

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Painting of the Qutb Minar

British School, Early 19th century

Watercolour on paper

61.5cm high, 47.5cm wide

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The Qutb Minar, the tallest sandstone brick minaret in the world, stands at 72.5 meters high in Delhi, India. Under the orders of Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the first sultan of the Delhi Sultanate, it was constructed from the late 12th century as part of the Quwwat al-Islam mosque, and served as a visual marker of Aibak's victory over the Hindu king, Prithviraj Chauhan, and subsequent expansion of Muslim rule into northern India.

This impressive minaret underwent further construction and additions. Aibak's successor and son-in-law, Iltutmish, added three further storeys; Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq repaired and divided one storey into two following a lightning strike in 1368; and Colonel Robert Smith, Garrison Engineer and Executive Officer at Delhi, repaired the damage caused by an earthquake in 1803 and controversially added a new Bengali-style cupola (chatthri) in 1828. The ill-placed cupola was later removed under Lord Henry Hardinge in 1848 and is now located on the grounds near the Quwwat-al-Islam Mosque. The Qutb Minar is one of the earliest Indo-Islamic monuments in Delhi and the Qutb Complex is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Qutb Minar is depicted here before the addition of Smith's cupola, indicating that the painting was rendered prior to 1828. For later examples of the Qutb Minar represented with the cupola, and also later when it was removed, see the British Library, Accession Numbers Add.Or.4034 and Add.Or.4692

respectively.