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HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL TOWN OF BANGLE MAKERS: FIROZABAD, UTTAR PRADESH

Ar Akshita Jain[1], Ar Kriteeka Sharma[2]
[1]*Conservation Architect,*
[2]*Assistant professor, MBS School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi*

ABSTRACT
Firozabad is a district situated near Agra. It is known as the Glass City of India for its large manufacturing of glass-related products. For more than 200 years the Firozabad industry has been indulging in making glass bangles and now has become the world's largest producer. Bangle-making skills have been transferred from generation to generation passing on the traditional technique. Now the business of the glass industry has grown in various fields like glassware like beakers, flasks, containers for laboratories, and other products like light bulbs, battery bulbs and other lighting and spotting equipment, glass art items are also made like toys, candle stands, fruits, birds and animal figurines and images of gods and goddesses and domestic glass goods like drinking glasses. It has now become a culture of small households in the city to indulge in making glass-related items. Most of the population is connected to the business. To produce all these products, one requires skill, craft and knowledge which cannot be gained without proper practice and knowledge. This paper focuses on the history of the town which is lesser explored and studied. It has various aspects of culture which has been studied upon.

KEYWORDS: *Glass, bangle, craft, traditional knowledge*

HISTORY OF FIROZABAD

Firozabad before the 16th century

Firozabad was a combined land of 7 villages which were Rasoolpur, Mohammad Gazamalpur, Sukhmalpur, Datauji, Akbarabad, Pempur and Jahanpur. The glass was then produced by locally available sand called 'reh'. They first dig a pit of approx 3 feet and fill it with water then the water is left for evaporation which gives matter in a crystallised form which is then melted in locally made Bhatti called 'bhainsa bhatti'[1]. The glass obtained from that was used to make bangles called *kadechhal ki chudi*[2]. These bangles were made by fixing the axe drawing wires and making spirals on the handle of the axe after cooling down the spirals they were cut and joined on the burners. The major manufacturer of glass involves bangles.

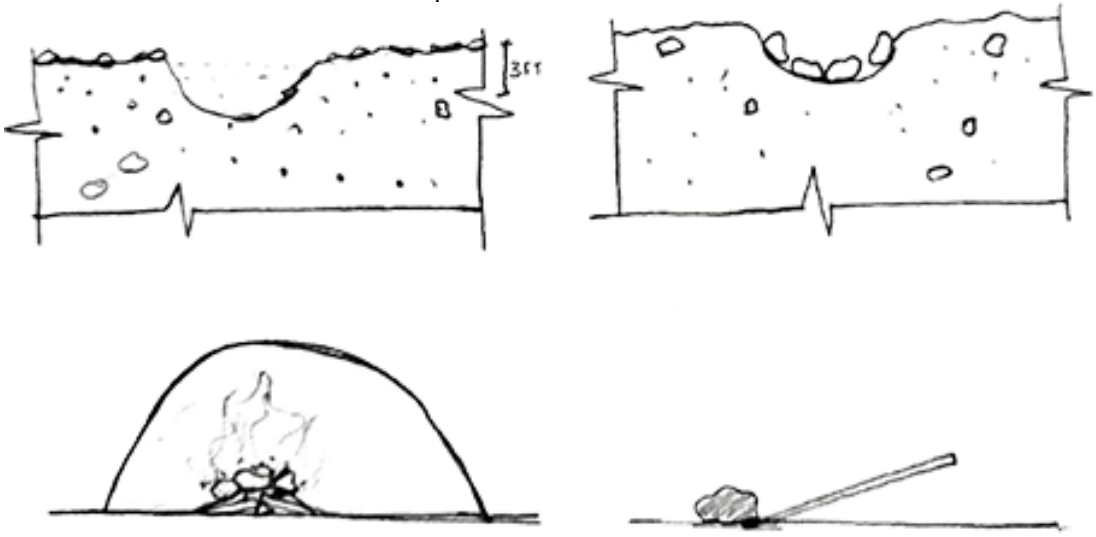


Figure 1: Process of Making Glass

[1] *Bhainsa Bhatti: homemade kiln to mix and milt glass components*

[2] kadechhal ki chudi: bangle made of mixed components (raw material)

