

## British Colonial Era Architectural History of Abbottabad and its Tourism Prospect

Hamid Zulfiqar \* Adnan Anwar † Shahid Mansoor Khan ‡

p- ISSN: 2521-2982

e- ISSN: 2707-4587

L- ISSN: 2521-2982

### Headings

- [Introduction](#)
- [Statement of the Problem](#)
- [Objectives of the Study](#)
- [Review of Literature](#)
- [Historical Background of Abbottabad](#)
- [The Alexander and Ashoka](#)
- [Pashtun Durrani Rule](#)
- [Research Methodology](#)
- [Court of the Senior Civil Judge](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Recommendations](#)
- [References](#)

### Abstract

*This research focuses on exploring the existing valuable yet neglected heritage trail of Abbottabad.*

*The primary objective of the research is to prepare a conservation strategy for the selected heritage trail in the city after profound study culminating in the detailed documentation of architecturally rich and valuable heritage buildings of the city. One of the important focuses of the conservation was the promotion of tourism in the city by attracting the local as well as international tourists by providing details of each historic structure. Documentation of the Architectural characteristics of important buildings in the selected areas of the city was included in the study. Moreover, all important buildings were documented in terms of their location, architectural and artistic importance. The research brought forth some interesting findings regarding the responses of government authorities and the general public towards the rich heritage trail of the area. In the light of these findings, conclusions were derived and a set of suggestions was prepared for practical implications on an immediate as well as long-term basis.*

**Key Words:** British Colonial Era, Architectural History, Abbottabad, Tourism,

### Introduction

The economic growth of a country remains a primary concern in all development plans, even if the approach is sustainable development or otherwise. To achieve this particular goal of the economic boost, different countries utilize their existing resources to the optimum possible levels. Tourism is considered to be one of the means for attaining a higher economic ranking in the globe. There are several practical examples of the fact how countries like Korea have utilized tourism to support the overall economic profile of the country (Oh 2005). Similarly, some regions like Brittany have focused on the cultural heritage of rural areas to attract tourism for the development of their economies (Kneafsey 2001). However, the current debate is that economies based on only one aspect of tourism are prone to

\* MPhil Scholar, Department of Conservation Studies, Hazara University, Mansehra, KP, Pakistan.

† Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, Hazara University, Mansehra, KP, Pakistan.

Email: [adnananwar.khan@gmail.com](mailto:adnananwar.khan@gmail.com)

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Engineering and Technology, Abbottabad Campus, KP, Pakistan.

fragility in terms of their sustainability. Italy is frequently quoted as an example in this regard ([Petrosillo, Zurlini et al. 2006](#)).

This is a well-recognized fact that as a psychological need, human beings try to keep a link with their history. Historical assets become a symbol of dignity for them on the one hand, but on the other hand, preserving these assets always proved to be a great challenge for the states as well. Architectural and cultural heritage is a valuable asset and a symbol of pride for countries and has been utilized in the contemporary world as a means of economic development ([Specht, 2014a](#)). Researches have also brought forth that architectural heritage is more important for the tourists than the local dwellers of a particular region. Residents put architecture in seventh place, whereas the tourists consider architecture as their fourth priority in tourism ([Specht 2014](#)). Keeping aside all its economic benefits, it is a universally recognized fact that the existing historical and architectural assets must be preserved for future generations.

Irrespective of the magnitude and profoundness of the work, some efforts have yet been made to conserve and document the heritage trails in some areas of Pakistan, but culturally and architecturally rich north regions of the country are still almost untouched in this regard. Northern regions of the country like Abbottabad and upper areas towards further north had been seats of great ancient civilizations which have left behind a rich architectural heritage as in the southern parts of the country. Some northern regions like Swat valley hold the remains of only one or two civilizations, and some efforts have internationally been made to conserve these remains as well ([Spagnesi 2006](#)). However, areas like Abbottabad have got the honor of being a seat of more than one civilization and have obvious shreds of evidence of this fact. These remains in the form of architectural masterpieces need to be preserved systematically and profoundly for the economic as well cultural development of the region.

### Statement of the Problem

Due to the inattention in documenting, preserving and projecting the rich architectural heritage of Abbottabad city, precious assets are mostly sheathed from the sight of the tourists, which is adversely affecting the economy of the region.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To document after chronologically investigating the selected heritage sites in the Abbottabad city on a case-to-case basis.
2. To suggest a mechanism for ensuring the accessibility of relevant information from anywhere in the world to attract heritage tourists and researchers.

