CHAPTER V

THE KARKHANAS: THE IMPERIAL WORKSHOPS

Akbar's patronage of the arts was not limited to the kitab-ana. He also supported a vast network of imperial karkhanas (workshops) that produced everything from perfume to clothes, guns, and tents. The emperor took a keen interest, bordering on the obsessive, in the various items produced in his workshops. Monserrate, who, impressed by Akbar's devotion to the arts, noted with awe that, "the king is considered by some to be mad, because he is very dextrous in all jobs, because I have seen him making ribbons like a lace-maker, and filing, sawing, and working very hard." Akbar did not hesitate to watch and even practice, "for the sake of amusement, the craft of an ordinary artisan." The emperor's desire to learn the trades of his craftsmen grew out of his conviction that ideas must be tempered by experience. As he put it, "Although knowledge in itself is regarded as the summit of perfection, yet unless displayed in action it bears not the impress of worth; indeed, it may be considered worse than ignorance." True greatness, according to Akbar and Abu'l Fazl, "does not shrink from the minutiae of business, but regards their performance as an act of Divine worship." This attitude, which led Akbar to quarry stone alongside his workmen at Fatehpur-Sikri, and to devise a way to prefabricate many of the city's buildings in order to cut down on the noise of the stone-masons, also led to his patronage of talented courtiers such as Mir Fathullah Shirazi. The latter entered the emperor's service at Fatehpur-Sikri in 1582-83 and exemplified the kind of person Akbar was trying to attract to his court. He was not only skilled in all sciences from astrology to Koranic studies but he was constantly inventing devices, such as a self-driven flour mill, a kaleidoscope, and a wheel that cleared twelve gun-barrels at once.

Although the exact location of individual workshops at Fatehpur-Sikri has yet to be identified, some of them were in cells adjacent to the emperor's palace. The House of Perfume, for instance, which was transformed into a residence for the Jesuits in 1580, was actually built against a wall of the palace. Other workshops were also constructed near the palace including "studios and workrooms for the finer and more reputable arts, such as painting, goldsmith work, tapestry-making, carpet and curtain-making, and the manufacture of arms." The imperial workshops and storerooms were administered as part of the emperor's extensive household. In 1591 alone seven thousand rupees were spent on the expenses of this administrative unit, which included "one hundred offices and workshops each resembling a city, or rather a little kingdom." The administration of the imperial stores and karkhanas was the responsibility of the miramans and the naazir-i-bayzat. These officers reported to the emperor's minister in charge of financial matters. In 1581, after Akbar's extensive administrative reorganization of the empire, management of the royal household was entrusted to Prince Murad. He was aided in this position by Raisal Darbari, Muhammad Ali Khazanchi, Karmullah, and Abd al-Samad, the latter presumably chosen for his intimate knowledge of the arts. Different officers were put in charge of each of the household's departments and workshops. I'timad Khan Gujarati, Baqi Khan, Jagmal, and Hakan Â'n al-Mulk among others supervised the buying and selling of jewels, while Nawrang Khan, Qasim Khan, Makhshus Khan, and Latif Khwaia were responsible for overseeing Akbar's many building projects. In addition to the many clerks, servants and artisans who worked there, each Carved Sandstone Wall of the Pavillion by the Amin Tahan Tank
had its own treasurer charged with keeping daily, monthly, quarterly, and yearly accounts.15

The artisans of the karbannas produced the luxurious furnishings required for Akbar’s princely lifestyle at Fatehpur-Sikri, ranging from sumptuous carpets that could seat an entire assembly to small gold or jade cups that were seldom touched by any hands but the emperor’s. The prolific output of the Mughal workshops was supplemented by a much smaller number of imported rarities. Other items from the karbannas served a more public function. When an important guest arrived at Fatehpur-Sikri, such as Mirza Sulyman in 1581 (see above p. 44), an array of textiles that bordered on the sculptural in their golden richness was brought out to decorate the road all the way out to the formal reception point sixteen kilometers (ten miles) from the city. Similar goods were used to decorate the palace on great feast days, such as the New Year which, according to Monserrate, Akbar celebrated at Fatehpur-Sikri in 1582, “with such lavish expenditure of money, with such magnificence of clothing, ornament and all manner of appurtenances and with such gorgeous games, that the like, we are told, had not been seen for thirty years.”16 Monserrate’s description of this Mughal pomp adds that the walls and colonnades of the State Hall were covered with gold and silk cloths and a jewel-encrusted throne was set up for Akbar under one of the awnings.

The principal surviving goods made in Akbar’s karbannas include textiles, metal and wooden objects, and jade and stone carvings. Because so few Akbari decorative works of art are inscribed, their attribution (or reattribution) to Akbar’s reign is, by necessity, based on formal and conceptual similarities to paintings from dated manuscripts and architectural ornament found on buildings of the period. A great deal of imagery is, in fact, shared among these related arts.

