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Abstract

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Key Words: Church Architecture, Colonial, Gothic Style, Garrison Churches, Transept, Ground Plan, British Engineers, Strategic Location, Epoch

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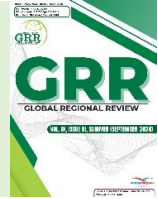
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Abstract

The Paper deals with the convexities of first gothic garrison churches as the stunning sacred structures of Christian community, built in very well-planned zones of British cantonment vicinity of Rawalpindi and Lahore during Colonial era. Garrison churches of Lahore and Rawalpindi had been reserved for high-ranking military officers of British army which developed as the center of lure of all intruders in every era due to their geographically strategic location. British East India Company was established here as a trading company but gradually it was wired up with political and religious roles. British engineers built many sacred structures in Rawalpindi and Lahore. This building epoch gave Lahore and Rawalpindi, as a new form of Gothic style of architecture. Paper analyses that the architectural history of Punjab, Pakistan owes to the British engineers who import this new style of architecture here to make the history of Rawalpindi and Lahore more charismatic.

Keywords: [Church Architecture](#), [Colonial](#), [Gothic Style](#), [Garrison Churches](#), [Transept](#), [Ground Plan](#), [British Engineers](#), [Strategic Location](#), [Epoch](#)

Introduction

'Martin Luther' said, "To be a Christian without a prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing". So, religious structures were more imperative and closer to the minds and souls of the British rulers of Rawalpindi and Lahore, Punjab of present Pakistan as compared to secular buildings.

British gave much attention and consideration to constructing the churches of Gothic style when they were assigned this task. Many churches were also built out of the cantonment vicinity but this study will architecturally analyze only those two gothic garrison churches which were planned, designed, and built soon after assuming the control of Punjab



from Sikh rulers in 1849. Architecture is rising all around us and we cannot get away from it, we cannot turn a blind eye to it, and if society pays attention to it, better architecture could be shaped (Ware, 1944). Actually, Church art and architecture grew in the course of centuries and became a complete subject of classic architecture. Many Greek and Roman art and architectural elements and sections were added permanently to church art and architecture (Breasted, 1916).

Rawalpindi and Lahore were geographically and politically as important as today. Rawalpindi and Lahore regions, which were part of the most ancient cultures of Soan and Indus Valleys, adopted many architectural styles by mixing prevailing designs and types in basic building techniques of all eras. This flexible scheme regarding art and architecture evolved over time and underwent many changes but in that whole scenario, religious structures remained intact in their basic building plan, design, and style and no major architectural changes could take place in them due to their sanctified primitive status. The architecture of every era is actually a record of communal, fiscal, sacred, emotive, logical, and inventive conditions in which the builder lives (Ware & Beatty, 1944).

For the first time in the Indian subcontinent, during Akbar's reign, a group of Christian followers obtained permission from the king's court to build the first church in Agra and King Akbar allowed them to build a church (Barkat, 2002). Similarly, when the British rulers arrived in Lahore and Rawalpindi, they first planned to build beautiful churches in the cantonment areas in view of their religious needs in an organized way. Since the British Army played a great role in capturing these areas, the British Government authorized the British Army to build beautiful churches within the garrison. So, for the execution of this plan, in Rawalpindi and Lahore, military cantonments were developed and urban areas were extended. In 1849, Sir Charles Napier who was commander in Chief of the British Army in the Subcontinent, visited Lahore and passed the order for shifting cantonment from Anarkali to the Mian Meer. In the southeast of the walled city of Lahore, 1300 square miles area of Mian Meer was demarcated as the military cantonment of the British (Aijazuddin, 1991).