### Review of Literature

One of the famous tourist cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abbottabad is situated in Orash Valley – lying between 34°09'N latitude and 73°13'E longitude –, 150 km north of Islamabad and 200 km east of Peshawar at an altitude of 4,120 feet (1,260 m). The city is also known for its high standard of educational institutions and military establishment (Hunter 1908).

### Historical Background of Abbottabad

The history of Abbottabad is directly attached to the history of Hazara, as Abbottabad was a part of Hazara at that time. Hazara comprises six districts, Haripur, Abbottabad, Manshera, Batagram, Torghar & Kohistan, and is located on the eastern part of river Indus ([Usman, Pervaiz et al. 2016](#)).

### The Alexander and Ashoka

Alexander, after overcoming different parts of Punjab (North), set up his guideline over a huge piece of

Hazara Division. While In (327 B.C.) Alexander the Great handed over the region to the chief (Raja) of state Poonch, Abisaras.

Hazara was governed by the Administration of Taxila until the tenet of the Maurya dynasty; at that time, Ashoka was the legislative head of the territory when he was ruling the region. Bindusara (Father of Ashoka) died in 272 B.C. Afterwards, Ashoka acquired the honored position and governed this territory and additionally Gandhara. Today, the Edicts of Ashoka engraved on rocks close to Bareri Hill serve as proof of his standard there ([HABEEB 2000](#)).

In the second century, son of Raja Salbahan of Sialkot, a legendary lord Raja Risallu took the charge of said region. He was a well-renowned legend among the people of the neighborhood ([SMEDA 2009](#)). When an explorer from china, Hiun Tsang, passed from this region, it was administered by a Kashmiri Leader Raja Durlabha vardhanna ([Bhaduri, Chattopadhyay et al. 2018](#)).

Hazara was progressively ruled by Shahi. Raja Jayapalla was the best-known ruler of the region among all Hindu Shahi leaders. Mehmood Ghazni vanquished Raja Jayapalla in his 1<sup>st</sup> crusade. When the Shahi tradition collapsed in 11<sup>th</sup> C.E., the Kashmiris took charge of the specified area under the initiative of Kalashan, who ruled from 1063 to 1089. King Susala ruled the region from 1112 to 1120. In the 12<sup>th</sup> C.E., Asalat Khan took charge of this range; however, not long after Mohammad of Ghor's demise, the Kashmiris by and by recaptured the Hazara Division and Control ([Khan 1991](#)).

### **Turk Rule**

In 1399, the Muslim warrior Timur, on his arrival to Kabul, positioned his Turk fighters (who had a place with a sub-tribe of Turks, called Karlugh Turks) in Hazara to secure the critical course amongst Kabul and Kashmir. By 1472, Prince Shahab-ud-Din established the state and named it Pakhli Sarkar, and picked the town of Guli Bagh as his capital ([SMEDA 2009](#)).

In the eighteenth century, the Turkish tenet arrived at an end because of the expanded animosity of the Swathi's and their associated strengths. The most essential assault was that of the Swatis in conspiracy with Syed Jalal Baba in 1703([SMEDA 2009](#)).

### **Pashtun Durrani Rule**

Hazara remained part of the Afghan Durrani Empire from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth hundred years.

### **British Rule**

After the First Sikh War, under the terms of the Treaty of Lahore, the zone was represented by Major James Abbott. Abbott figured out how to secure and ease the region within a year. During the Second Sikh War, Abbott and his men were cut off by the Sikh armed force from supplies and fortifications from whatever was left of the British Army; however, they could keep up their position.

By 1849, the British had picked up control of all of Hazara. Notwithstanding, the western Pashtun tribes were incidentally defiant. These tribes incorporated the groups of Allai, Batagram in the Nandhiar valley, and The Black Mountain (Tor Ghar) Tribes. The British sent numerous undertakings against these tribes to pound a few uprisings somewhere around 1852 and the 1920s.

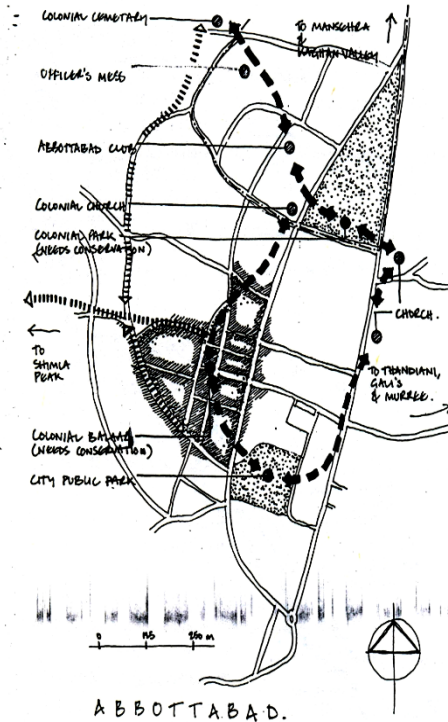
### **Architectural and Historical Importance of Abbottabad**

In 1853, Abbottabad was built and designed by British engineers with the help of local craftsmanship and traders' touch. The work done by British royal engineers and local craftsmen was so perfect that Abbottabad was declared as the most beautiful and lush green hill station of the Indian sub-continent. It

had huge trees like Lebanese and Himalayan cedars and parkways of horse chestnuts, pines, chinar, walnuts, almonds, Celtis, etc.



