

INDIA FOR TRANSFERWARE COLLECTORS

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TRANSFERWARE COLLECTORS CLUB



DATABASE DISCOVERIES #27, JUNE 2020

A group of thirteen transferware enthusiasts, including the presidents of both the Transferware Collectors Club and the Friends of Blue (Figure 1), returned in early March from a fifteen day tour of northern India. Our return was just in the nick of time, considering the sequestering from the coronavirus that has been required since we came home. While the trip included many of the usual tourist highlights, it also aimed at some of the sights that have also wound up in transferware patterns. Needless to say, it was exciting to see these places “in the flesh”, and now it’s satisfying to compare our photographs of the present-day structures to both the transferware patterns and the artists’ renderings from which they were copied. One remarkable spot not included here is the Junagarh Fort in Bikaner which includes several architectural elements composed of British transferware plates, platters and drainers. Other tour members will undoubtedly be writing about that. The groupings of images which follow are not in chronological order, and of course they exclude hundreds of other pictures of the country which we all took, the focus here being just on the places appearing on transferware. Readers of this article can read more about the patterns and source prints shown below in the TCC Database of Patterns and Sources.

THE TAJ MAHAL

I was overwhelmed by the Taj Mahal. The gazillions of photographs we’ve seen still don’t do it justice. It simply is the most glorious structure I’ve ever seen. The building practically glows as if lit from the inside, due to the use on the exterior of a special marble that not only reflects light differently from other marble, but also doesn’t stain. It’s enormous but so perfectly proportioned that its size isn’t obvious from most photographs. Another surprise was finding that the matching structures off to the east and west sides, one a mosque and the other a utility building, are much further away from the Taj than is shown in the artists’ prints on which the transferware patterns are based. One detail that I had never noticed until I saw the actual building is that it is set upon an enormous plinth which raises it up as if it were (and it is) an art object on a stand.

There are several transferware patterns showing the Taj Mahal, but all of them except one are based on the aquatint (Figure 3) by Charles Ramus Forrest in his *A Picturesque Tour along the Rivers Ganges and Jumna in India*, published in 1824 by Rudolf Ackermann, London. The exception is the Worcester platter copied from the engraving (Figure 4) by Robert Elliot in *Views in the East*, published in 1833 by H. Fisher, Son, & Co., London. Both of these views are taken from the river side of the building, which our group visited (Figure 2) but to which most tourists are oblivious. A park has been re-established across the river as a viewing point, and after we had seen and entered the building on the other side along with thousands of other tourists, we drove across the river and had the park all to ourselves.



