

p-ISSN : 2521-2982 | e-ISSN : 2707-4587

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gpr

DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gpr/.2024(IX)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gpr.2024(IX.III)



GPR

GLOBAL POLITICAL REVIEW
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

VOL. IX, ISSUE III, SUMMER (SEPTEMBER-2024)

Article Title

A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan

Global Political Review

p-ISSN: 2521-2982e-ISSN: 2707-4587

DOI(journal):10.31703/gpr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume):10.31703/gpr.2024(IX)

Issue:III Summer (September-2024)

DOI(Issue):10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III)

Home Page

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Volume: IX (2024)

<https://www.gprjournal.com/Current-issues>

Issue: III-Summer (September-2024)

<https://www.gprjournal.com/Current-issues/9/3/2024>

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Abstract

This article defines the 'Church Architecture' with its genera which was introduced by the British government to the Subcontinent. This architecture is a significant part of the cultural heritage and British Archaeology of Pakistan. 'Church Architecture' is still a center of attention for the general public and the Christian community in Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. These "churches" were not only religious buildings of the British era but have always been the political and religious epicenters of British authorities. When the British East India Company was expanding its trading activities all over the subcontinent before 1849, simultaneously, 'Company' was trying to achieve the political and religious agenda of the British authorities. With combat skills, this trading company was able to meet the existing Sikh ruling powers on the battlefield, and the 'Regime Change Operation' ended, and the 'British Era' of architecture and supremacy emerged in Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan.

Keywords: Sanctified, British Era, Supremacy, Churches, Christians, Church Architecture, Genera, British East India Company, Regime Change Operation, Religious Agenda.

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Pages: 21-32

DOI:10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-III).03

DOI link:[https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024\(IX-III\).03](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).03)

Article link: <http://www.gprjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://gprjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/3urvlolA2.pdf>

Citing this Article

03	A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan						
	Author	Kaniez Fatima Mukhtar Ali Durrani Shakirullah			DOI	10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).03	
Pages	21-32	Year	2024	Volume	IX	Issue	III
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA	Fatima, K., Durrani, M. A., & Shakirullah. (2024). A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan. <i>Global Political Review</i> , IX(III), 21-32. https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).03					
	CHICAGO	Fatima, Kaniez, Mukhtar Ali Durrani, and Shakirullah. 2024. "A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan." <i>Global Political Review</i> IX (III):21-32. doi: 10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).03.					
	HARVARD	FATIMA, K., DURRANI, M. A. & SHAKIRULLAH. 2024. A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan. <i>Global Political Review</i> IX, 21-32.					
	MHRA	Fatima, Kaniez, Mukhtar Ali Durrani, and Shakirullah. 2024. 'A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan', <i>Global Political Review</i> , IX: 21-32.					
	MLA	Fatima, Kaniez, Mukhtar Ali Durrani, and Shakirullah. "A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan." <i>Global Political Review</i> IX.III (2024): 21-32. Print.					
	OXFORD	Fatima, Kaniez, Durrani, Mukhtar Ali, and Khan, Shakirullah (2024), 'A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan', <i>Global Political Review</i> IX (III), 21-32.					
	TURABIAN	Fatima, Kaniez, Mukhtar Ali Durrani, and Shakirullah. "A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan." <i>Global Political Review</i> IX, no. III (2024): 21-32. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).03 .					



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Title

A New Sanctified British Era of Architecture and Supremacy at Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan

Abstract

This article defines the 'Church Architecture' with its genera which was introduced by the British government to the Subcontinent. This architecture is a significant part of the cultural heritage and British Archaeology of Pakistan. 'Church Architecture' is still a center of attention for the general public and the Christian community in Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. These "churches" were not only religious buildings of the British era but have always been the political and religious epicenters of the British authorities. When British East India Company was expanding its trading activities all over the subcontinent before 1849, simultaneously, the 'Company' was trying to achieve the political and religious agenda of the British authorities. With combat skills, this trading company was able to meet the existing Sikh ruling powers on the battlefield, and the 'Regime Change Operation' ended, and the 'British Era' of architecture and supremacy emerged in Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan.