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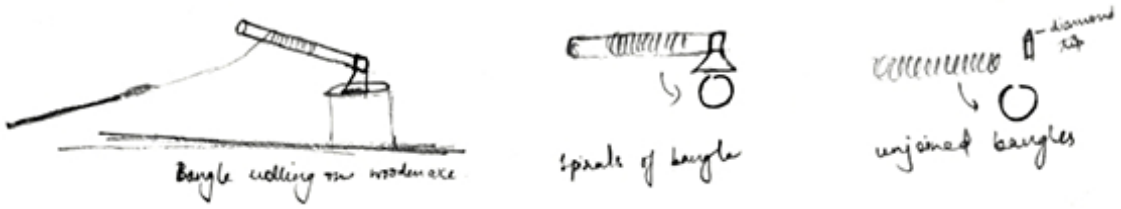


Figure 2: Process of Making Bangles

Firozabad in 16th and 17th century

Firozabad was a barren land until Akbar's reign. Akbar started to rule Agra from year 1556 to 1605.3 He was a Muslim ruler whose ruling territory involved Fatehpur Sikri, Edmatpur, Firozabad, Farah, Jalalabad, Fareednagar, Talihar, Akbarpur, Jalalpur, Kisanpur, Mughalsarai and Islamabad Nagar.

It was when Raja Todarmal in 1566 who was a minister in Akbar's court travelled to Gaya for religious purpose and while returning he was clean shaved and stayed in Asifabad (a small village) where he was looted by residents of the place as they could not recognize him. When he returned to Agra he informed same to King Akbar he then sent one of his trusted servants (mansabdar) Firoz Shah who destroyed Asifabad. Later some villagers gathered and pleaded to Firoz and explain their state of living with no food or homes he then decided to develop Firozabad on barren land. This land was part of villages whose evidence could not be found today. Those villages were then known as Rasoolpur, Md. Gajmalpur, Mizamabad, Datauji, Akbarabad and Raipura. Firozabad is mentioned in Akbar's boundary of rule in Agra. Before Akbar Babur had visited the area but the name of Chandwar could be found in his autobiography "Tujka Babri" not Firozabad so this became more evident that Firozabad only existed after Babur. The mark of Firoz Shah being in Firozabad is Tomb of Firoz Shah where his remains are grounded. The agriculture could flourish in the region easily because of the availability of water from the river Yamuna. The development of small residences was done with a major economical source of agriculture. After the demise of Firoz Shah in the 17th century his tomb was made in memory of all the work he had done and the name Firozabad was marked as the permanent name of the place.

Sher Shah Suri rebuilt the Grand Trunk Road in the 16th century, which went from Sonargaon in Bengal to Lahore in Punjab, and then on to Multan. It was constructed to allow for simple trade between cities. Agra was connected to Sonargaon in the east and Multan in the north and west via Lahore and Delhi, while another road connected the capital to Borhanpur in the south and Jodhpur in the southwest. These roads eased communication, aided trade and commerce, and allowed armies to be dispatched quickly from one location to another. The road also aided the Sultan in keeping a robust spy apparatus in place and establishing efficiency postal department. During the colonial period, the road was upgraded and extended up to Peshawar, and it was dubbed Grand Trunk Road. This road, presently known as National Highway 2, runs through Firozabad. Uttarapatha was the name given to the Grand Trunk Road in ancient India (means northern route).