Abbottabad Current Map



Abbottabad Colonial Map

### Pictorial History of the Context

To highlight the importance of the context, a brief pictorial history of the significant buildings of Abbottabad is given hereunder:



A Picture of Abbottabad Taken in 1853



Abbottabad in 1878



**Colonial Buildings in Abbottabad in**



**House in Nawan Sheher, Abbottabad in**

### Research Methodology

Basic research and information accumulations were carried out by primary as well as secondary sources. Data was gathered from a variety of sources that had been carefully monitored, documented, and compiled and served as an important input to the basic decision-making process.

During the study phase, both scheduled and unstructured interviews were held. Individuals were asked for information on their culture and legacy and the heritage resources as well. They were also given information on the conservation and maintenance of their cultural assets. Thirty persons from various professions were chosen and met to discuss the region's architectural heritage; these meetings revealed several completely undiscovered buildings. These locations are extremely important to the town's heritage. Abbottabad, as one of the most advanced British cities of the time, had advanced systems of firefighting, street sanitation, and natural sewers. Different people have different ideas about how to care for and manage these historic buildings and heritage sites. Some of the participants stated that these sites should be protected as national heritage through proper administration and security, while others held the opinion to demolish the structures and were currently using them as stores.

The research was led by a group of learned elderly people from the region, who assisted in revealing information behind the unique buildings and sites. These studies were properly performed, and information was gathered through visits to numerous areas. Images, illustrations, and architectural drawings of the structures were included in the data. Similarly, minor aspects such as floral patterns, themes, construction materials, and mosaics were highlighted. With the help of old images, the construction plan and earliest buildings were discovered in unique contexts at the time of their construction.

The literature review was a vital component of the overall research effort. As described earlier, several books, diaries, and websites were accessed to understand the physical, economic, political and environmental context of the buildings. A number of unstructured interviews, reviews and focus group discussions were carried to cross-check and verify the history from folk knowledge.

The second phase of the research included the preparation of plans and maps of the urban neighborhoods clearly showing the location of significant buildings along with their age, architectural character and artistic value. This phase was completed with the help of a group of young architects employed and trained for this purpose.

### Significant Buildings of Heritage Trail

Abbottabad was famous and a piece of attraction for the British officers because of its sloping roofed

buildings, which were of tremendous beauty, extent, and amicability. It, however, became a polluted, overcrowded, and chaotic town as a result of debasement and a lack of coordination among various responsible government departments. Despite the contemporary, poorly planned, rather unplanned sprawl of the city, the rich architectural heritage of Abbottabad can still be witnessed.

In the areas falling under the administrative control of the municipal committee, there are only a few old buildings having historical significance, whereas around 25 to 30 sites of heritage significance can be witnessed in the cantonment limits of the city. These sites include lonely standing richly ornamented buildings, tree-lined streets having a number of significant buildings and other destinations having trails or glimpses of the rich past.

Listed hereunder are some of the heritage structures and green lines in Abbottabad whose significance demand immediate inclusion in the category of protected buildings under the Antiquities Act 1975.

### Session Courts of Abbottabad (Listed to be Demolished)

The images below show the more than a century-old ancient Session Courts situated among forests of welcoming tall pines in the heart of the then Abbottabad Town.



Front View of Session Courts,



Rear View of Sessions Court

The beauty and grandeur of the building have now been ruined by encroachments and illegitimate additive constructions. It is one of a few courthouse buildings that were built before 1947, which need to be declared as preserved landmarks.

### Deputy Commissioner's Residence

The Deputy Commissioner's Residence and Office stands in the context of tall trees with features dominantly revealing an excellent Swiss Tudor cottage.

During the earthquake 2005, a few stones from the structure fell down, causing cracks in the mud plaster on the inside of the walls. The site was unfortunately declared irreparable and set for demolition after inspection by the sub-engineers from relevant departments. However, architects from the Department of Architecture, UET Peshawar, Abbottabad Campus, declared that it can be retained and rehabilitated after necessary yet systematic repairs.



