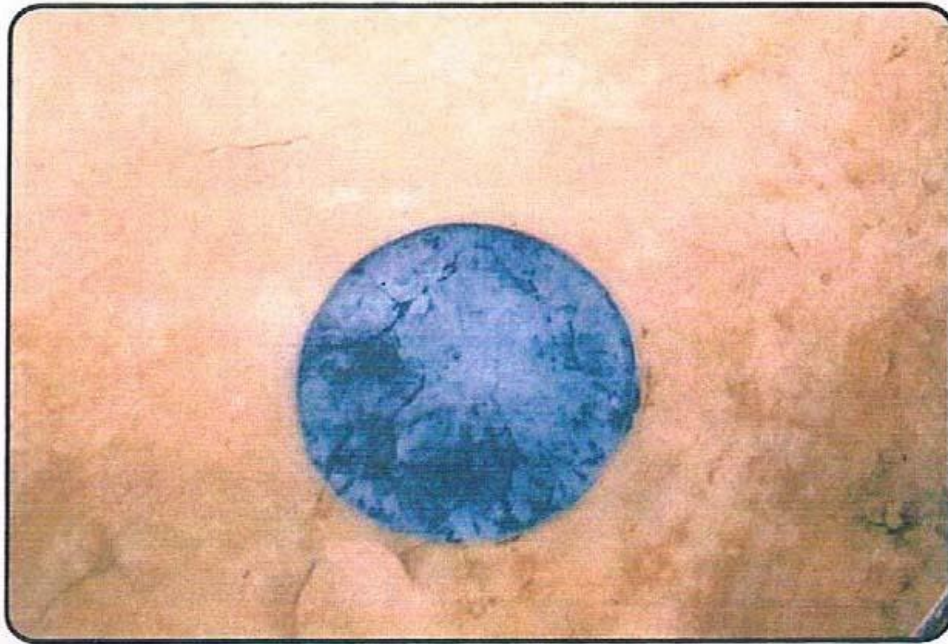


(A)



(B)

### PLATE - 6

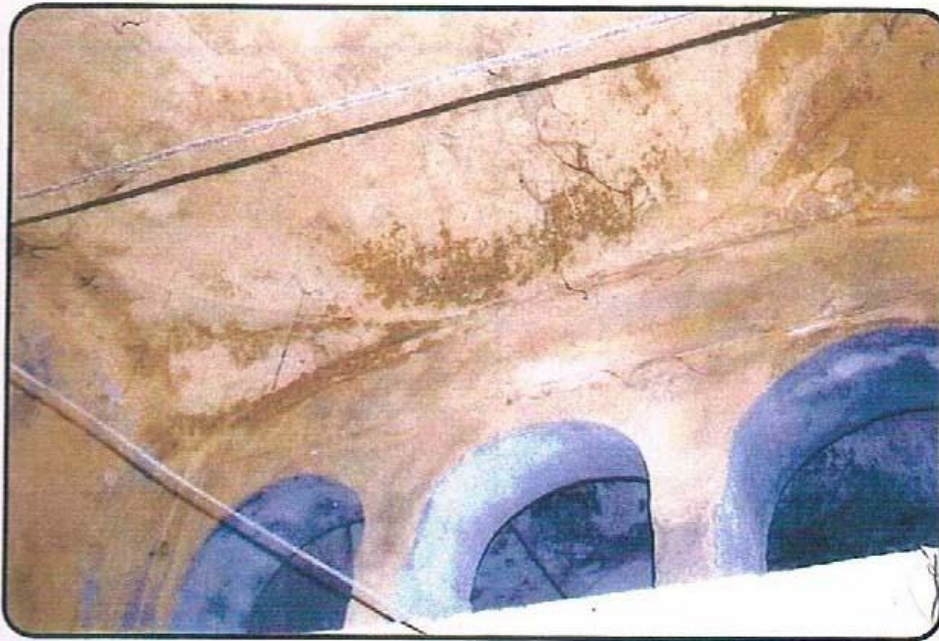


(A)