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Introduction

Oriental Christian Churches, are a desirable, but much-neglected part of the religious history of the ecclesiastical period (Yeates, 2022). Religion is the basic necessity of human instinct. From the deserts to the inhabited cities, Man always resorted to religion. Man remembers his god whenever he meets with sorrow or happiness and whenever moments of failure or success come upon him. Thus, the history of architecture is primarily a history of man shaping space, and the historian must keep spatial problems always in the foreground" (Pevsner, 1945). In the background of this vital need, the British East India Company came to the Subcontinent to trade in spices and some other raw commodities. Since 1608, the

British East India Company has been trading as a larger supplier of cotton, tea, opium, indigo dye, and silk to Europe. Merchandisers used to bring back these raw commodities to the markets of the Subcontinent after fine processing and receive handsome prices from the Indian buyers. Thus, the whole Subcontinent became the busiest commercial market.

The Mughal Emperor Jahangir approved the request of 'William Hawkins to open a factory in Madras. Gradually British East India Company established many trading posts all over the Subcontinent. British East Company extended its trading powers to the political bodies of local Rajas. This intervention became the reason for Regime Change Operations in the Subcontinent. Ultimately British guardsmen of the East India Company met



with Sikh soldiers on the battlefield and obtained political powers finally.

After assuming the political command of the whole Subcontinent, British engineers built many secular and religious buildings with new styles of architecture all over the territorial region. The same case was done with the fertile land of Punjab in present-day Pakistan. Construction of different buildings was their administrative requirement to keep their troops and executive bodies systematic and organized. Some old buildings were utilized after some necessary changes to house their political setup but they built splendid churches by using beautiful Gothic construction techniques borrowed from their native land for the holy purpose. “Churches in India replicate the styles and fashions of typically European ecclesiastical architecture. Gothic arches and flying buttresses, baroque decoration, and sophisticated classical lines are all to be found. (Yeates, 2022).

Architectural Voyage of Churches in Rawalpindi

According to the London Gazette published on May 3, 1849, the nomenclature of Rawalpindi is declared as ‘RawulPindee’ located in the Pothohar region of Punjab Pakistan. This area came under the control of the British on March 8, 1849. Before

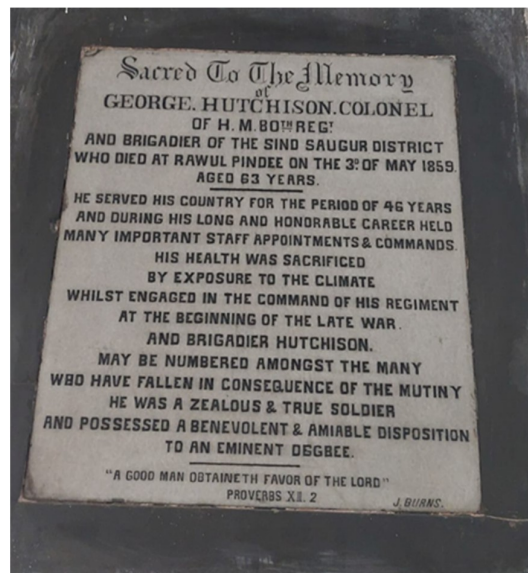
1849, it was under the control of the powerful Sikh dynasty. “Rawalpindi was the gateway for armies entering India and for others who crossed it to fight the Afghans in the West. Rawalpindi took its name because it was the abode of the Rawals” (Khan, 2015).

Rawalpindi city became more popular strategically when Lord Dalhousie declared it as the headquarters of Northern Command. “With it, Rawalpindi also became the largest British garrison in the whole of British Indian territories” (Nadiem, 2006). Owing to the strategic significance of Rawalpindi, the British government gave special value to the city. The city was adorned by the cantonment, barracks, arsenals, bazaars, clubs, and Mall Road. Moreover, the most beautiful addition was the construction of beautiful churches and Cathedrals especially in the vicinity of the cantonment area of Rawalpindi. These churches were considered to be the channel of communication and interaction between authorities sitting in Britain and the Subcontinent (Barkat, 2002).

These churches are still standing with all grandeur as a remarkable feature of colonial architecture and holy specimens of the British era and as an asset of British Archaeology in Pakistan.