Front View of DC Residence

### Court of the Senior Civil Judge

The building is one of the most significant structures in Abbottabad because it has a unique towering chimney and Gibbs borders around its windows. Other salient features include stone floors, dormer windows on the roof, and pea-cap-shaped verandahs with wooden posts. The size of stones used in the structure is relatively larger than in other buildings of a similar age. Similarly, color and type of stone are also different from other buildings.



Court of the Senior Civil Judge

### Former Assistant Commissioner's Court and Deputy Commissioner's Offices (Later on DRO Offices)

This magnificent building now lives only in old documents as it has been demolished. It had unique ceilings, dormer windows, and massive elliptical stone arches. Interior spaces were adorned with antique wooden furniture, but the context was ruined with numerous new yet haphazardly placed, plastered with grey cement, and unplanned buildings. The building was severely damaged during the 2005 earthquake, was declared dangerous and was later on demolished.



**DRO Office**

### **Strong Room Hut (Opposite DRO Office)**

The building was constructed with black stones laid in lime mortar and also pointed with white mortar, which could be seen as one of the magnificent features of this structure. Decorative elements included large padlocks with Queen Elizabeth II emblems, hand-forged steel gates and other elements which were really worth collecting and safeguarding. The building was, however, abandoned for demolition due to severe damages during the earthquake.



**Strong Room Hut**

### **Record Room General (Mohafiz Khana Aam)**

Built-in 1872AD, it was a general record room of Hazara. The building was declared to be demolished after a fire which turned the precious old land record into ashes and the 2005 earthquake.





Views of Record Room

### Police Lines Reporting Room and Supporting Structures

The reporting room, hospital, garages and residences, all were constructed with thick stone walls having chimneys, fireplaces, dormer windows and wooden pillars supporting the roof of the verandah. The building is demolished.



Police Lines Reporting Room

### Residence and Office of the Civil Surgeon of Hazara

This beautiful building was a masterpiece of its age, laid in stone masonry had perfectly balanced facades. Extra heavy gauge tin sheets used in its roofs were imported from England. Like other buildings of the same period, it had brass door handles, high-quality pipes and a vast landscape having Camphor trees. The vicinal landscape spread in an area of more than 40 kanals was badly ruined as it was encroached and grabbed by the estate mafia after the fire had destroyed the precious land records in the Mohafiz Khana Aam.



Residence and Office of the Civil Surgeon, Abbottabad

### Villa of Shahzada Sahib of Bokhara

Gifted to Shahzada Sahib of Bokhara by the British Indian Government, the complex was originally comprised of a palace, royal library, guest cottages and beautiful landscape, including orchards and groves of pine and deodar trees. Currently, only the royal palace is intact and needs the attention of the authorities for restoration.



Shehzada Sahib Bokhara House, Abbottabad

### Bungalow of Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Sahib

This bungalow has got a historical value as the foundation of the N-W.F.P. Muslim League was laid here. Similarly, the decisions about the formation of Pakistan were also taken behind the closed doors of this bungalow.



Bungalow of Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum

The building encountered severe damages during the 2005 earthquake and is currently owned and looked after by the “Auqaf” Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### Other Worth-Mentioning Structures

There are many other significant and worth-mentioning structures spread over the vast expanses of the then Abbottabad Town. These included:

- i. Stone-Built Water Tanks behind the Jail and on Shimla Hills were constructed in 1925 AD
- ii. Cantonment Police Station, Kotwali of Abbottabad, which was like a small castle
- iii. Old Tehsil Building behind Cantonment Police Station, which was damaged during 2005 earthquake but the main structure is still intact
- iv. Saint Luke’s Church, First Cottage of Abbottabad, Pastor’s Bungalow, and Lebanese Cedars and Oak trees in its landscape
- v. Residence of Forest Conservator, Deputy Conservator, and DFO Gallies
- vi. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Office of the Head Clerk, DFO Gallies