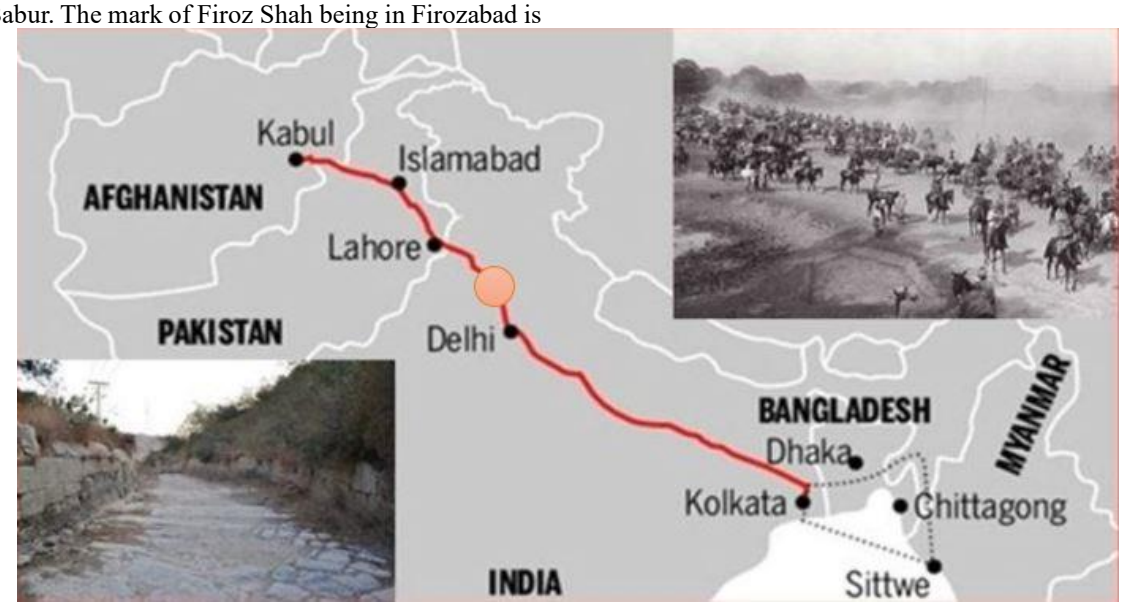


Figure 3: Grand trunk road from Kabul to Kolkata (Firozabad Marked With Circle)

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Firozabad in 18th century

In 1737 when Firozabad had been developed enough, a part of it was looted and burnt by a part of Bajirao Peshwa's army who were crossing the region. During Scindia's reign in Gwalior in 18th century his trusted fellow D Vayan came to city and started Neel (flower use to colour clothes) farming which had been in region for quite a long time.

Firozabad in 19th century

During the rule of Britishers a resident of Firozabad Chaubeyji helped British army and East India Company in many ways for which he got rewarded 10acre of land in East of Firozabad signed by Sd. R. Canyngham (then collector). In 1833 Firozabad was taken into the territorial boundary of Agra.

Railway was introduced in India in 1853 when first train travelled for 34kms from Bori Bunder (Bombay) and Thane. Firozabad was industrial hub since a long time and after a time water transportation became very difficult that's when in year 1862 railway introduced in Firozabad and very first train travelled between stations of Tundla and Shikohabad. In year 1863 it expand to Tundla to Aligarh and growing since. The station also had a massive store area where imported items use to store before it came into market. In year 1868 firozabad had its first Nagar palika.