Akbar was particularly fond of textiles. Cloths from all over the world were imported by the emperor and copied by his artisans. Foreign weavers, mainly from Iran, directed studios17 in Lahore, Agra, and Ahmadabad as well as Fatehpur-Sikri.18 According to Abul Fazl the emperor himself:

acquired in a short time a theoretical and practical knowledge of the whole trade; and on account of the care bestowed upon them the intelligent workmen of this country soon improved. All kinds of hair-weaving and silk-spinning were brought to perfection; and the imperial workshops furnished all those stuffs which are made in other countries. A taste for fine material has since become general, and the drapery used at feasts surpasses every description.19

In addition to the textiles manufactured in the karbannas there were velvets from Europe, Iran, and
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In addition to the textiles manufactured in the karbhanas there were velvets from Europe, India, and Gujarat, satin and silk from Yazd, Mashhad, Herat, and Europe and broadcloth from Turkey, Portugal, and Nagaur.20 Akbar was somewhat of a courtier, designing new fashions as he pleased and often dressing in garments of silk combined with long cloaks of his own design.21 Each year one thousand costumes were made for the imperial wardrobe and one hundred and twenty of these were always kept in readiness for the emperor.22 These clothes were arranged according to the days, months, and years of their entry into the wardrobe, and according to their color, price, and weight.23 Abul Fazl adds that:

All articles which have been brought, or woven to order, or received as presents, are carefully preserved; and according to the order in which they were preserved, they are again taken out for inspection, or given out to be cut and to be made up, or given away as presents.24

Although few imperial textiles of the period have survived, a silk hanging now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (no. 70) indicates the artistic heights many of these items reached. Woven into the background of the textile is a standing figure with a long cape and an elaborate turban. A boldly patterned geometric border surrounds the figure and creates the impression of an arched doorway or niche. The figure's elongated body, long narrow hands, and large oval face are almost identical to those of several of the figures in the Hamzanama, and suggest the hanging may have been made during the late 1560s or early 1570s. Later on in the seventeenth century, similar hangings depicting European figures, were used to decorate one of Jahangir's palaces.25

Akbar's interest in textiles also extended to carpets, which were used to cover the floors of palaces, tombs and tents.26 By the end of the sixteenth century Abul Fazl was able to write that:

His Majesty has caused carpets to be made of wonderful varieties and charming texture; he has appointed experienced workmen, who have produced many masterpieces. The golins [kilm] of Iran and Turan are no more thought of, although merchants still import carpets from Goshan (a town between Kishan and Isfahan), Khuzistan, Kirman and Sabiwar. All kinds of carpet weavers have settled here, and drive a flourishing trade. These are found in every town, especially in Agra, Fatehpur and Lahore.27

A number of carpets can be attributed to Akbar's reign even though some of them have traditionally been attributed to a later date. Among the most important of these rugs are:

An animal carpet, in fragments (no. 71), now in several private and public collections in America and Europe, 71. Fragment of an Animal Carpet (late 1500s).
73. Pictorial Carpet, detail (ca. 1380-90).
A fragment of an animal-and-tree carpet in the collection of Howard Hodgkin.
A rug with birds among trees in the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna. 29
A fragment of a bird-and-beast carpet now in the collection of Howard Hodgkin.
A hunting carpet formerly in the Worke collection. 31

73. The Widener Animal Carpet (late 1390s). Detail, right.
A fragment of an animal carpet now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. 30
A pictorial carpet in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 72).
An animal rug in the National Gallery of Art, Washington known as the Widener carpet (no. 73).
An animal-and-tree carpet now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 42).
A fragment of a rug depicting two elephants fighting in the Textile Museum, Washington, D. C. 31
An animal carpet now in a private collection in Great Britain. 32
All of these carpets except for the fragment in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the rug in the private Brails collection (which have deep blush-green fields) are woven against dark red backgrounds in either silk or wool. Catalogue number 71 is generally considered to be from the earliest extant Mughal rug. The fragments of this carpet are composed of recurring motifs such as six-headed birds, leopards' heads with sharp fang-like teeth, and exuberant, if not awkward, forms that distinguish them from other early Mughal textiles. Only the Hodgkin animal-and-tree carpet, with its large, stiffly drawn lion and telescopic flower, comes close to sharing the odd and enigmatic feeling created by the images of these early pieces; their boldness of design reflects the same taste for drama and action that characterizes the paintings of the Tuzusama and Hammamamama.

Models for the grotesque imagery of these pieces can be found in representations of fifteenth-century Iranian textiles, like the fabric covering the yurt behind the enthroned figure of Timur in the 1469-68 Zaferiyyana (no. 57) and such sixteenth-century textiles as the small imperial rug, possibly from Tabriz, now in the Museum Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon. Persian carpets—by no means craftmen—also provided the inspiration for many of the other rugs woven for Akbar. A series of late-sixteenth-century animal carpets from eastern Iran, are clearly the prototype for such Mughal rugs as the Widener carpet (no. 73). The Iranian carpets are composed of intricately scrolled vines that entwine a variety of animals—some real and some mythical—against a rich red background of wool pile on a warp and weft of silk. Large floral medallions punctuate the vines and create a counterpoint to the animals. The same kind of pattern, using almost identical motifs, is established in the Mughal rugs.