Figure 1 Our group on the “popular” side of the Taj Mahal



Figure 2 Our group across the river from the Taj Mahal

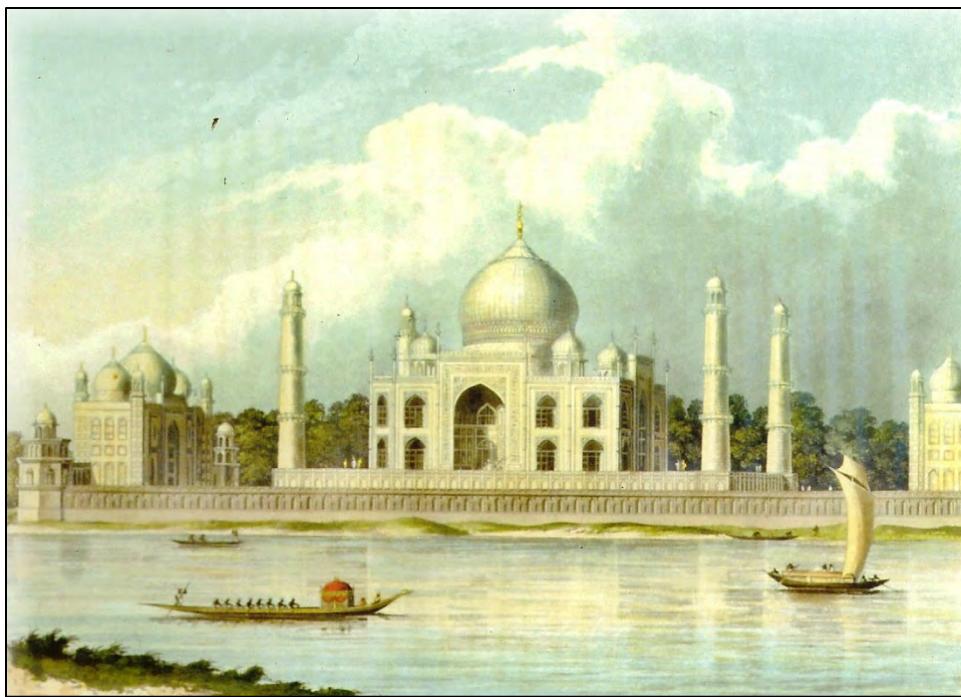


Figure 3 Charles Ramus Forrest



Figure 4 Robert Elliot



Figure 5 John Hall & Sons



Figure 6 Oriental Scenery Cartouche series



Figure 7 Parrot Border soup tureen



Figure 8 Parrot Border toothbrush box, centered on side mosque



Figure 9 Thomas & Benjamin Godwin vegetable tureen base



Figure 10 Indian Scenery (maker "JC"), based partly on Robert Elliot print

AKBAR'S TOMB

Not far from Agra, where the Taj Mahal is located, is Sikandra (formerly called Secundra), where the tomb of Akbar, the first Mughal emperor, is located. The gateway, or entrance, to the tomb is the structure usually featured on transferware, with the tomb itself only visible in the distance. We were able to tour both the gateway (Figure 11) and the tomb (Figure 12). Three artists' prints (Figures 13-15) are the sources for the transferware patterns known.



Figure 11 Gateway



Figure 12 Tomb

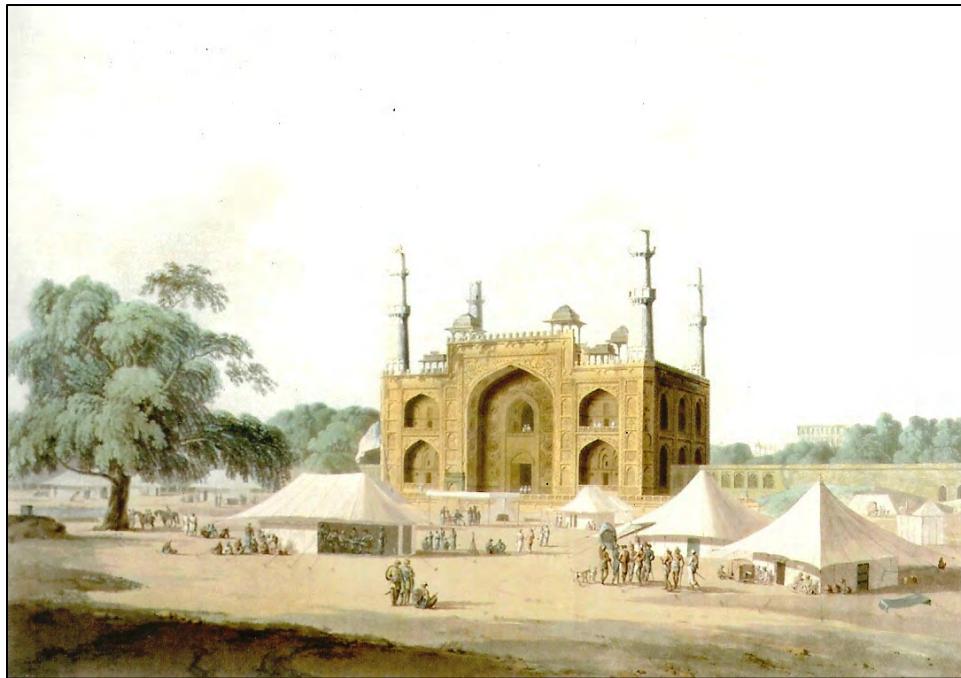


Figure 13 Thomas & William Daniell, *Gate of the Tomb of the Emperor Akbar, at Secundra, Near Agra*



