

# **REMINISCENCES OF AGRA**

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Reminiscences of Agra by Frederic Fanthome

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**FREDERIC FANTHOM**

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OF AGRA**



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# REMINISCENCES OF AGRA.

BY

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&c., &c.

*SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.*

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1895.

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## PREFACE.

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THE favourable reception which the first edition of this little book has met with encourages me to bring out a revised and amplified edition which, I hope, will be found less unworthy of the perusal of the literary world than the first one. I am sorry I could not succeed further in unearthing facts connected with the Agra Catholic Mission, which lie buried deep below the sods of antiquity, apparently destined never to see light again, and so the information respecting that institution which these pages contain is anything but exhaustive.

The records of the Archdiocese of Agra, including the *Firmans* of several of the Emperors of Delhi, suffered much during the disastrous Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, and the few fragments which have survived the catastrophe contain very little historical matter. Nevertheless I am extremely obliged to his Grace Mgr. Emmanuel Van den Bosch, the Archbishop of Agra, for his courtesy in supplying me with as much data as he could lay his hands upon.

My grateful thanks are also due to Dr. A. Führer (Ph.D.), Archæological Surveyor, N.-W. Provinces and Oudh, and Curator, Lucknow Museum, for the assistance I have received from him in collecting general information, interesting to the student of Indian history.

LUCKNOW, INDIA, }  
March 21, 1895. }

FREDERIC FANTHOME.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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AGRA was originally a village dependent on Biana, and Sikander Lodi made it his capital. But the old Agra of the Lodi dynasty lay on the left bank of the river Jumna, where traces of its foundations still exist. The modern city on the right bank, which, at the time of the accession of Akbar, consisted simply of an old unsightly citadel built of bricks, is the work of Akbar, the actual founder of the Moghul empire in India. In A.D. 1565, Akbar commenced the Fort under the direction of Kasim Khan, an officer in the imperial service. It took about eight years to finish, and cost, it is said, above thirty-five lakhs of rupees. It is built of red sandstone, the stones being fastened to each other by iron rings which pass through them. The foundation everywhere reaches water.

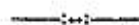
About twenty years later, a Catholic chapel was built in the heart of the city, by virtue of a *Firman* of the Emperor Akbar, and Divine Worship was held in it with every freedom amid alien races and creeds. By the blessing of God its altar has never been without incense since, and the Mission has flourished beyond all expectation. The following pages contain a brief history of its progress.



During the decline of the Moghul empire, Agra, with the rest of the province, fell under the sway of the Marhattas and continued with them until 1803, when it was surrendered to Lord Lake. It was then made the head-quarters of a civil establishment, and, later on, the seat of the Local Government. Shortly after the Mutiny of 1857-58, all the head offices were removed to Allahabad which is more central for the transaction of work than Agra.

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# REMINISCENCES OF AGRA.



## CHAPTER I.

### AKBAR THE GREAT MOGHUL AND THE DAWN OF THE CATHOLIC MISSION AT AGRA.

HISTORIANS and annalists have given graphic accounts of all and everything in Agra; but they have said nothing, except in monosyllables, of that old institution, the Agra Catholic Mission, which has been in existence now about three centuries. Either those writers wanted to reduce a reality into a shadow—a "to be" into a "not to be"—or they had no data to go upon, the archives of the Mission not being accessible to the public. Be that as it may, I am of opinion, that, religious considerations apart, the said Mission possesses an intrinsic interest, it having been, as I shall prove farther on, part of the warp in the loom of affairs the progress of which has terminated in the texture of the British rule in India. The Agra Catholic Mission, therefore, deserves a conspicuous place in British-Indian history, and I

make an attempt, with faltering hand, because of the magnitude of the task, to draw aside the curtain of oblivion that veils its annals at present.

The reign of Akbar, the Great Moghul Emperor, was the era in which the Mission was established; and as his name is inseparably blended with it, I shall not only have much to say on his behalf, but I must start with a brief account of that monarch—a monarch to whom indisputably belongs the first place amongst the rulers of Hindustan, and a bird's-eye view of whose life will, I have no doubt, be more interesting to the reader historically, religiously, and politically, than volumes on the life of any other potentate of the East.

Akbar was the son of Humayun and Hamida Banu Begum who was afterwards called Mariam Makani. He was born on October 14, 1542, the second day after the march of his parents from Amarkot in Scindh, at a time when they were wandering about in dreary deserts, unfriended and forlorn, when each sigh that they heaved brought forth the words of the poet—

“ Sad is my fate . . . . .  
The wild deer and wolf to a covert can flee ;  
But I have no refuge from famine and danger ;  
A home and a country remain not to me.”

Humayun was even destitute of means to make small presents to the few servants who were with him. Akbar's birth, therefore, was not attended with the pomp and pageant of an oriental royal house. I conceive that great men brought up in the school of adversity have, as a rule, none of the wayward and perverse characteristics of some of those who are