The Indian carpets, however, differ from their Iranian models in two ways: their fields are more open and the animals that populate them are drawn with a greater sense of naturalism. Instead of being abstract elements of an elaborate pattern, the animals and flowers in Indian rugs are treated as individual studies. Note, the carefully drawn thrones and full-bodied elephant in the Widener carpet which immediately bring to mind the almost contemporary "portrait" of a family of cheetahs (no. 46). The figures in many of these rugs are related to—if not derived from—contemporary Mughal drawings and paintings. The two camels fighting in the Widener carpet are based on a famous painting by Rihzad, or a very close copy of it, which had found its way during the third quarter of the sixteenth century to India where it was copied by Abd al-Samad (no. 58). Similarly, figures from the Boston pictorial carpet (no. 72) have their origins in miniatures from the great manuscripts of the 15th and 16th centuries. The two men conversing in their simple house with its second-story pavilion are closely related to the foppish derish in the 1551 Rudanizan of Janis.' When, in 1572, the Emperor Akbar's tent-shed was ready for a new group of artists to work with his weavers in developing new designs. Mir Sayyd Ali, for example, has been credited with the design of the early animal carpet (no. 71), which, if correct, means that the rug must have been worked on prior to 1572, which, in fact, is the case. Formal conventions used in illustrating manuscripts were transferred to woven goods and the results were often spectacular. A large animal-and-tree carpet belonging to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 12) also suggests a connection between the decorative arts and the architectural decoration of cities such as Fatehpur-Sikri. It is composed of a repeating series of palm and flowering trees, birds, tigers, antelopes, and griffins against a finely woven red background. Each component of the rug's eight meters (twenty-seven feet) from the birds to the palm trees and leaping gazelles—is rendered in minute detail. The movement from the branches of one tree to the next creates a web-like effect that holds the composition together and leads the eye around the carpet. While it is difficult to date this rug with precision, the closeness of its design to several of the intricately carved stone panels in the pavilion by the Anup Talao at Fatehpur-Sikri (see p. 106), indicates that it may have been woven around 1570. Both have similarly drawn palm trees with scaly trunks and feathery branches and angular flowering bushes held further by the interaction of their branches.

At Fatehpur-Sikri Akbar's most valuable textiles were kept in the farakhabana (private storeroom). Akbar considered this one of the most important parts of his household and looked upon the efficiency of its administration as an "insignia of Divine worship" for it was these textiles that were used to display the full range of his power during festivals and welcoming ceremonial for revered guests. The majority of textiles stored in the farakhabana, however, were related to the construction and decoration of the emperor's tents, which ranged from relatively simple affairs to large multi-storied designs that took days to erect. On journeys these tents, with their many awnings,
Textiles were not the only products of the imperial workshops at Fatehpur-Sikri that gave visual expression to Akbar’s great wealth and taste as a connoisseur. By the time of his death in 1605, the emperor had accumulated an assortment of golden and silver furniture and plate as well as golden images of elephants, horses, and camels in addition to silver cups, discs, candelabra, and columns said to be worth 93,320,668 rupees. While many of these objects have been lost or destroyed, the pages of sixteenth-century manuscripts depict similar works of art.

A pair of spectacular gilded bronze lion heads (NO. 74), now in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Cologne, are among the few objects from this period still extant. Each of the boldly cast heads weighs about fifty kilos (one hundred and ten pounds) and measures thirty-two centimeters (fifteen inches) high by forty-five centimeters (eighteen inches) deep. Both have large, almond-shaped eyes, flaring nostrils, small pointed ears, and flowing manes that are as majestic as
carpets, wooden screens and panels and other ac-
coutrements, were transported by a vast caravan of
elephants, mules, and camels. Specially trained
workmen in conjunction with the quartermasterwere
responsible for selecting sites for pitching the tents and
making sure that they were properly laid out
according to rigidly established camp protocol.

A devastating fire destroyed much of the far-
rudhisthana at Fatehpur-Sikri in 1539. Arif Qandahar
records the vast range of material that was burnt:

Approximately one crore [1,00,00,000] pieces of awnings
(khamayana), tents (bhangah and khayawan) and screens
(araparda) made from gold cloth, European velvet, woolen
doth, Dammuk silk, satin and brocade, brocaded carpets and
European velvet, gold cloth and embroidery of an amount
beyond description were all burnt and lost. Due to the
dignity of power of the one of lofty nst [Akbar] and the
unbounded benefits of his generosity, the dust of anger
never reached the noble and the most holy mind of His
Majesty and he never asked again for any of these burnt
articles.45

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three twenty-centimeters (fifteen inches) high by forty-
five centimeters (eighteen inches) deep. Both have
large, almond-shaped eyes, flaring nostrils, small
pointed ears, and flowing manes that are as majestic as
they are dramatic. Except for minor variations in the
articulation of the manes, the heads are identical and
were presumably cast from the same mold.