Figure 14 Charles Ramus Forrest, showing the tomb in the background



Figure 15 Robert Elliot, showing only the tomb



Figure 16 Asiatic Scenery by W. & G. Harding,
after Daniell



Figure 17 Asiatic Scenery by Job & John Jackson,
after Daniell



Figure 18 Oriental Scenery Cartouche series, after
Forrest



Figure 19 Chamberlain's Worcester, after Elliot



Figure 20 Parrot Border series, after
Forrest

PRAYAGRAJ (FORMERLY ALLAHABAD)

This city, located at the confluence of the Ganges and Jumna rivers, was the site of several structures depicted by artists and copied onto transferware. The most notable of these was the Chalees Satoon, or forty-pillared hall, which no longer exists but was located within the Fort of Allahabad. The fort itself, which we did visit, doesn't appear on transferware. Near Allahabad there is a complex of tombs of the family of Akbar's son, Jahangir. The Daniells produced aquatints titled "Mausoleum of Sultan Chusero" (Figure 21), which was the tomb of Jahangir's brother Khusrus (Figure 23), and "Mausoleum of Sultan Purveiz" (Figure 22), which was incorrectly named. It actually is the tomb (Figure 24) of Nisar Begum, the sister of Khusrus. Nevertheless, the name of Sultan Purveiz is associated with the transferware pattern copied from the Daniell print.



Figure 21 Thomas & William Daniell, *Mausoleum of Sultan Chusero, Near Allahabad*

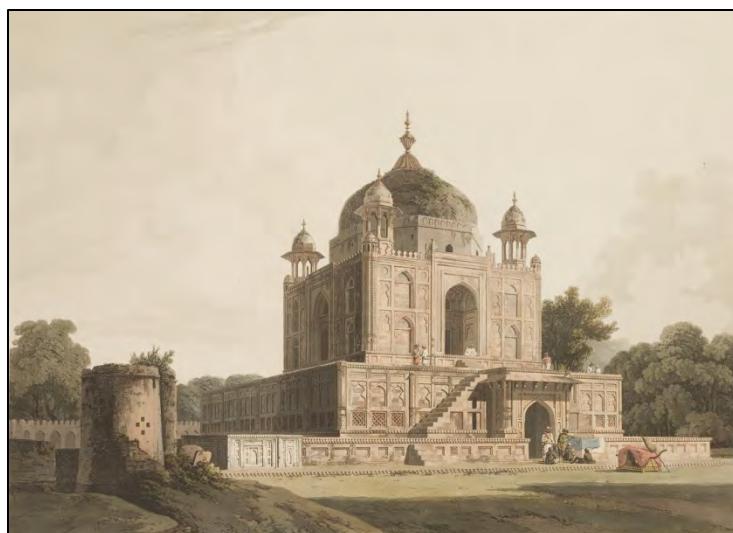


Figure 22 Thomas & William Daniell, *Mausoleum of Sultan Purveiz, Near Allahabad*



Figure 23 Tomb of Khusrū (Sultan Chusero)

