

Preservation of Tangible Heritage - A case of Major Tourist Attractions of Swat, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Heritage sites are integral to the city's physical identity. The inhabited architecture, the placement, and the function of these structures over the period unveil the tale of where the city belongs to, and where it might be in the future. These attributes are a valuable addition to the city's character and when preserved well, can improve the social, environmental, and economic stature of the community. It has been observed that heritage sites in Saidu Sharif, Swat are being overlooked due to a lack of awareness, and neglected preservation strategies and laws; risking the region on the verge to lose its valuable assets. This article recognizes the value of heritage sites in the area by highlighting their social and economic benefits as well as the related values. It proceeds with discussing various landmarks of Saidu Sharif Swat and concludes by proposing recommendations for preserving the sites on aspects of prevention and maintenance, by considering the context of the region.

Key Words: **Tangible Heritage, Heritage Sites, Preservation Strategies, Swat Valley.**

Introduction

Cultural heritage has been one of the prime considerations of tourism planners, urban planners, and historians of all times. The intention remained was to revamp the human habitat in terms of material and non-material heritage, covering architecture, monuments, historical relics, artifacts artistic icons, celebrations, and folklore. Architectural heritage is considered an important cultural attraction and a testimony of history, which tells the historical changes of this city. Therefore, it is of great historical and cultural value. In recent days, the economic value of heritage has also been explored and, thus, it is considered important for development in many cities (Wang et al., 2019). The conservation of architectural heritage buildings is made through a coherent, coordinated, and scheduled activity

of study, prevention, maintenance, and restoration. Prevention is said to be the measure needed to limit risk situations for heritage constructions (Borri, & Corradi, 2019).

Saidu Sharif, the capital of Swat also known as the core of this region, because of having most of the heritage public buildings and archeological sites. A large portion of the Mingora and Saidu Sharif's structures were planned by foreign architects and engineers. The materials utilized in these structures are stones, straws, mud, wood, and so on, which were accessible in the locality of Swat. These buildings are of great significance because of the exceptional flair of design of the state's era and the portrayal of that period. They are in deteriorating conditions these days due to multiple reasons (Martore & Olivieri, 2016). The choice to destroy and reconstruct these structures is egotistical. These structures having their very own character and adding to the city's picture of urban development are being overlooked.

To re-establish and draw out the expectancy of these structures, it is necessary to look at them efficiently in a legitimate manner for further protection and safeguarding of the valuable heritage. The reuse of the ancient structures helps in diminishing the pace of deterioration of these structures as well the materials due to the harsh climatic conditions. The vast majority of the structures are viewed as unusable as their current use never again altogether fulfills the capacity retained in them (Douglas, 2006).

The manmade disaster (terrorism) in Swat valley started in November 2007 along the widespread fear it brought danger to the crushing of heritage structures through networks of repeated suicide assaults. Later the exceptional floods of 2010 acted like a sprinkling of salt on the injuries of valley Swat. The two calamities seriously devastated the rich social and cultural legacy and Swat's property, an ancient valley of harmony and a Center of incredible education with two thousand years of age history (Ragheb et al., 2017). A portion of the lofty tourist spots which speak to the period is still there in pathetic condition. The significant heritage needs to be retained. This investigation is a push to reestablish the importance of the heritage structures of the state's time in Swat, a rich and lush green place with a novel flair of architecture. In the 19th century under the rule of Akhund Sahib, Swat has grown up as a significant area for learning and a center of development in infrastructure and buildings (Ali et al, 2013).

The state of swat was renowned for its architectural design, streets, roads, and other structures. The structures of that specific time reflect the peak quality of the building as well as the best engineering plans of the time. As a result of its architectural and engineering quality, specialists in the area esteem them as landmarks. Moving forward to the most noteworthy social significance of architecture, the ruler of Swat, started the design and development of some important structures. Some of the structures are the public buildings like hospitals, schools, colleges, and administrative buildings comparable with more instructive examples in the region of Swat, Buner, and Shangla which were portions of the

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swat state (Martore & Olivieri, 2016). Swat Valley is known as the "mini Switzerland", its landscape is a proof of the natural beauty and is one of the most visited areas of Khyber Pukhtunwa. Its economy depends to a major extent on the tourism industry. The war on terror and floods have affected the valleys attractions as well as the architectural built heritage. Therefore, this paper aims to evaluate the architectural heritage of Saidu Sharif Swat and to analyze the challenges and opportunities of the preservation of the built heritage of the study area.

Research Methodology

This research uses the qualitative method as a major research tool. The relevant data was extracted from onsite visits and interviews with relevant persons as well as published resources according to the specific heritage of the area and presented in a simplified manner for the possible preservations and policy guidelines of the future.