Only one other early Mughal bronze, a lion stand-
ing on its hind legs (fig. 13), can be compared to the
Cologne lion heads. With its muscular torso, sharply
delineated forms, and carefully drawn face, it conveys
the same sense of power that the lion heads exude.
Both also share a number of formal features, such as
the swirling lines and rippling knots of their manes,
open mouths with thin protruding tongues, and heav-
ily worked eyes with deeply furrowed brows. These
features relate closely to contemporary Mughal paint-
ings of lions. The roaring lion, for instance, is almost
identical in shape and design to a lion depicted in a
Mughal Zafarnama,47 while the Cologne heads have
the same broad smiling faces, slightly crossed eyes
and well-modelled features as the lions in the painting
of “Noah’s Ark” from an unidentified manuscript illus-
trated ca. 1500.48

The backs of the lions’ heads reveal their function.
Each one has a deep V-shaped well. Two rectangular
prongs—one at the top and one at the bottom of each
head—extend backwards almost twenty-five centime-
ters (ten inches). Slots in the prongs provide a means
of securing them. This design is well suited to attach-
ing the heads to the prow or stern of a ship. According
to Abul Fazl, “His Majesty had the stems of the (impe-
rial) boats made in the shape of wonderful animals,
and thus combines terror with amusement.”49 Many
Akbari miniatures show these boats with finely
wrought elephants, antelope, and leopard-headed
prows and an illustration from the Chester Beatty
Library Tazlianna (f. 162v) depicts one with a gilded
lion-headed prow almost identical to the remarkable
examples from Cologne. In 1574 Akbar set out from
Fatehpur-Sikri for Bengal by ship and Abul Fazl’s
account of the event indicates the effort that went
into making the emperor’s boats both awe-inspiring and
attractive:

Such wonderfully fashioned boats were made under his
directions as to be beyond the powers of description. There
were various delightful quarters and decks, and there were
gardens such as clever craftsmen could not make on land on
the boats. The bowls (pir), too, of every one of those wa-
terhouses were made in the shape of animals, so as to as-
tomish spectators... There were wonderful instances of ar-
chitecture, and various canopies and extraordinary decora-
tions, etc., so that if this writer should proceed to describe
them he would be thought to be exaggerating.48

A large number of the objects made in the imperial
workshops were associated with needs of the em-
peror’s kitchen, which operated around the clock in
order to satisfy Akbar’s dietary idiosyncrasy—eating
only one meal a day at irregularly spaced intervals.44
The emperor’s food was served on dishes of gold,
silver, stone and earthenware. According to Abul Fazl:

During the time of cooking, and when the victuals are
taken out, an awning is spread, and lookers-on kept away... The gold and silver dishes are tied up in red cloths,
and those of copper and china in white ones. The mirl
buhurwal [superintendent of the kitchen] attaches his seal,
and writes on it the names of the contents while the clerk of
the pantry writes on a sheet of paper a list of all the vessels
and dishes which he sends inside, with the seal of the mirl
buhurwal, that none of the dishes may be changed.45

These elaborate precautions were taken to insure
that the emperor’s food was not poisoned. A gem-
studded golden spoon,46 a large wine bowl with an
inscription to 1583 given to the shrine of Abu Abdullah
al-Husayn,46 a vase,46 and a ewer,46 and several frag-
ments of Ming dynasty blue- and-white ware (fig. 14)
reflect the objects either made in the farhundis or kept
in the storerooms that were used in the preparation
and serving of Akbar’s food. Some of these objects like
the humble lion-headed ewer48 and the simple brass
vase were obviously utilitarian and employed on a
daily basis. Others like the dazzling gold spoon with
its emeralds, diamonds, and rubies and the wine bowl,
which has a lengthy inscription around its rim and
detailed champlevé designs on the lower part of its
body, probably served ceremonial purposes.

While little is known about the Chinese porcelains
collected by the Mughals, by the 1580s an abundant

FIG. 14. Ming Chinese ceramic fragments from Chia-ching reign (1522–66: Emperor Shih-tung), excavated at Fatehpur-Sikri.
supply of blue-and-white ware had made its way to Akbar's court. The miniatures of such manuscripts as the *Hamzanama* and *Abbarnamas* depict these vessels in quantity and show them serving a variety of functions from containing food to decorating the niches of palaces. The Mughals came into contact with Chinese porcelain as early as 1497, when Babur noted that one of Ulugh Beg's pavilions at Samargand was known as the *chinakhanan* (Porcelain House). Later, in 1519, the emperor complained of losing a China cup and a spoon when his raft overturned on a river. During the second half of the sixteenth century, Chinese porcelains became extremely popular in India as evidenced by the vast number of fragments of Ming bowls excavated recently at Fatehpur-Sikri (fig. 14) and other sites such as Din-pahad in Delhi. In addition to the metal and ceramic objects made for Akbar, works of wood and jade and other stones were produced in the imperial ateliers. Jade vessels were among the Mughals' most prized possessions. Akbar and his many descendants supported a thriving industry that turned out exquisitely carved rings, dagger hilts, drinking cups, and related goods. The models for most of these objects—especially the vessels—were Timurid jades brought to India during the latter half of the sixteenth century. An exquisite white tankard with inscriptions to Ulugh Beg, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan⁵⁷ and a highly polished dark-green wine cup inscribed for Jahangir at Fatehpur-Sikri in 1649⁶⁷ are examples of this important trade.