Figure 4: Railway storage from 19th century

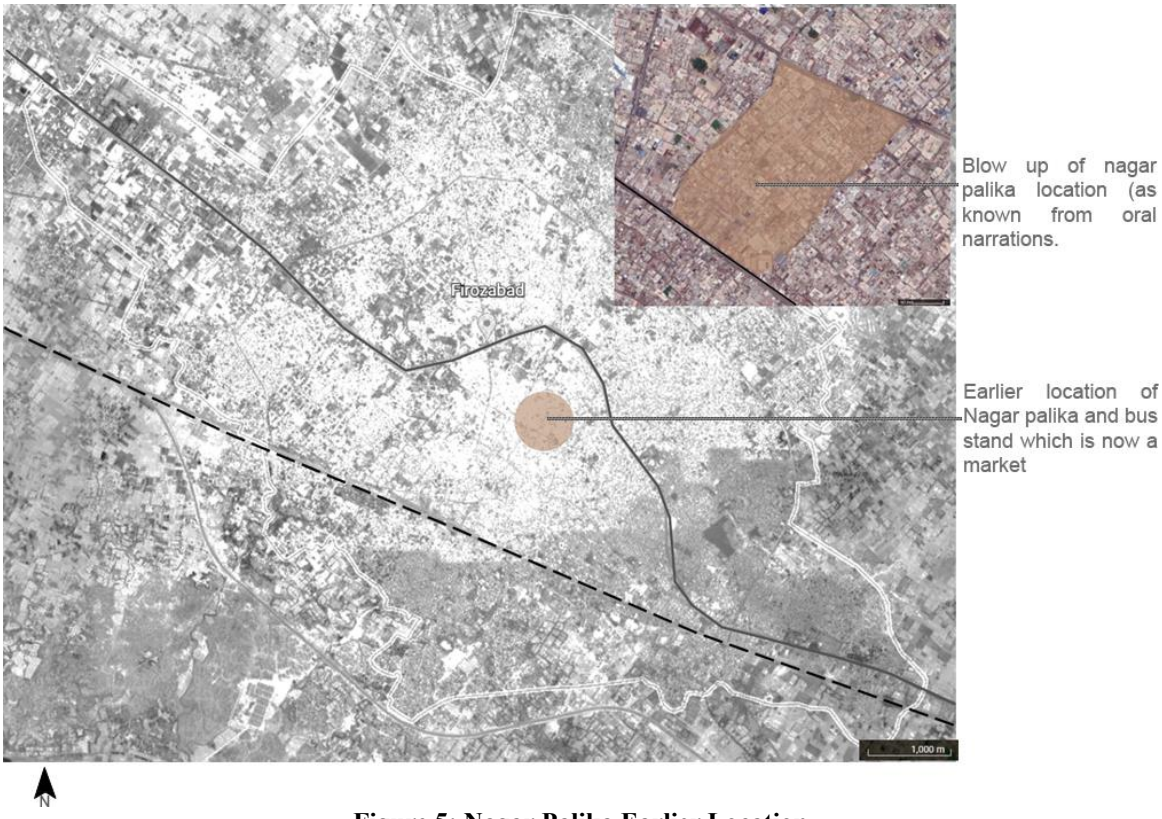


Figure 5: Nagar Palika Earlier Location

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Firozabad in 20th Century

Before year 1920 Firozabad was into the farming, import and export of bamboo and neel. After 1920 glass came to Firozabad. Firstly final products were imported later some labor class clan started collecting broken glass and started melting it into their homes and made bangles out of it which was easiest to cast and later it gave shape to town and started to be known as Suhag Nagari and its connection to Agra which is a tourist hub made these items flourish and grow till now. Firozabad was counted as tehsil under the district of Agra until 5th Feb 1989 when it is announced a separate district with Firozabad, Jasrana, Shikohabad, Tundla and Sirsaganj tehsil Agra.

There had been some known writers from Firozabad which gain popularity nationally and internationally. Those writers are Shree Brahm Gulal ji, Bodha Kavi, Kavi Tikaram, Shreethar Pathak, Shree Satyanatayan Kaviratha, Pd. Banarasidas Chaturvedi, Shree Brijmohan Bhatnagar, Shree Ratan Lal Bansal, Shree Phool Singh Sharma, Shree Umesh Joshi, Pranav (pen name), Shree Ram Prakash Jain, Mir Akbar Ali, Munshi Jagan Kishor, Hazrat Mirza, Hakeen Nausa, Shree Anjum Ansari and Shree Mathura Prasad.

INFERENCE

The city's craft work has received little attention in literature. When it comes to the glass industry, a global description of the bangle production process, child labor, pollution, and health hazards have all been discussed. Nothing supports the story of a craftsman and an artisan, or how industries and artisans are interdependent on one another. Almost all the articles mention artisans or craftsmen as labourers. The art behind curating the products is not touched any literature.