

Taj mahal

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The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism and Urban Significance The Taj Mahal is an outstanding mausoleum erected in the town of Agra by Shah Jahan. As Koch (2005) points out, “ Not only was monument to be a magnificent burial place for Mumtaz Mahal, but it was also to testify the power and glory of Shah Jahan and Mughal rule” (p. 128). Edo Koch has been analyzing in details the Architecture, symbolism and the urban significance of the monument for the past ten years. He began his analysis in 1994, together with Richard Barraud, when the Archaeology Survey of India granted him permission.

Analysis of the Complex

As Koch (2005), points out, “ the Taj Mahal is built northern end of the main axis of a vast oblong walled-in complex that measure 896. 10m x 300. 84m” (p 130). This is to take advantage of the waterfront situation in the garden. The garden around the Tomb has two major sections; the cross-axial and the four-fold garden. The waterfront was a chief element in the design of the whole complex.

At the southern far corner of the garden is the Taj forecourt, at both of its widths, are framed by two smaller courts (tombs of lesser wives of Jahan and courtyard for the tomb attendants). The mausoleum also has additional complex of quarters for merchants and tourists. This was to ensure its accessibility to the whole world. The upkeep and maintenance of the Taj Mahal was financed by the taxes from thirty villages in Agra and income from bazaars and caravanserais as ordered by imperial command.

The Taj as Built Architectural Theory

According to Koch (2005), “ The Taj is built architectural theory and can be read like a literary text, once we have mastered the architectural language”

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(p. 137). Even though there are no texts to prove that the Mughals had written architectural theory, Koch states that his investigations have shown that the theory was laid down in the planning itself.

In conclusion, the principles of Shah Jahan's architecture, which resulted in the building of the monument, are geometric planning, symmetry, hierarchy, proportionality and uniformity, attention to details, naturalism, and symbolism. These principles and their astonishing results can be clearly seen in the complex. For instance, asymmetrical planning with a focus on bilateral symmetry can be seen in the central axis in which the main features are placed. In addition, the building was built to symbolize the power and glory of Shah Tahan. The naturalism principle can be seen through decorations of walls, ceilings, and the tombs; they are mostly decorated with flowers of different colors (Koch 139-146).

Work Cited

Koch, Ebba. *The Taj Mahal: Architecture, Symbolism and Urban Significance*. Muqarnus, Vol 2.

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