Similarly, Rawalpindi in 1849 fell under the British regime. The military barracks were laid and

British army troops were stationed here. Military authorities here in Rawalpindi were immediately given the task of a beautiful garrison Church in the vicinity of the cantonment and the area of the present General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army. It was named as 'Christ Church Rawalpindi'. On the other hand, in Lahore Maj. G. N. Sharpe, 2020 was the designer of the beautiful church of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. These both churches are the projectors of British supremacy, power of ability, and unique style of Gothic architecture. After being equipped with these responsibilities, British army officers and soldiers were mobilized to deal with any political instability in colonial Punjab, Pakistan. Engineers of British army units were given the job of making arrangements for the erection of some administrative and religious buildings in Rawalpindi and Lahore to organize the agenda of British authorities. The extension of British Rule to India caused the technical and architectural change (Mumtaz, 1985).

An architect said that architectural marvels are always the specimens of cultural heritage but their decay transformed them into archaeological belongings. This study is an effort to document the originality of their layout plan, design, architectural elements, and their societal status in British Rawalpindi and Lahore and in the present scenario so that their cultural rank could be kept unremitting lest these churches turn into archaeological properties due to inattention or corrosion. So, the composition of their architectural record was important before they fell into the calamities of time. Sacred structures are always the important properties of any society due to their extended status of faith and authority (Brown, 1845).

Christ Church Rawalpindi

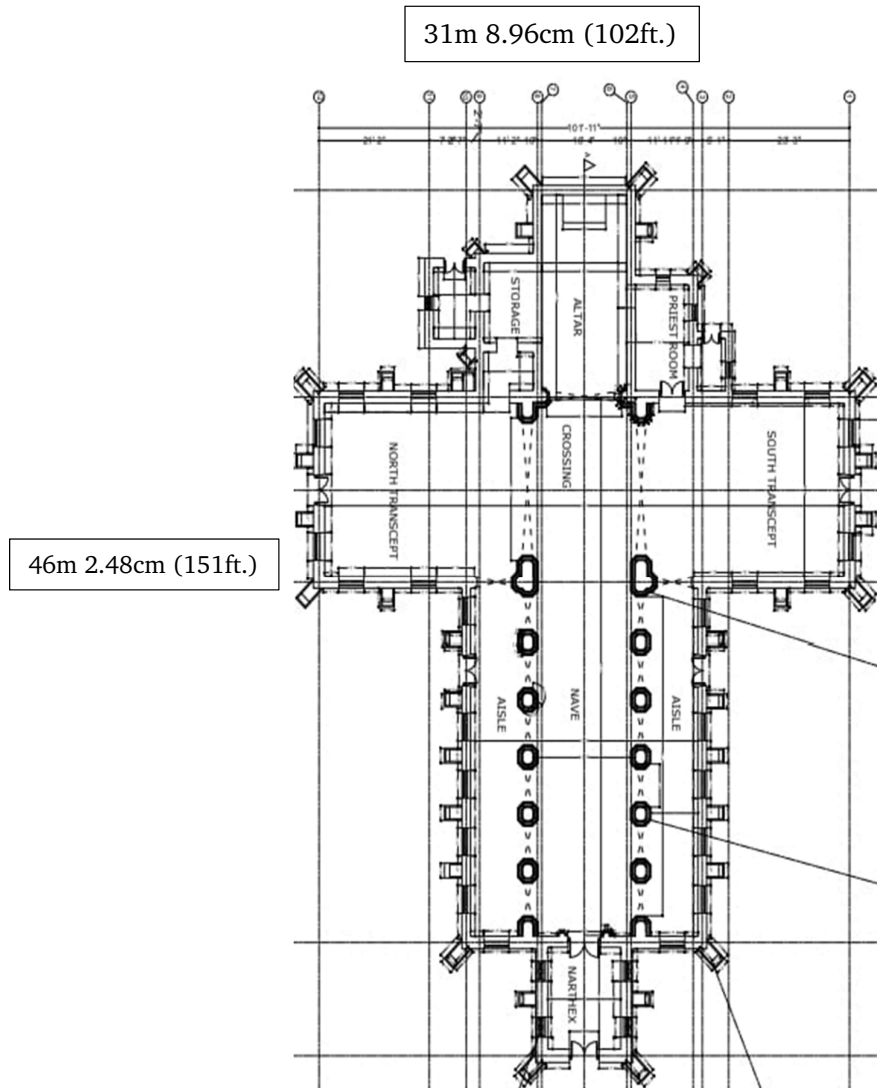
'Christ Church Rawalpindi' was built in 1852 to congregate the British army officers under their religious desires (Wilsey, 2014). According to church historians, the origin of Christ's Church goes back to the time of Constantine, the Roman emperor who destroyed all kinds of pagan temples and declared himself the worshipper of the Christian faith. He ruled over Rome from 306 AD to 337 AD. He was the first ruler of Rome who converted to Christianity and tried to house his faith in any specific sacred structure like Egyptian and Greek