Figure 1

Pl. 1: Nomenclature of Rawalpindi on a tablet in Christ Church (Researcher))



Christ Church Rawalpindi

It was the first garrison church of Rawalpindi located near the famous and historical area of ‘Lal

Kurti Bazar’, Rawalpindi Cantt. Punjab Pakistan. This church is exactly adjacent to the General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army. Churches

around the world have a rich archaeological and historical background starting from the Ancient Roman Empire “With Roman building began the separation of structural technique from architectural form. It was not until Byzantine architecture developed, under Greek influence, in the Eastern Roman Empire, that a true arcuated

architecture was evolved, which resulted in such masterpieces as Santa Sophia, Justinian’s great church at Constantinople” (Ware and Beatty, 1944). The origin and birth of churchyards, sanctuaries, and Crosses are linked to Roman and Greek architecture (Friar, 2000)

Figure 2

Pl. II: Christ Church Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan (courtesy Rev. Rashid)



It was built on March 12, 1852, by the expert British engineers. Its construction work was properly planned by the British East India Authorities working here. So initially British engineers built a prototype church at a very short distance of 50m. Actually, this prototype church was also working as a site office of British officers and engineers working on this project. They also used to perform their prayers in this early church constructed in the demarcated land acquired and reserved for Christ

Church Rawalpindi. Ground plans and other obligatory arrangements regarding the construction of Christ Church were done by the architects and engineers of the British East India Company. According to an Ex. Army Chaplain of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. the architect and designer of Christ Church was the same who built Lahore’s first garrison church in Mian Meer Cantonment of Lahore.

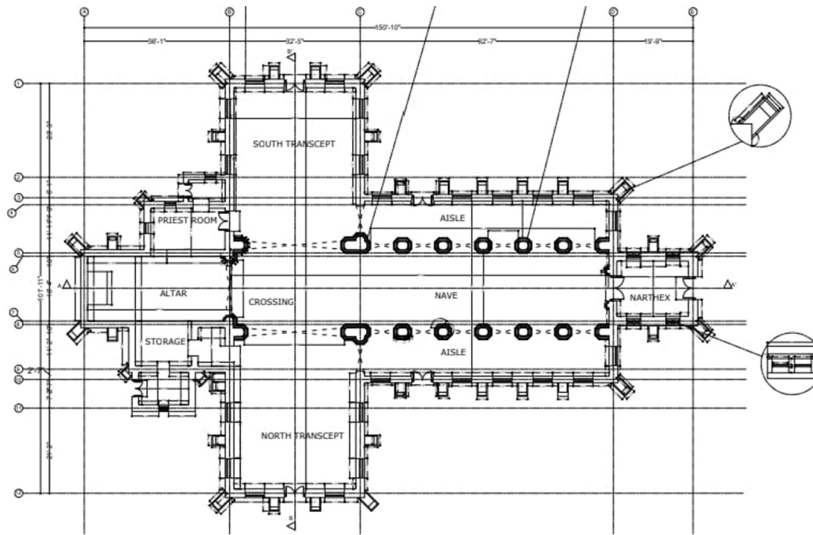
Figure 3

Pl. III: Prototype Church of Christ Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Figure 4

Fig. V: Christ Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Captain G. N Sharpe' was a British army officer serving in the Bengal Regiment who gave his utmost services to construct the St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt which is almost the contemporary church of Christ Church built in Rawalpindi. Its preliminary church services were started in March 1851. Sunday prayer was

mandatory for garrison officers, deputy commissioner, cantonment magistrates, and railway officials here. Christ Church was the sacred structure that was built and kept reserved for British army officers and clergy class only. No low-rank army soldier or general public was allowed to go to Christ Church for prayer.

Figure 5

Pl. IV: Christ Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



This church was built by following the Gothic techniques of construction. According to the ground plan of Christ Church (Fig. IV) western side of the church has the main entrance which follows

the 'Narthex' or 'Vestibule'. Above the 'Narthex,' a beautiful gallery is built to facilitate and accommodate the highest-ranked officers of the British army or administrators during prayers,

meetings, or social gatherings as the church was not performing a single role.