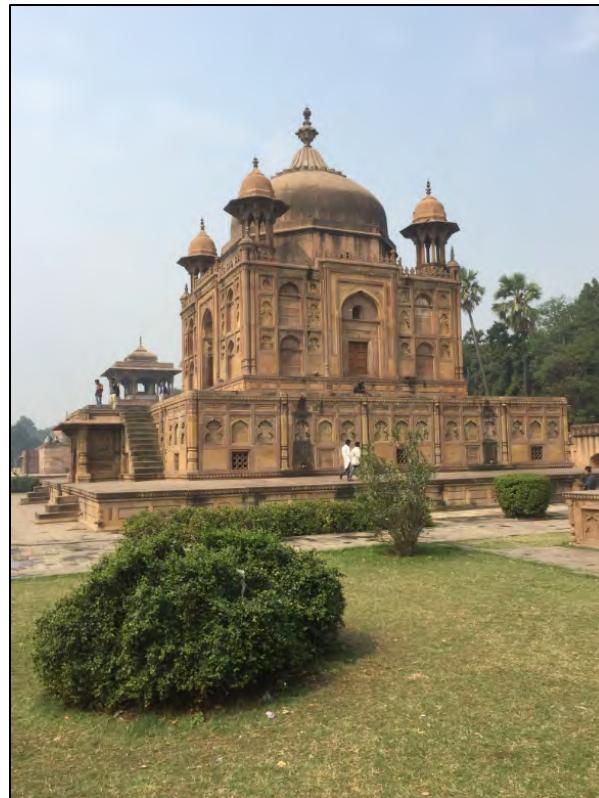


Figure 24 Tomb of Nisar Begum



Figure 25 Mausoleum of Sultan Chusero, maker unknown



Figure 26 Mausoleum of Sultan Purveiz, sometimes called “Indian Procession”, marked “Walsh”

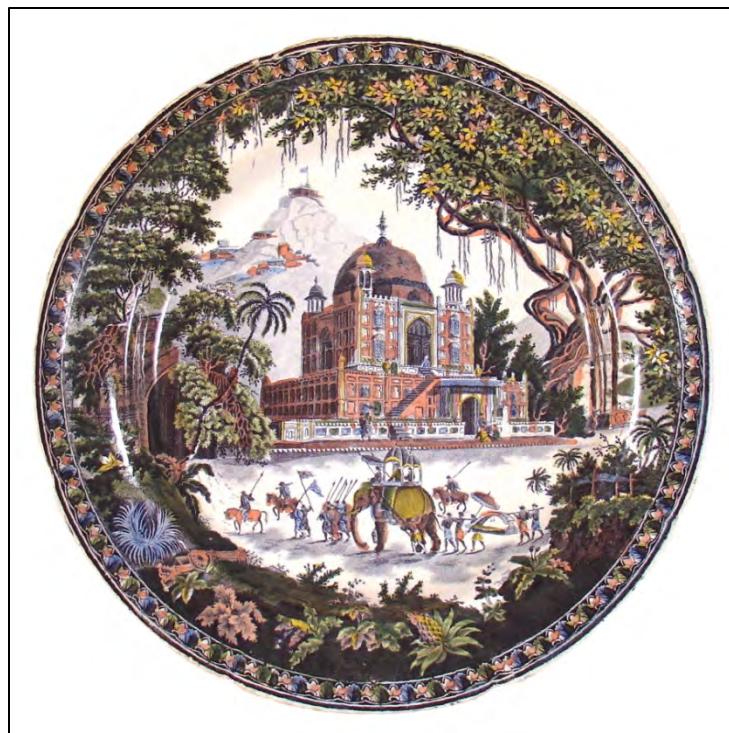


Figure 27 Mausoleum of Sultan Purveiz, painted underglaze, unmarked

VARANASI (FORMERLY BENARES)

The Ganges riverfront (Figure 28) in Varanasi has changed considerably since the early nineteenth century when several English artists portrayed it and transferware makers copied from prints of the city. Therefore, while we didn't photograph many specific structures that appear on transferware, we were able to capture the same general impression of the place. One of the photographs (Figure 29) shows a nightly Hindu ritual which is held near a "burning ghat" where we saw multiple cremations taking place on the riverfront.