Jade reached the Mughals through middlemen who plied the commercial routes between India and China. Khwaja Mu'in, who came to Akbar's court in 1562–63, had a monopoly on jade from Kashgar and was presumably a major supplier to the Mughals.⁶⁸ Although there are no jades that have inscriptions dating them to Akbar's reign, at least one vessel, a small jar or ink pot (no. 75), can be attributed to this period.⁶⁹ The simplicity of the pot's design with its full, almost heavy, features contrasts with the thinner and more refined jades of the seventeenth century,⁷⁰ and relates it to such jars as the ones that appear in "A Muslim Teacher with His Pupils" (no. 67) which can be ascribed to the 1670s and "Mercy in Gemini" (no. 56) from the 1687 *Karshapana*.

Wood was one of the most popular materials used by Akbar's craftsmen. Abul Fazl, records that eight kinds of wood were in general use during the sixteenth century, including *nim*, mulberry and *sadul*.⁷¹ Akbar was apparently so interested in the structural properties of this material that he had seventy-two types of wood weighed in order to determine their relative density. From this knowledge the emperor was able to improve building methods as well as to invent a variety of new carts and carriages that eased the burdens of travel. One of these, a large cart drawn by an elephant, contained several bathrooms providing Akbar with a mobile pleasure pavilion.⁷²

A large box and a chair, both inlaid with ivory, and a panel possibly from a throne, are among the few wooden objects of Akbar's reign still extant. The box, now in the National Museum, Stockholm (fig. 41), is divided into a series of rectangular units by the ivory inlays. In the center of each of these units is a finely executed arabesque emanating from an oval form. Flowers and buds punctuate various points along the arabesques and add both complexity and excitement to the design. A similarly decorated lid covers the box. The coat of arms and initials of Clas Fleming (married 1671 and died 1697) and his wife Ebba Stenbock (who died in 1644) are engraved on the top of the box, indicating that it must have been in Sweden by the end of the sixteenth century. Similar boxes abound in contemporary Mughal paintings.⁷³ The chair, now in Uppsala, has almost identical ivory inlays to the box.⁷⁴ A cartouche at the back of the chair has the name *Catharina* Stenbock Stenbock engraved on it.⁷⁵

75. Small Fluted Vessel (late 1500s).
supply of blue-and-white ware had made its way to Akbar's court. The miniatures of such manuscripts as the *Hamzahnama* and *Akbarnama* depict these vessels in quantity and show them serving a variety of functions from containing food to decorating the niches of palaces. The Mughals came into contact with Chinese porcelain as early as 1497, when Babur noted that one of Ulugh Reg's pavilions at Samarqand was known as the *chimikhana* (Porcelain House). Later, in 1519, the emperor complained of losing a China cup and a spoon when his raft overturned on a river. During the second half of the sixteenth century Chinese porcelains became extremely popular in India as evidenced by the vast number of fragments of Ming bowls excavated recently at Fatehpur-Sikri (fig. 14) and other sites such as Din-pahan in Delhi. In addition to the metal and ceramic objects made for Akbar, works of wood and jade and other stones were produced in the imperial ateliers. Jade vessels were among the Mughals' most prized possessions. Akbar and his many descendants supported a thriving industry that turned out exquisitely carved rings, dagger hiltts, drinking cups, and related goods. The models for most of these objects—especially the vessels—were Timurid jades brought to India during the latter half of the sixteenth century. An exquisite white tankard with inscriptions to Ulugh Reg, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan and a highly polished dark green wine cup inscribed for Jahangir at Fatehpur-Sikri in 1619, are examples of this important trade. Jade reached the Mughals through middlemen who plied the commercial routes between India and China. Khwaja Mumin, who came to Akbar's court in 1652-61 had a monopoly on jade from Kashgar and was presumably a major supplier to the Mughals. Although there are no jades that have inscriptions dating them to Akbar's reign, at least one vessel, a small jar or ink pot (no. 75), can be attributed to this period.

The simplicity of the pot's design with its full, almost heavy, features contrasts with the thinner and more refined jades of the seventeenth century, and relates it to such jars as the ones that appear in "A Muslim Teacher with His Pupils" (no. 67) which can be ascribed to the 1750s and "Mercury in Gemini" (no. 56) from the 1783 *Kritah-i Sarm*.