Stone Built Water Tanks



Cantonment Police



Old Tehsil Building



Saint Luke's Church



First Cottage of



Pastor's Bungalow



Lebanese Cedars and Oak



Residence of Forest



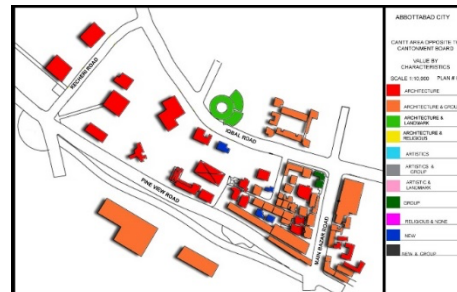
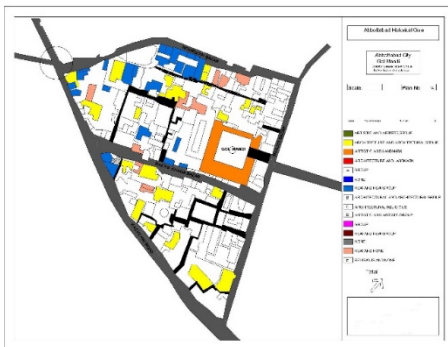
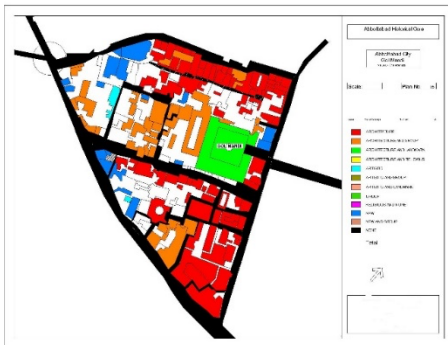
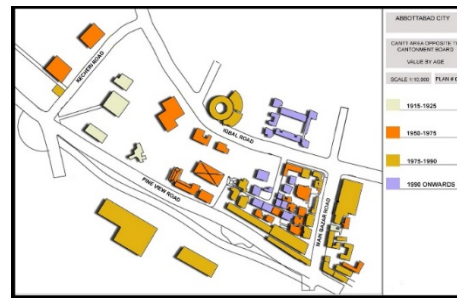
Residence DFO Gallies



Office of the Head Clerk,

### Documentation at Urban and Neighborhood Level

For the guidance and facilitation of the tourists, comprehensive documentation of all important buildings was done at the neighbourhood level. Location, age, the architectural and artistic value of all important buildings were marked on the maps generated by the team members employed by the researchers. A few of the plans cum maps are shown hereunder, for example:



## Conclusion

This study was unique, one of its kind, and pioneer research in the context of Abbottabad with a primary objective of devising a conservation strategy for the valuable heritage trail. Most of these valuable heritage buildings are already demolished by either private owners or even by the government authorities. Many of the remaining buildings are on the brink of demolition. The devastating earthquake of October 2005 and then the severe earthquake of October 2015 caused severe irreparable damages to many of these heritage buildings. Unfortunately, no systematic and serious effort has hitherto been made to repair such buildings, which are ultimately being demolished.

Documentation of the heritage trail can be used as a bridge between academia and professionals in the domain of architecture. Preparing a conservation plan for the heritage trail is though requires patience and dedication, yet it is not unaffordable if undertaken by the local authorities with the partnership of

academia. If immediate steps are not taken for the conservation of the built heritage of the city, it would disappear in few coming years and would ultimately adversely affect the tourism of the area as well.

The vanishing heritage trail is depriving the local inhabitants of an opportunity of learning from their rich past, which will negatively affect the perceptual context of the city in the future. Similarly, the destruction of architecturally rich historic buildings would also impose monetary exactions on the local inhabitants in the form of continuous economic losses caused by decreasing national as well as international tourism.

### **Recommendations**

It is suggested that the local authorities should promote collaboration among the existing architectural and conservation institutes as well as the professionals practicing in the region for the conservation of rich architectural heritage. This would help in the effective utilization of the expertise of academia in the domain of architectural conservation.

## References

- Bhaduri, S., et al. (2018). Historical Geography, Netaji Subhas Open University.
- Habeeb, S. (2000). Asokan Rock Edicts in Pakistan. *Ancient Sindh Annual Research Journal* 6(6), 87-87.
- Khan, H. (1991). Janjuas, their Early Life. *Ancient Pakistan* 7, 178-185.
- Kneafsey, M. (2001). Rural cultural economy. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(3), 762–783. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383\(00\)00077-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(00)00077-3).
- Oh, C. O. (2005). The contribution of tourism development to economic growth in the Korean economy. *Tourism Management*, 26(1), 39–44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.09.014>.
- Petrosillo, I., et al. (2006). Indicating fragility of socio-ecological tourism-based systems. *Ecological Indicators* 6(1), 104-113.
- Smeda, N. (2009). "District profile Mansehra." Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, Ministry of Industries and Production. Government of Pakistan.
- Spagnesi, P. (2006). Aspects of the architecture of the Buddhist sacred areas in Swat. *East and West* 56(1/3), 151-175.
- Specht, J. (2014). Architectural Tourism and the Spectaculture. *Architectural Tourism*, 133–164. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-06024-4\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-06024-4_5).
- Usman, K., et al. (2016). Exploring the fish fauna in water bodies of Hazara Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Journal of entomology and zoology studies*, 4, 848-851.