Figure 28 Varanasi, Ganges riverfront



Figure 29 Varanasi, Hindu ritual

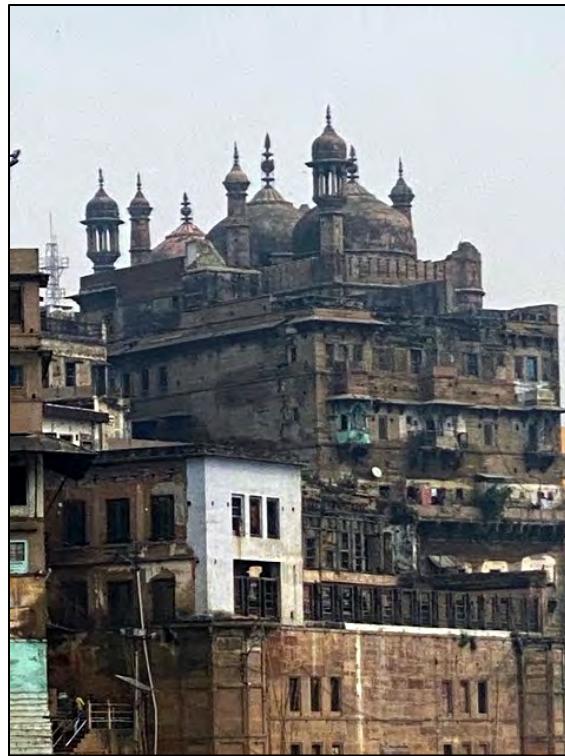


Figure 30 The main building shown in Robert Elliot's engraving below. The original towers, or minarets, were destroyed in an earthquake.



Figure 31 *Benares*, by Robert Elliot



Figure 32 A leaning Hindu temple similar to those shown in Charles Ramus Forrest's aquatint below

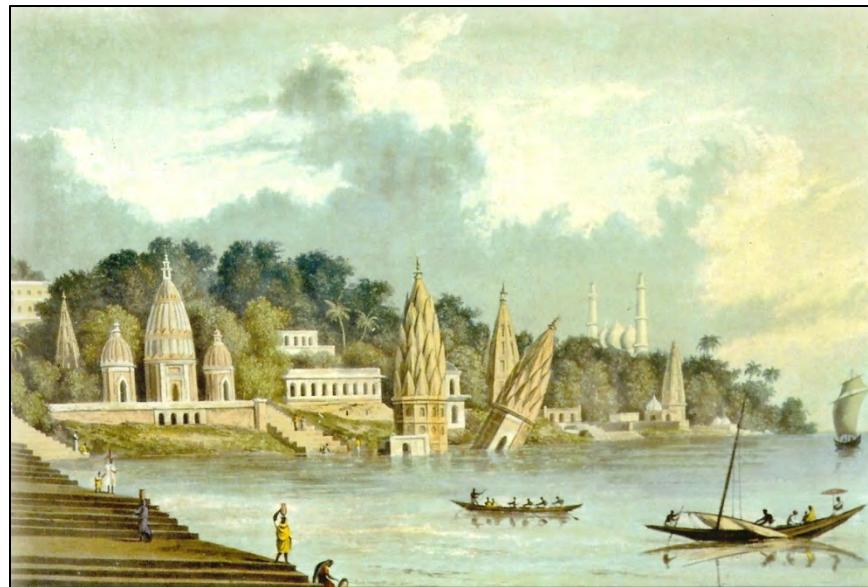


Figure 33 *Benares*, by Charles Ramus Forrest



Figure 34 John Hall & Sons, after Charles Ramus Forrest (left side of print)



Figure 35 Parrot Border series, after Charles Ramus Forrest (right side of print)



Figure 36 Mogul Scenery by Thomas Mayer, after Robert Elliot



Figure 37 Flower Panel Border series, maker unknown, after Robert Elliot

KOLKATA (FORMERLY CALCUTTA)

While not on the usual tourist itinerary, Kolkata is of interest to transferware collectors, because quite a few patterns are based on artists' pictures of various sites in the city and north of it on the banks of the Hooghly River, a tributary of the Ganges which runs through Kolkata down to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. In addition to seeing sights within the city, we took a breakfast cruise a short way up the Hooghly River, where we saw interesting spots, if not actual places depicted on transferware. The most notable Calcutta pattern seen on transferware is "Eastern Street Scene", by both John & Richard Riley and Samuel Alcock. The pattern's main building is copied from Thomas & William Daniell's "View on the Chitpore Road" but no longer exists. Chitpore Road is one of the main streets in Kolkata, and this is what it looks like nowadays, with a heavy rain. It was dry when we drove down it, but the traffic was almost as bad.