Wood was one of the most popular materials used by Akbar's craftsmen. Abul Fazl, records that eight kinds of wood were in general use during the sixteenth century, including sawn, mulberry and bahul. Akbar was apparently so interested in the structural properties of this material that he had seventy-two types of wood weighed in order to determine their relative density. From this knowledge the emperor was able to improve building methods as well as to invent a variety of new carts and carriages that eased the burdens of travel. One of these, a large cart drawn by an elephant, contained several bathrooms providing Akbar with a mobile pleasure pavilion. A large box and a chair, both inlaid with ivory, and a panel possibly from a throne, are among the few wooden objects of Akbar's reign still extant. The box, now in the National Museum, Stockholm (fig. 13), is divided into a series of rectangular units by the ivory inlays. In the center of each of these units is a finely executed arabesque emanating from an oval form. Flowers and buds punctuate various points along the arabesques and add both complexity and excitement to the design. A similarly decorated lid covers the box. The coat of arms and initials of Claus Fleming (married 1573 and died 1597) and his wife Ebba Stenbock (who died in 1604) are engraved on the top of the box, indicating that it must have been in Sweden by the end of the sixteenth century. Similar boxes abound in contemporary Mughal paintings. The chair, now in Uppsala, has almost identical ivory inlays to the box. A cartouche at the back of the chair has the name Catharina Stenbock Reg. (ina) engraved on it.
the lake. The emperor employed several different kinds of gladiators, each capable of performing remarkable feats:

In fighting they show much swiftness and agility, and join courage to skill in stooping down and rising up again. Some of them use shields in fighting, others use cudgels. The latter are called lathvati. Others again use no means of defence, and fight with one hand only; these are called yathnath. The former class come chiefly from the eastern districts, and use a somewhat smaller shield, which they call dhiran. Those who come from the southern districts make their shields large enough to conceal a horseman.

The combatants in the Hodgkin panel, with their bold gestures and lively movements, are part of a standard iconography of kingship found throughout the Muslim world. Their ritualized fighting was meant to entertain their royal patrons while symbolizing the martial arts. This imagery was ideally suited to the adornment of such imperial equipment as thrones. Akbari thrones were made of gold, silver, and carved wood, often inlaid with precious stones. The pages of the emperor's historical manuscripts record many of these thrones, which consisted of low square or octagonal platforms with raised backs ending in either polylobed medallions or arches. Narrow panels of wood similar in shape as well as design to the Hodgkin panel decorated their edges, enhancing their beauty and emphasizing the ruler’s status.

Abul Fazl boasts that clever workmen could chisel the red sandstone from Fatehpur-Sikri more skillfully than carpenters could turn wood. Their creations, in his opinion, vied with the picture book of Māni—the paradigm of artistic perfection. The elaborately carved walls of the pavilion by the Anup Talas at Fatehpur-Sikri as well as the finely worked columns and reliefs at the Red Fort in Agra, and the citadel at Lahore testify to the accuracy of Abul Fazl’s words. Akbar’s master stone-masons and designers were not limited in their production to architectural decoration. They also made monumental stone sculptures such as the red sandstone statues of the great Raiput warriors Jaimal and Parra (fig. 16), and the massive elephants that guard the main gate at Fatehpur-Sikri (see p. 45). Jaimal and Parra, defended Chittorgarh against Akbar in the siege of 1567–68 (no. 4), and were both killed during the battle—the former shot by a bullet from the emperor’s favorite gun, Sangram.

The statues of Jaimal and Parra were originally mounted on the backs of large black elephants driven by mahouts, which stood in front of the Elephant Gate at the Red Fort in Agra, completed according to Badauni in 1568–69. During the seventeenth century
the lake. The emperor employed several different kinds of gladiators, each capable of performing remarkable feats:

In fighting they show much swiftness and agility, and join courage to skill in stooping down and rising up again. Some of them use shields in fighting, others use cudgels. The latter are called latanis. Others again use no means of defence, and fight with one hand only; these are called rajayaks. The former class come chiefly from the eastern districts, and use a somewhat smaller shield; which they call durva. Those who come from the southern districts make their shields large enough to conceal a horseman. 78

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Abul Fazl boasts that clever workmen could chisel the red sandstone from Fatehpur-Sikri more skillfully than carpenters could turn wood. Their creations, in his opinion, vied with the picture book of Mani—the paradigm of artistic perfection. 80 The elaborately carved walls of the pavilion by the Anup Talau at Fatehpur-Sikri as well as the finely worked columns and reliefs at the Red Fort in Agra, and the citadel at Lahore testify to the accuracy of Abul Fazl's words. Akbar's master stone-masons and designers were not limited in their production to architectural decoration. They also made monumental stone sculptures like the red sandstone statues of the great Rajput warriors Jaimal and Patta (fig. 16), and the massive elephants that guard the main gate at Fatehpur-Sikri (see p. 45). Jaimal and Patta, defended Chittorgarh against Akbar in the siege of 1567-68 (No. 4), and were both killed during the battle—the former shot by a bullet from the emperor's favorite gun, Sangram.