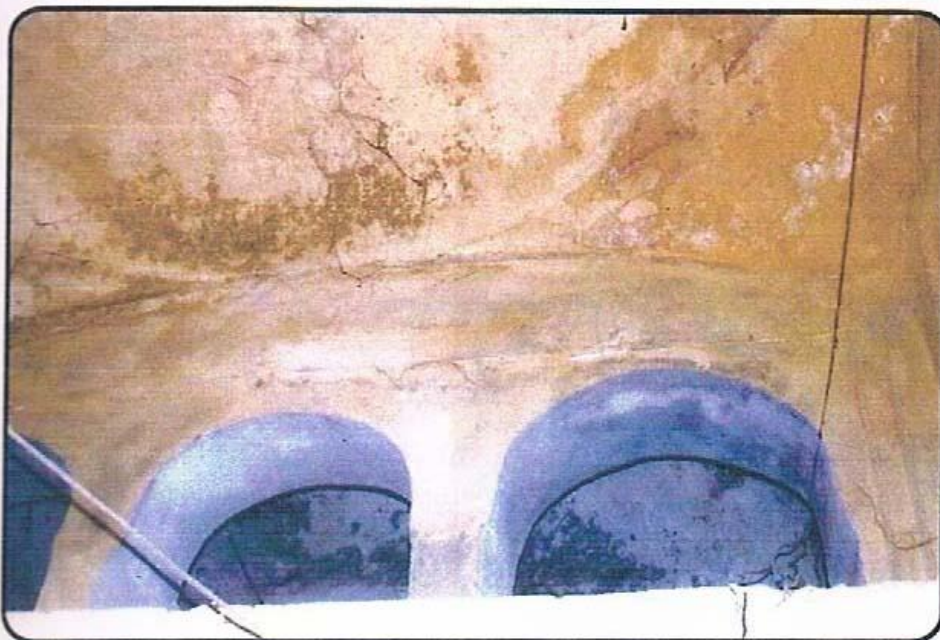


(B)

### PLATE - 7

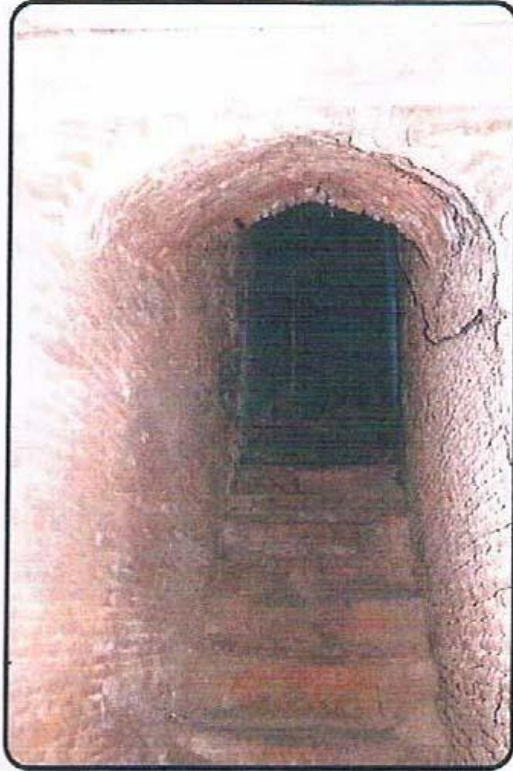


(A)

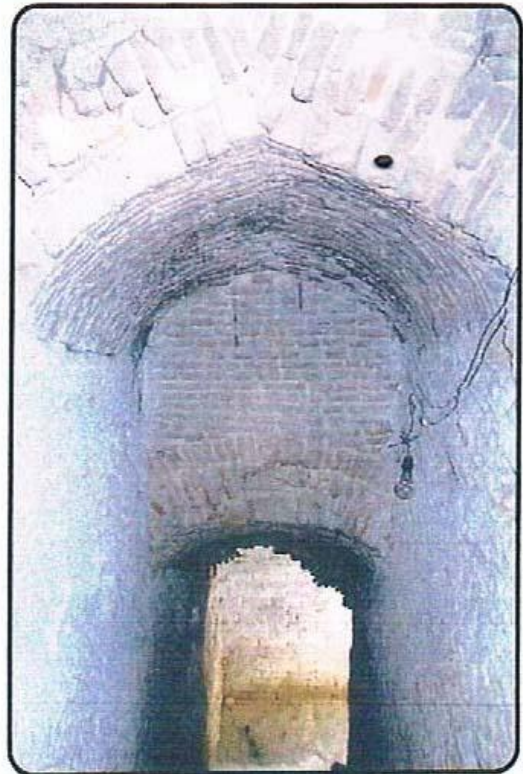


(B)