temples. He chose 'Basilica' from Roman architecture as a basic layout structure for the construction of the Christian Church.

Architectural Composition of the Christ Church Rawalpindi

Figure 1

Ground Plan of Christ Church Rawalpindi, Punjab (Researcher)



It was basically a transverse arrangement that became a permanent ground plan of churches and Cathedrals. "There are certain basic principles of architecture which are common to all ages and climes" (Atkinson, 2017).

The Gothic style of architecture was adopted for the construction of this marvelous Christ Church.

Although Gothic originated in northern France, but spread across the rest of Europe so it could be said as a French prototype (Fletcher, 1999). The ground plan of the Christ Church Rawalpindi is found transverse during the survey. Its length is 46m 2.48cm (151 ft.) and it obtains a width of 31m 8.96cm (102ft.). It lies from West to East. 'Narthex'

is a porch-like 'Roman Atrium' at the west entrance of Christ Church Rawalpindi.

Figure 2

Old Picture of Christ Church Rawalpindi (Courtesy Rev. Rashid)



Figure 3

Christ Church Rawalpindi after Renovation (Researcher)



This 'Narthex' is found next to the main entry door. Over this porch, a beautiful wooden gallery has been designed and found to seat the garrison senior officers or clergy class. Next to the 'Narthex' and 'wooden gallery' the area of 'Nave' and 'Aisles' starts in which a spacious seating arrangement on both sides of the 'Nave' is provided to congregate the garrison worshippers at the time of prayer. Rows of seven columns are found to form the colonnade on both sides of the Nave next to the seating arrangement. These rows of columns support the

whole roof structure of the Church. Two more entry/Exit doors are found in both 'Aisles' of the Church.

Next to 'Nave' 'Transept' is found to cut the section into Crosses and this section provides two exit doors towards north and south directions. Crossing the 'Transept' towards the east, an elevated podium appears from where the most sacred and holy section of 'Apse' begins. On both sides of the 'Apse,'

two spaces are functioning as 'Vestries, or Chaplain rooms or offices.

Figure 4

Internal View of Christ Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



'Apse' has a vaulted wooden truss roof which is still beautiful and original as it was built in the British era. At the eastern end, a stained glass window is found reflecting the imagery of Jesus Christ. The scissor roof is still beautiful, in good condition holding the whole structure. On the elevated podium under the 'Apse', an 'Altar' has been placed where holy traditions are performed.

The external structural arrangement has been finished with stepped gothic buttresses with pointed

tops. A sequence of windows as clerestory in the north and south directions of the 'Nave' is found to supply air and light to the sacred Christ Church Rawalpindi. The gable roof of the Christ Church is the main visible feature of Gothic architecture. In the beginning, a low-height boundary wall was built to demarcate the Church vicinity but latterly, due to the insecure conditions of the country, a heightened wall was constructed around the Christ Church Rawalpindi for its safety.

Figure 5

Internal View of Christ Church Rawalpindi (Researcher)



Renovation of Christ Church Rawalpindi

Some parts of the Christ Church were demanding renovation so, in 2019, the Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan gave the grant to renovate its building. Renovation work was done with care and under the supervision of expert engineers who renovated its required architectural sections with the same design, technique, and material in which it was initially built. It was also repainted in yellow color but again in the last renovation phase, the paint was removed and now the English Brick Bond Masonry technique was applied presently (Loth, 2011).