The statues of Jaimal and Patta were originally mounted on the backs of large black elephants driven by mahouts, which stood in front of the Elephant Gate at the Red Fort in Agra, completed according to Badauni in 1588-89. 82 During the seventeenth century they were moved to the fort at Shahjahanabad in Delhi where the French traveller, François Bernier, among others, saw them. 83 At some point, possibly during the reign of Aurangzeb, they were dismantled and buried in the gardens of the fort where they were eventually uncovered in 1865. 84 While it is impossible to know whether or not the statues of Jaimal and Patta were conceived as part of the original setting of the gate, they were definitely in place by 1580 when Montecore visited the fort and observed that:

In front of the gateway are statues of two petty kings, whom Zendikum [Akbar] himself shot with his own musket; these are sculpted on life-size statues of elephants on which the kings used to ride when alive. These statues serve both as trophies of the King's prowess, and as monuments of his military victories. 85

A miniature (ca. 1913) from the Baburnama, showing Babur entering the fort at Agra in 1526 depicts Jaimal and Patta in detail. 86 The Rajputs and their mahouts straddle the backs of their mounts, which stand on low platforms on either side of the fort's gate. Brightly colored cloths cover the elephants' backs and act as a visual counterpoint to the darkness of their skin. Though clearly anachronistic, the inclusion of Jaimal and Patta in a scene from the Baburnama is not surprising since the artist of the manuscript painted the fort at Agra as they saw it in the early 1900s rather than as it would have been seventy years earlier. A second painting, dated 1610, by Ustad Salimshah leaves no doubt that the statues at Agra were of Jaimal and Patta. 87 Like the miniature from the Baburnama, it portrays the entrance to the Elephant Gate and shows the two elephants and their riders at either side of the gate. But here the artist has added in Devanagari script the names of the two Rajputs next to the elephants.

The heads of Jaimal and Patta, though slightly worn and no longer attached to the warriors' bodies, are as boldly conceived as they are strong. 88 Their well-modelled faces cere a sense of power and determination. Look, for example, at the sharply defined lines of their eyes and ears, and the full, rounded folds of their turbans. Similarly accomplished forms can be seen in the elephants that decorate the brackets of Akbari buildings at the fort in Lahore (which date to the 1590s) as well as the serpents and other animals that adorn the walls and brackets of the so-called Jahangiri Mahal at Agra.

Akbar's interest in the appearance of his world and his desire to leave his mark on almost every aspect of his empire extended to such areas as the mint and the Office of Administration. Gold and silver, because of
and Mulla Ali Ahmad, were responsible for preparing the finely cut dies for casting gold coins that included inscriptions by poets such as Fayzi. Mawlana Maqsad came from Herat and served under Humayun before going to work for Akbar, who greatly admired his astrolabes, globes, and copying-boards, as well as his engravings. Mulla Ali, a native of Delhi, was Akbar’s finest engraver. According to Abu’l Fazl he was "unsurpassed as a steel-engraver, so much that his engravings are used as copies." He learned his trade from his father, Shaykh Husayn, and studied the work of Mawlana Maqsad before surpassing both of them.

Two superbly cast gold mohurs, one dated 1578-79 and another possibly from 1579-80, and two silver rupees dated 1577-78 and 1578-79, all minted at Fatehpur-Sikri, are evidence of the skill of Akbar’s die-cutters and engravers. The mohur, in particular, with its finely shaped lines and large flowing letters set deeply into the gold show how important coinage was for the Mughals. Indeed, each coin represented not only a specific weight but also a symbol of the emperor. Although this extension of the emperor’s persona to his coins was by no means unique to the Mughals, Akbar sought to make it explicit through the use of inscriptions. For the tahara, a heavy round coin, Fayzi composed the following lines:

It is the sun from which the seven oceans get their pearls,
The black rocks get their jewels from his lustre,
The mines get their gold from his fostering glance,
and their gold is embossed by Akbar’s stamp
This coin, which is an ornament of hope,
Carries an everlasting stamp, and an immortal name.
As a sign of auspiciousness, it is sufficient
That, once, for all ages the sun has cast a glimpse on it.53

While Akbar was at Fatehpur-Sikri, in 1577-78, he ordered a complete revision of the operation of his mints. Abd as-Samad was appointed master of the mint and he became responsible for the overall administration of the imperial mints of Lahore, Gujarat, Jaunpur, Pama, and Bengal in addition to the mint at Fatehpur-Sikri. As part of the reorganization of the mints the emperor also ordered that square coins be produced. Although it took several years for these wishes to be carried out, the result of Akbar’s efforts was the standardization and centralization of his mints and a dramatic increase in the quality of the coins they produced. The extraordinary refinement of the mohur and the visually arresting design of the rupee are in direct response to the emperor’s reforms and reflect his impact on the development of Mughal coinage.