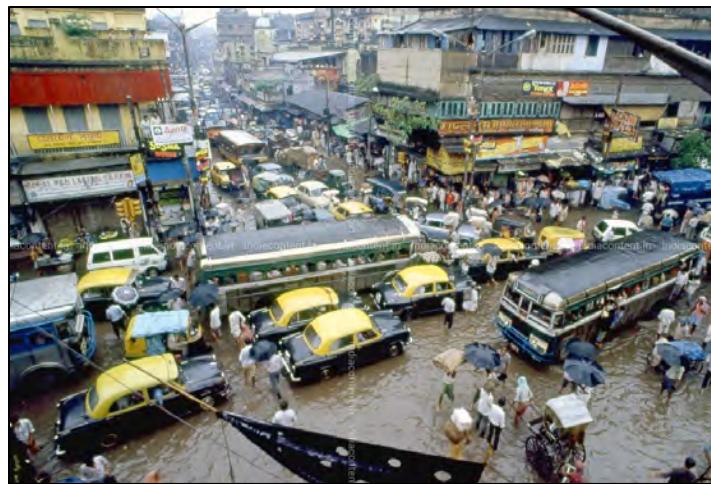


Figure 38 Chitpore Road today



Figure 39 Thomas & William Daniell, *View on the Chitpore Road, Calcutta*



Figure 40 John & Richard Riley, "Eastern Street Scene"



Figure 41 Boats on the Hooghly River, similar to the boat in "Sursey Ghaut, Khanpore", below



Figure 42 Ghat on the Hooghly River, similar to that seen in "Ghaut of Cutwa" below.



Figure 43 John Hall & Sons, "Sursey Ghaut, Khanpore"

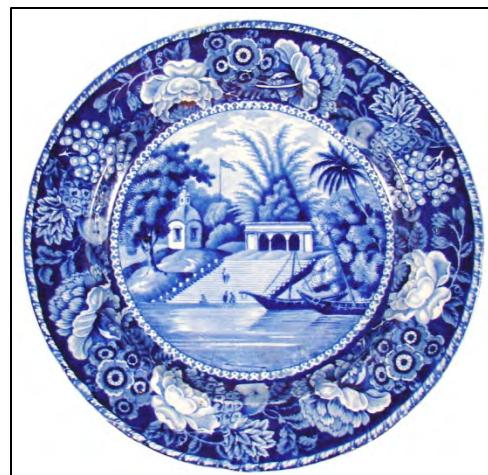


Figure 44 John Hall & Sons, "Ghaut of Cutwa"

DELHI

Our time in Delhi was short, but we managed to see a lot, including the Qutb (sometimes spelled Cuttub) Minar and the Red Fort. The Qutb Minar stands amid impressive ruins in a park. The giant pillar (Figure 45), the most important sight within the park, wasn't used on transferware, though a ruined arch near to it appears on the lid of a Parrot Border vegetable dish. The picture of the lid (Figure 48) is taken from Friends of Blue bulletin 51, where it is printed in reverse. On the same day we visited the Red Fort (Figures 49-50), inside of which is a complex of structures comprising the Palace of the King of Delhi (Figures 51-52). The only source print for transferware (Figure 53), by Charles Ramus Forrest, gives us only a bird's eye view of the whole compound, so it was particularly interesting to see both the outside and the inside close up.