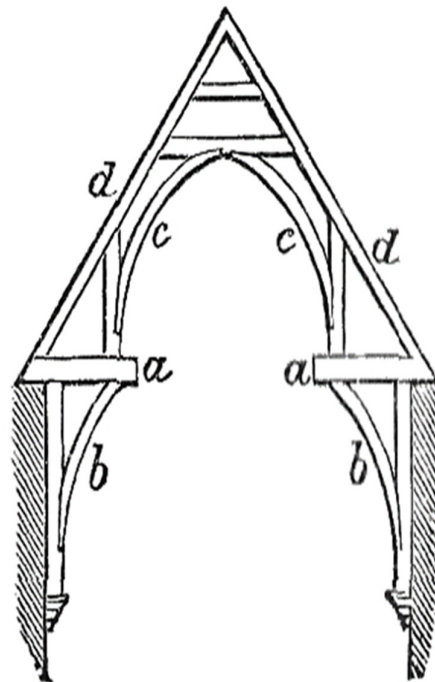
Next to the 'Narthex' a wooden door leads to the very important section of the church which is called 'Nave'. Basically, it is a congregational place for the worshippers. On both sides of the main concretionary place (Nave), the seating arrangement of fine wooden benches is still preserved and in fine condition. The seating area was furnished with fine polished wooden benches in different rows under the beautiful wooden roof. Fine wooden panels are still safe and especially wooden hammer-beam roofs are marvelous due to their fine texture and quality. This roof was approaching the end corner of the nave. An ample space was provided to settle the worshippers in the seating area. The outer part of the whole roof was sharp-pointed according to the Gothic style of construction. From the main entrance to the connective nave, a number of

ventilators for sufficient sunlight and air. The arrangement is called clerestory. The topmost area of the nave due to the hammer beam roof represents a trefoil arch. Next to the 'Nave' the distinctive area of the 'Transept' cuts the oblong section in Christian Cross shape which is the main characteristic of any church or cathedral around the world.

A beautiful 'Altar' was placed just right in front of the 'Apse'. 'Apse' has always been an integral and significant architectural element in church building which lies in the east of all churches and cathedrals of the world. The whole church was festooned with beautiful gothic arches around. A number of memorial tablets have been documented during surveys on which the achievements of British army officers during the British Era of Rawalpindi with dates of their martyrdom were written. The exterior of the Christ church is as beautiful as the interior.

Figure 6

Pattern of Arches at Christ Church Rawalpindi (Courtesy Ware and Beatty)



A Very special characteristic in the construction of Christ's church is the use of beautiful Stained Glass Windows in which the image of Jesus Christ is evident. This architectural representation is a special characteristic of Gothic art and architecture.

Stained glass windows (Fig. 6) were documented as well preserved. The whole building was strengthened by Gothic buttresses. These buttresses were given the style of three steep steps and topped with pointed sharp ends.

Figure 7

Stained Glass Window in Christ Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Figure 8

Pl. VI: An Old View of Christ Church Rawalpindi Punjab Pakistan



St. Paul's Church Rawalpindi

This church is located at the Mall Road Saddar Rawalpindi. It was built in 1876 by Rev. G.J. Chree. The first service was started in January 1908. It is the second oldest church after the Christ Church Rawalpindi. This church was administered by the Church of Scotland established in 1560. British troops residing in Rawalpindi used to come for Sunday prayer regularly. After the partition, this church was handed over to the Presbyterian

Church Authorities run by the Americans. It was built with grey bricks. The beautiful pointed roof was built in pink English bricks. Thus, a very sharp contrast of grey and pink color in all weathers becomes more eye-catching for all. Due to this contrast, it was known as the Pink Church.

Saint Paul's Church was architecturally more conical than Christ's Church due to its Scottish design and the tall tower. It is also a protestant church like Christ church Rawalpindi.

Figure 9

Pl. VII: St. Paul's Church Rawalpindi Cantt. Punjab, Pakistan (Researcher)



The frequent use of buttresses makes its appearance very composed. “The purpose of buttresses and flying buttresses is binding architectural elements. Apparently, their presence in church art and architecture is decorative but actually their role is supportive (Nikolinakou, 2005). Mathematical computations and geometrical calculations are incorporated in such kind of construction to transform the sacred architecture in a great balanced and symmetrical demonstration. The true role of buttresses and flying buttresses is to form the perfect balance and

equilibrium in any kind of architecture. They also serve as rampant arches and these arches cannot be created without the rules of geometry in architecture. It requires mathematical calculations to assemble the structure and its strength (Quintas, 2016).

The four-storied ‘Tower’ at the vestibule reaches its prominence when it becomes more conical at the top. This conical part of the main tower is surrounded by small turrets on all four corners.