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*It is the sun from which the seven oceans get their pearls, The black rocks get their jewels from its lustre, The mines get their gold from his fostering glance, Their gold is emblazoned by Akbar’s stamp.*

This coin, which is an ornament of hope, Carries an everlasting stamp, and an immortal name. As a sign of its auspiciousness, it is sufficient That, once, for all ages the sun has cast a glimpse on it. 191

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The imperial mints and workshops depended upon the efficiency of the Office of Administration for their success. At Fatehpur-Sikri this office was in a large hall and, as Momarzade noted, it was:

*presided over by a chiefman of great authority and ability who signs the royal formans (orders). These are eight days afterwards sealed by one of the queens, in whose keeping is the royal signet-ring and also the great seal of the realm.*

*During these eight days’ interval every document is most carefully examined by the confidential counsellor and by the King himself, in order to prevent error and fraud. This is done with special care in the case of gifts and concessions conferred by royal favour. 194*

All appointments and financial transactions had to be recorded by the imperial clerks and authorized by the relevant superintendents and ministers before being given royal approval. This meant that vast amounts of paper work had to be processed daily and that each order had to have its authenticity certified. Consequently, seals were affixed to all formans in order to guarantee their veracity. The Avin-I-Akhbari describes in detail the various kinds of documents issued by the records office from sanads (vouchers) to sanyoghali (royal grants) and parvarchos (stripes), and stipulates the precise order in which the different seals were to be applied to these papers. Each document was divided into several folds beginning at the bottom of the page and ending at the top with the emperor’s tughras (monogram):

*The first fold which is less broad, at a place towards the edge where the paper is cut off, the Vadi puts his seal; opposite to it, but a little lower, the Muddaf of their Drama puts his seal, in such a manner that half of it goes to the second fold. Then, in a like manner, but a little lower, comes the seal of the Sader. The seals of the Drama and the Sader do not go beyond the edge of the second fold, whilst the Drama-I-Jaz, the Badshah-I-Jaz and the Drama-I-Badshah put their seals on the third fold. Then, the Drama puts his seal on the fourth, and the Safi-i-Tanzil on the fifth fold. The seal of His Majesty is put above the Tughras on the top of the Forman, where the prince also put their seals in Jalpur.* 195

Many of the same artists who worked on the dies for Akbar’s coins made his seals. Mawlama Masqad designed one of the emperor’s earliest seals as a circular form containing the names of Akbar and his ancestors back to Timur written in nasta’liq. He also created a similar seal using naskhitali characters, but this one only had Akbar’s name on it. These seals were put on letters to foreign kings and on documents relating to royal appointments. A second kind of seal, called a mihrabi, used for judicial transactions, was six-sided and inscribed with the words “uprightness is the means of pleasing God; I never saw any one lost in the straight road.” 196 For other orders a square seal, with the words Allahum Akbar jalal jalalahu, which can be construed either as “God is Great” or “Akbar is God,” was employed.

Mulla Ahmad Ali recites several of the emperor’s seals and in a long letter to Badauni—a close friend of his—he describes his work on the circular seal containing the names of Akbar and his forebears, a task which took four months to complete. 197

My employment from the estate of Zii-Ul-Haijib to the end of Rabi-Ul-Awal (year unknown) has been the engraving of the seal of the just king, the perfect Khalifah on which are engraved his sublime titles and the names of his exalted ancestors as far as Amir Timur, the lord of the (farnanate) conjunction. The seal is wide and round and contains eight circles, one in the middle, and the rest clustered around it. 198

In addition to Akbar’s name, located in the central circle, and Timur’s which is directly above Akbar’s, the seal bears the names of Humayun, Babur, Umar Shaykh Mirza, Sultan Abul Said Marza, Sultan Muhammad Mirza, and Jalal ad-Din Miran Shah. 199

This seal can be seen in the upper right hand corner of a beautiful, though partially damaged farman (no. 80) now in the archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Agra. Surrounding the outer circle of the seal is a series of red and gold flecks that give the impression that it is enclosed by a halo. Immediately to the left of the seal is Akbar’s tughras and below it in a fine hand is the text which grants permission to a group of Jesuit fathers to build a “house of worship” in Cambay and implores the ruler of that city not to stand in their way. 200 Gold flowers, trees and birds, highlighted in blue and red, decorate the page and reflect the document’s royal origin. Although the date of the farman is no longer entirely legible it must have been issued sometime prior to 1588 when Father Xavier noted in a letter to the General of the Society of Jesus that:

*After much vacillation and much obstruction from our opponents, he (Akbar) gave us leave to build a church at Cambay; the same favour could not be obtained in the case of Sindh, on account of the vehement opposition encountered.* 201

The importance of this farman for the history of the Jesuits in India is obvious. Its exquisite illumination—which differs from most surviving Akbari formans—suggests that the emperor considered it a significant document and enhanced its appearance in order to emphasize either his support of the Jesuits or, by extension, his commitment to religious tolerance.