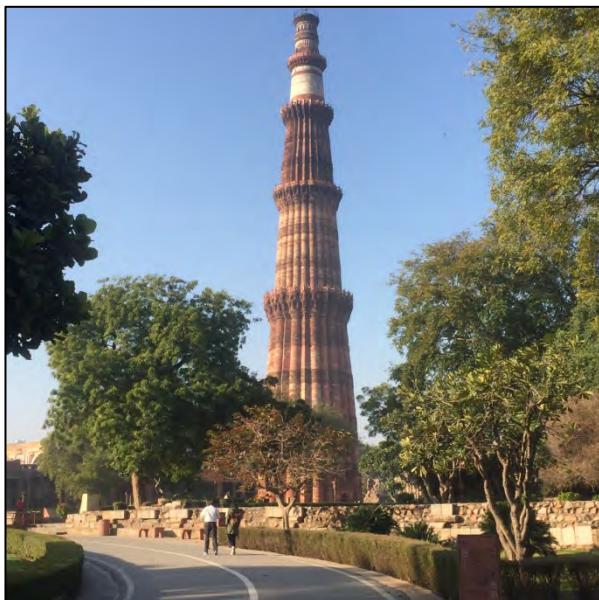


Figure 45 The Cuttub Minar



Figure 46 The Cuttub Minar with ruined arch

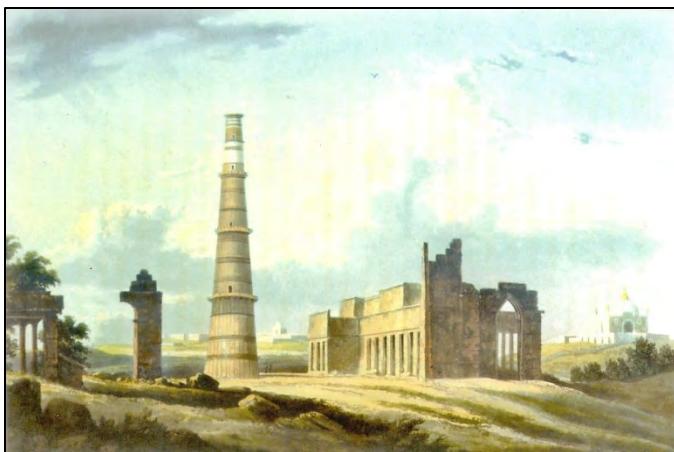


Figure 47 Charles Ramus Forrest, The Cuttub Minar in the Ruins of Ancient Dehli (sic)



Figure 48 Parrot Border series lid to a vegetable dish



Figure 49 Delhi, The Red Fort entrance

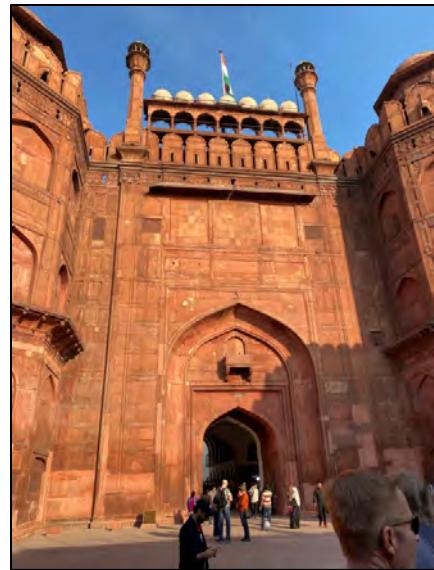


Figure 50 Entrance closeup



Figure 51 Palace complex



Figure 52 Palace main building

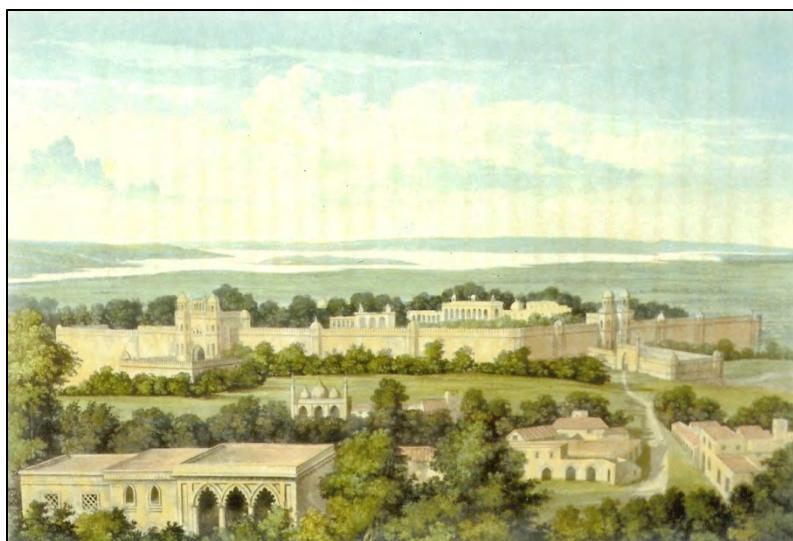


Figure 53 Charles Ramus Forrest,
Palace of the King of Dehli (sic)



Figure 54 John Hall & Sons soup tureen, Palace of the King of Dehli (sic)



Figure 55 Parrot Border series sauce tureen, Palace of the King of Delhi