St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt

St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt was built in 1856, located in the heart of the Lahore Mian Meer Cantonment. It is the first garrison Church

which was designed by Maj. G.N. Sharpe. He was the army officer of the Engineer Battalion of the Bengal Regiment. Primarily and soon after attaining the powers in Lahore by the East India Company, in 1852, it was directed by the British authorities that a temporary church must be built here as an expression of devotion to Jesus Christ. Initially, the church services were started in a temporarily built church constructed of fine wood and its name was kept Mian Meer Church. Soon this wooden structure was burnt and damaged severely during the conflict between Sikhs and the British army. After seizing the political hold by the Sikhs in the Lahore region, British authorities ordered Maj. G.N. Sharpe to redesign and rebuild a solid church structure immediately to celebrate their victory and dedicated this garrison church to St. Mary.

Figure 6

Agreement of Transfer of Land of St. Mary Magdalene Church to Lahore Cantonment Board in 1956

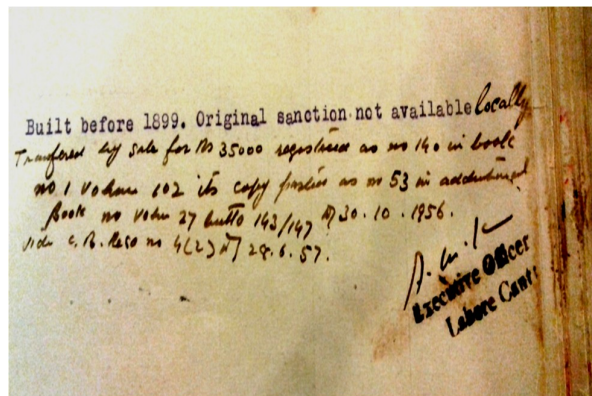
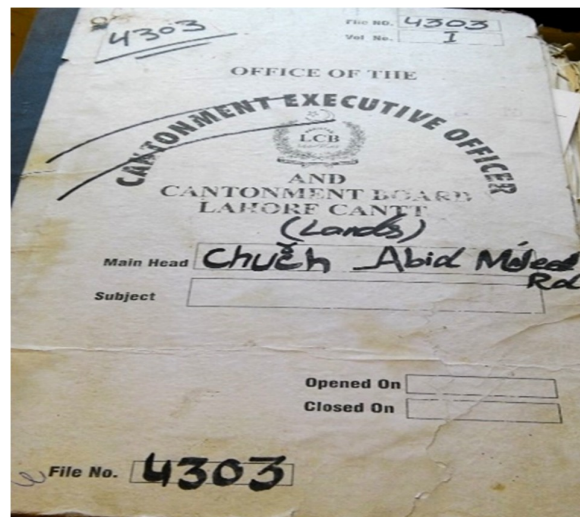