Figure 10

Pl. VIII: Saint Paul's Church Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan (Researcher)



The third story is given three arches on each side of a cemetery. The second story is comparatively simple and the tower at ground level has been

raised with bastions. The white and grey color scheme has left cool effects. The entire main building of the Church is enclosed by the

buttresses. Entering from the Narthex, the clear images of four gospels in a stained glass window at the apse are noticeable. An altar in green clothing has been kept. Entering from the Narthex and starting from the Nave, ample space has been

spared for seating, approaching towards the Transept. The roof of Saint Paul's Church is wooden but somehow simpler than the Christ Church.

Figure 11

Pl. IX: Tower of Saint Paul's Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Clearestory windows are running along the top border of the entire Nave. These typical windows were frequently used in Romanesque Architecture in Cathedrals and Basilicas. These windows are a big source of sunlight and air in all churches of the

British era built in the Subcontinent during their regime. At the eastern side where the Apse is built, four lancets with gospel images are also the main feature of Gothic Architecture.

Figure 12

Pl. X: Clearestory windows in St. Paul Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



St. Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi

Saint Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi Cantt is another beautiful architectural specimen of the British Era. It is located in the vicinity of Lal Kurti, Rawalpindi Cantt. Unlike Christ Church, it represents the Catholic sect of the Christian Community. According to the Gazetteer of Rawalpindi District, published in 1909, the construction of this Catholic Cathedral was completed in 1880. Saint Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi Cantt is completely different

from Christ Church and Saint Paul's Church Rawalpindi in terms of architecture and representational design (Fig. XI).

The main tower at the façade of St. Joseph Cathedral (Fig XI) is less conical than the tower of St. Paul's Church Rawalpindi. Christian Cross, over the Wheel Window, was made in such a manner that the window and Cross both are prominent. This window at the tower is also called the Rose Window in Gothic Architecture.

Figure 13

Pl. XI: St. Joseph Church Rawalpindi, Punjab Pakistan (Researcher)



Contrary to what was previously described about both churches, in St. Joseph Cathedral, a statue of Saint Mary was placed in an Apse. In the image, Saint Mary was carrying Jesus Christ in her hands. During surveys, it was noted that number of consecrated plates of biblical scenes of Jesus Christ

and St. Mary have been displayed on the walls of St. Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi. It is noteworthy that the Apse is the main and vital part of every church and Cathedral. The main roof was not made up of wood. Two parallel arched aisles were given on both sides of the Nave.

Figure 14

Pl. XII: Statue of St. Mary in St Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Figure 15

Pl. XIII: Altar kept in St. Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Figure 16

Pl. XIV: Interior of the St. Joseph Cathedral Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Conclusion

After the Independence War of 1857, Regime Change Operations in the Subcontinent took place successfully by the British Authorities and a new era of building and power cropped up. British Authorities declared their hegemony in the Subcontinent. Now it was their administrative requirement to establish their scheme with the help of an organized system. The growth of British rule in India fetched a stream of intellectual and technological progress which, spreading colonization became gradually international (Mumtaz, [1985](#)).

The most relevant was the settlement of the Cantonment in Rawalpindi to reside the British

Army who played a vital role in its annexation. “As elsewhere in the Subcontinent, instead of living together with the locals, they built themselves spacious cantonments with barracks, arsenals, officer and civilian residences, churches, clubs, and other amenities, usually outside the town (khan, [2015](#))

After demarcating the cantonment of Rawalpindi, the engineers of the British Army were given the task of the construction of Churches. That was the time when a new sanctified British Architectural Era was begun. In this milieu, these three churches in the vicinity of Rawalpindi Cantt were built up. The Gothic art and architectural style adopted in the construction of these churches

was completely new for the local engineers and civilians. The fundamental ground plans, arrangements of churches, solid material used in their erection, and ornamental scheme, during the British Raj, show the basic idea and plan behind the construction of churches. The researcher comes across the architectural intentions of the British Government under which these monumental and well-planned constructions of churches came into existence (Lal, [2012](#)).

British architects and engineers surprised the Indians with this new Gothic style in which pointed towers and spiky roofs were prominent features instead of domes here on the subcontinent. They focused on architectural changes that occurred and were fetched by British engineers in the form of sacred architecture (Talboot and Kamran, [2017](#)). Churches are our most valuable cultural assets therefore, the Government should pay special attention to them to save this British archaeological and cultural heritage lying in Pakistan.

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