Literature Review

The term "architectural heritage" can be categorized into the following immovable heritage:

- **Monuments:** Buildings and structures having evident historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social, or technical interest inclusive of fixtures and fittings.
- **Townscapes:** The cluster of similar urban or rural buildings having evident historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social, or technical interest, which is sufficiently coherent to form the topographically definable units;
- **Sites:** Collective creation of man and nature, which are partially built upon and sufficiently distinctive and similar to be topographically definable and have an evident historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social, or technical interest.

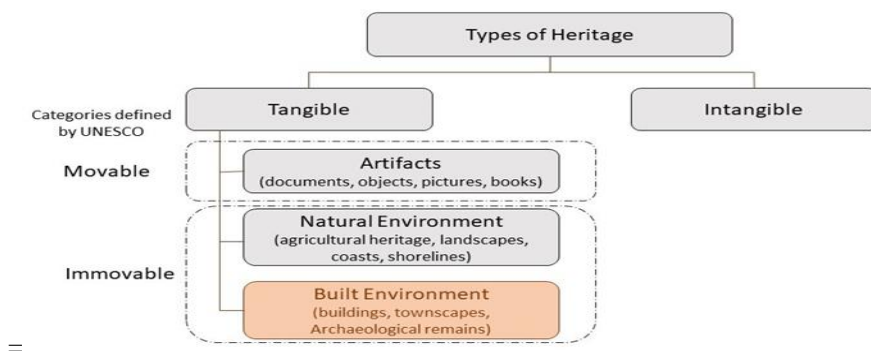


Fig. 1. Types of heritage

Appealing maintenance, adaptation, and reuse can allow the architectural heritage to give aesthetic, environmental, and economic benefits where the original use may not be possible. The creative challenge is to find suitable ways to fulfill the requirements of a structure to be safe, long-lasting, and useful on the one hand, and on the other, it is to maintain its character and unique interest (Ragheb et al., 2017).

The capital of the Swat state known as Saidu Sharif, is one of the historical sites in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. Its economy highly depends on tourism and agriculture (Rahman & Nawaz, 2020). Historic sites in Saidu Sharif are a significant part of international heritage. While they have survived, sometimes for hundreds of years, they will not survive indefinitely without periodic care and attention.

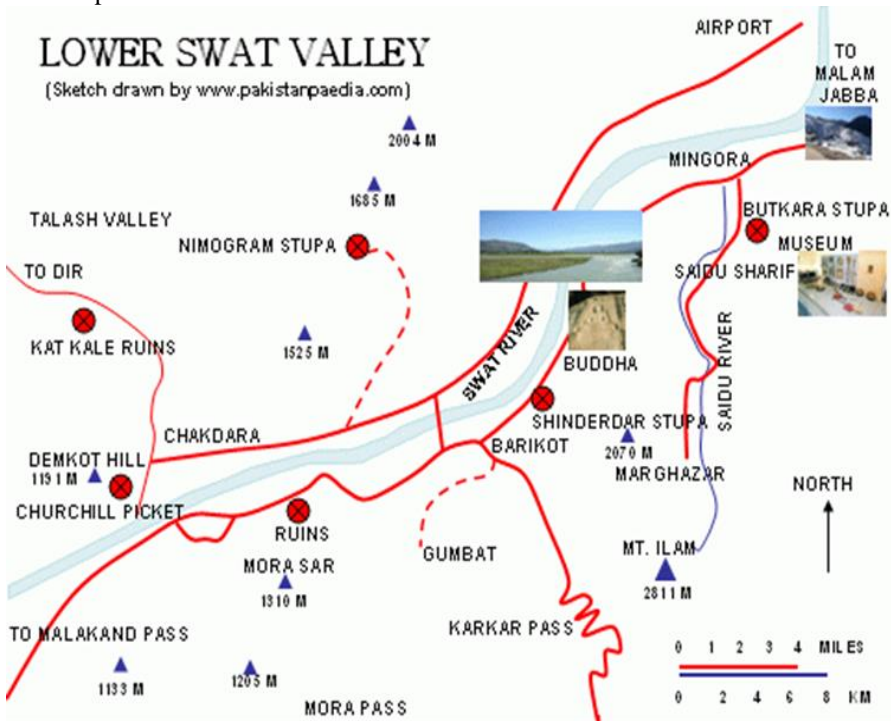


Fig. 2. Map of lower Swat valley

Stupas

There are several ruins and stupas from the Gandhara civilization, one of the significant stupas is The Shingardara Stupa, situated at a distance of 3 km from Barikot towards Saidu Sharif. Historians believe, it was built between the 3rd and 4th century and it is the only stupa that is left with the original dome still intact as shown in Figure below. Large figures of Buddha have also been carved on the

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stones in the nearby place. It consists of several sacred images for worshipping and it is said to be the most preserved stupa as compared to the rest as shown in Figure.