Figure 7

Record File of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantonment

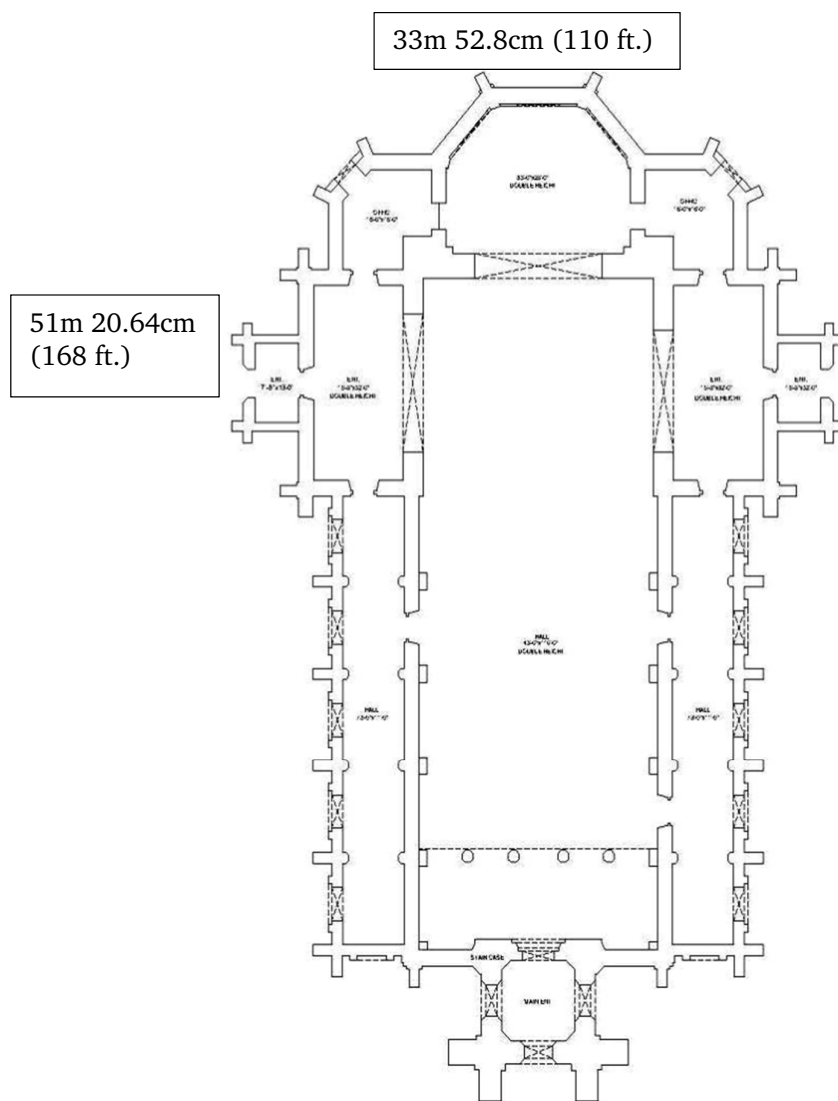


The construction of St. Magdalene Church Lahore was started in 1854. The striking church planned in the Early English Gothic style was built in 1854-56. It is built with the help of burnt bricks and lime mortar. The craftsmanship throughout is of first-rate outstanding and wonderfully completed (Medley, 2023). The internal appearance of this church was more striking and mind-blowing due to its historical and structural antiqueness. Archaeological background of church Architecture is necessary to

understand the historical background of its structure and especially it is more significant because they are sacred structures because the philosophy and fact behind their forms of creation are usually very stimulating and have dogmatic meanings (Renfrew and Bhan, 2016). Although pointed architecture was cultivated in Northern France and spread across Europe usually adopted for churches and cathedrals (Fletcher, 1999).

Figure 8

Ground Plan of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt.



The pure white building of St. Mary Magdalene Church has many prominent features of gothic art and architecture, well-planned and well-designed representing the marvelous era of British hegemony in Lahore.

A magnificent structure of an eye-catching church was the dire need of the political and religious

scenario of British rulers in the subcontinent generally and Lahore particularly.

Therefore, the ground plan of the church was prepared. Its length was 51m 20.64cm (168 ft.) and its width was 33m 52.8cm (110 ft.). This Church acquired more space than the Christ Garrison Church Rawalpindi.

Figure 9

View of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt



Figure 10

East View and Main Entrance of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore



The construction of St. Mary Magdalene Church was completed in January 1856 but properly opened on 23 March 1857. The total amount which was

allocated by the British authorities was 90,000. Lime mortar plaster was done on the exterior of the church which increases its sacredness. Gothic roofs

and arches, arcaded porticos, fine use of durable wooden scissor roofs, and stained-glass windows became the distinctive features of church architecture in the subcontinent (Vincent, [1970](#)).

Figure 11

View of Varandha around the St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt.



Figure 12

View of Gallery, Nave, Colonnade, Clerestory, Scissor Roof, and Seating in St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt.