# PLATE - 8



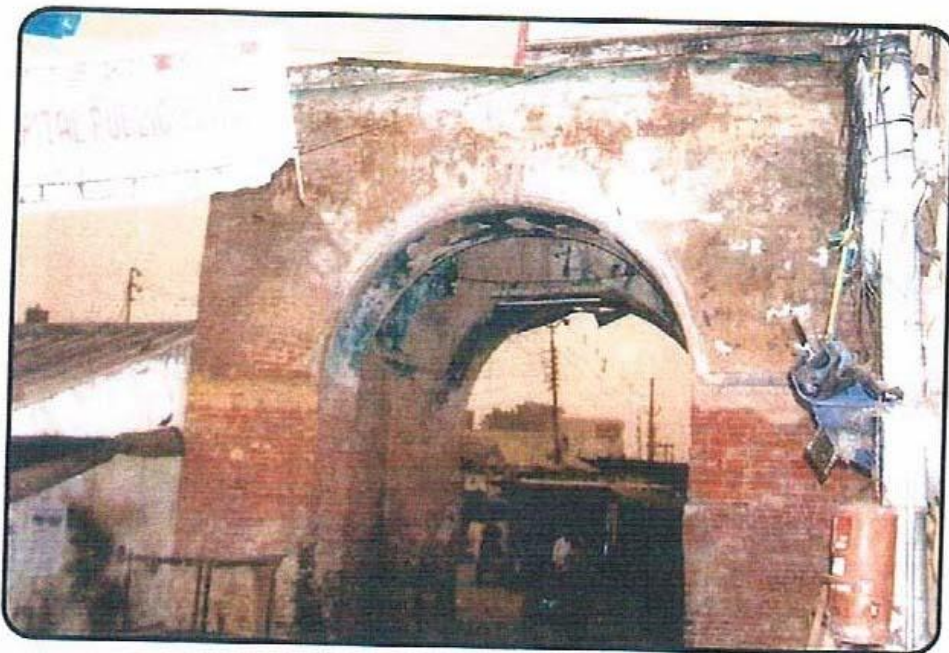
(A)



(B)



PLATE - 9



(A)

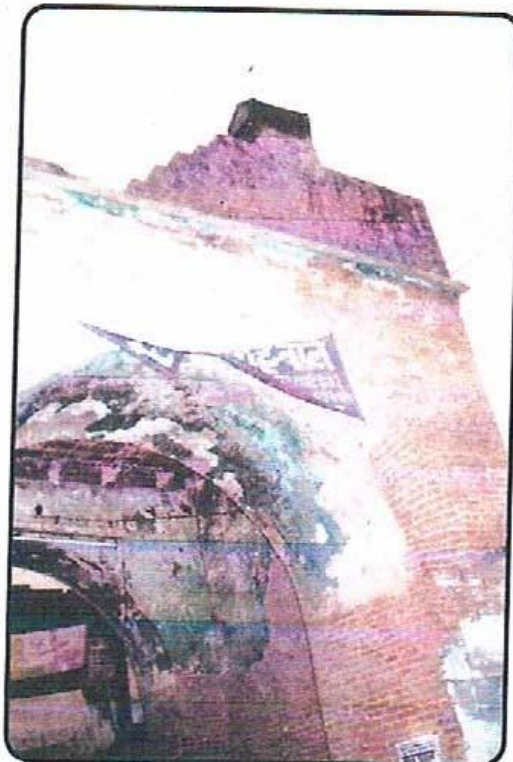


(B)

# PLATE - 10



(A)



(B)