Fig. 3. *Shingardara stupa (taken by researcher)*

White Palace

This building was built in 1950 and was the summer house of Wali e swat. This beautiful palace lies in the area of Marghazaar, which is 7000 feet high from sea level. As shown in Figure. the palace is now used as a hotel and restaurant.



Fig 4. *White Palace Marghazar, Swat. (taken by researcher)*

Akhund Shrine

Saidu is known as sharif (pious) because of the shine of Akhund. The marble flooring of the courtyard is in harmony with the exterior walls of the shrine. Original wooden elements on the entrance were replaced by replicas for protection. It is now a public space for all people.



Fig. 5. *Akhund shrine saidu sharif swat*

Values of Preservation

To ensure the process of preservation and conservation which may lead to authentic results, certain values must be considered.

1. Aesthetic Value

Any rehabilitation or restoration work done may not be accepted as legitimate if it is not aesthetically authentic. All finishing materials, colors, textures, and other visual elements must be the same as the original. If any new modern changes are executed, they must merge seamlessly with the old aesthetically. Any work dealing with the aesthetics of the building must conform to the original (Rehman, 2011).

2. Environmental Value

If any changes are made in conservation, they should exhibit thermal, environmental, and comfort properties that are similar to the original. Any conservation work that ignores the context will be considered unauthentic. Properties such as the acoustics of the materials used in conservation must also behave in the same manner as the original (Rehman, 2011).

3 Historical Value

The relevant history of the building and the historical context must be emphasized in any new alterations. Only those materials, structures, or elements can be changed or removed that either clash with the aesthetical characteristics, create hurdles for users, or harm the original usage and function. In any intervention, history must be preserved, this has to be always remembered. Historical materials must be used alongside historical methods of construction wherever applicable, this requires an in-depth literature review and scientific testing in laboratories to study the materials (Rehman, 2011).

4 Socio-Cultural Value

The preservation work and communal qualities should likewise be remembered. Socio-cultural values of any building are not separate from its physical existence but are an integral part of its identity. This ought to be considered an essential part of preservation. Socio-cultural values of any building are not separate from its physical existence but are an integral part of its identity.

5 Scientific Value

All the work carried out during the whole conservation process must be technically and scientifically sound. The materials, methods, and techniques of construction, all have to be scientifically demonstrable to be as close to the original as possible. This requires diligent research and laboratory work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Preservation of architectural heritage has a very vital role to strengthen the economy through the tourism industry. It helps to promote the beauty and skill of the local region which can create job opportunities. The importance of heritage tourism activities and its implications for the preservation of these historic structures in the city have to be defined by considering the manmade environment aspect, sociocultural aspect, and economic aspects. In a study, it is concluded that among the three major stakeholders connected to the preservation of architectural

heritage (people, experts, and government), two (people and government) are interested in economic development because of tourism (Taher Tolou Del et al., 2020). The process of preservation of a historic site must be according to the rules and regulations given by ICOMOS and UNESCO Charters. The building preservation should be done by the local craftsmen under the supervision of the archeology department comprising a team of field experts. The existing conditions of the objective structure should be documented in advance if any modification or mediation is started. Any alterations should be the least necessary. It should be repeatable or may be reversible. The interventions must not harm an existing building.

The following guidelines are recommended to help the management in the formulation of a preservation plan for the historic sites of Swat.

1. For the long term, a strategic planning for the city needs to be designed in which avoid urban sprawl-like development and that could be more sustainable.
2. multistory structures near heritage buildings/ sites needs to be prohibited through bylaws.
3. The sign boards used for advertisements must not be allowed in historic sites.
4. Historic buildings facing serious issues of cracking, deflection, or failure must be investigated by a team of relevant professionals.
5. The building's original masonry must be retained without the application of waterproof coatings. Repointing of only those areas should be done where moisture exists.
6. There should be the least possible alteration to the structure and physical appearance of the building.
7. Installation of Mechanical systems must not damage the building interior.
8. The building materials used in the conservation of historic structures must be compatible with the old materials. The conservationist should do proper material testing and check whether the material is appropriate to use or not.
9. Training of the Local community should be done for the conservation of historic monuments under the supervision of professionals.
10. There needs to be a management team whose core responsibility is to maintain the historic buildings/site.
11. Tourist attractions must be created on the heritage site to promote the Swat's Culture. New hotels, restaurants, and guest houses, depicting the culture of Saidu Sharif, should be constructed in that area for the facilitation of tourists.

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