Architectural Similarities and Dissimilarities

Like Christ Church Rawalpindi, the ground plan of St. Mary Magdalene Church shows a transverse architectural arrangement. Starting from the 'vestibule' to the 'Apse' at the eastern end, the structural arrangement is the same except for size and space. One architectural component 'Veranda' which found in St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. is missing in Christ Church Rawalpindi. The exterior of the Christ Church Rawalpindi is also different than St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore

Cantt. A tall and magnificent multi-storeyed tower is standing over the vestibule of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. Which is missing in Christ Church Rawalpindi. Naked English Brick Bond masonry has been found concealed under the lime mortar in St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt whereas brick masonry in Christ Church Rawalpindi is found visible during data collection surveys.

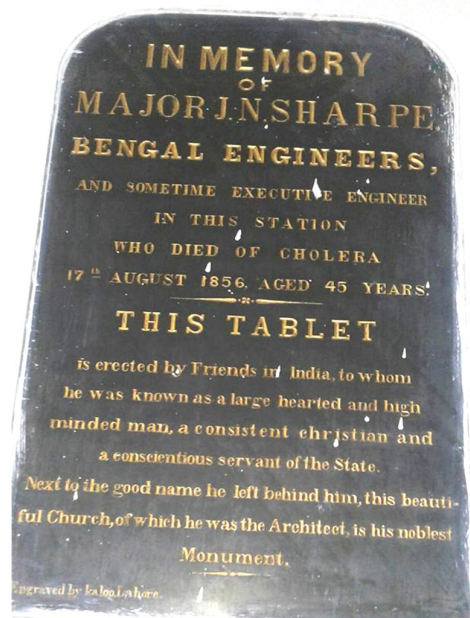
During surveys, the researcher documented fine gargoyles, an animal figure bulging from the roof in the outer structure of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. Which is a special architectural

characteristic of the gothic style of construction but no gargoyle was found in Christ Church Rawalpindi. Gargoyles have triplicate architectural significance. They are built as a decorative element in religious buildings. The second significance is that they provide a channel for roof water and the third importance is that they have theological values in them and represent the evil faces. A revolution in church art and architecture came at the end of the 16th century when Protestant and Catholic modifications and adjustments were distinctively occurring within the sacred spaces (Allen, [2022](#)).

Major J.N. Sharpe was designated in Lahore as Executive Engineer during the construction of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. who completed this church with great zeal and zest because he was a high-minded man and a consistent Christian as Pl. XII defines whereas no written evidence was found about who was the architect of Christ Church Rawalpindi Cantt. Punjab, Pakistan. According to the Ex. Army Chaplain of St. Mary Magdalene Church Lahore Cantt. G.N Sharpe was the designer of the Christ Church Rawalpindi.

Figure 13

Tablet Fixed in St. Mary as Evidence of its Architect/Designer



Conclusion

Construction of Garrison churches in Lahore and Rawalpindi was the fixed requirement of the British government that's because the garrison officers were actually the backbone of British domination there (Bryant, [1994](#)). So, religion is the flame behind any movement. Keeping in view this fact, the physical design of Saint Mary Magdalene Church in Lahore Cantt (1956) and Christ Church Rawalpindi represent a unique architectural specimen in the building history of Punjab. Their design not only reflects a connection to Romans, Greeks, and very close ancestors in Northern France and Britain but also serves as an expression of the Church of England as an institution. During this challenging

research journey, the researcher came to know that the British authorities took away all their historical record to England. British authorities left behind only a statement transferring this monument and land to the Department of Military Cantonment Board Lahore. Today, this church is part of the Military archive.

Christ Church (1952) was built as the first garrison church in Rawalpindi keeping in view the religious need of garrison officers posted at a very strategically important station of Rawalpindi Cantt and to exhibit the power and control over the natives. On the other hand, English masters of these churches provided educational, health, and social services to the locals (Barkatullah, [2010](#)).

To uncover this history, the researcher had to delve into records housed at the Office of Military Land, the Cantonment Executive Officer's office, and the Cantonment Board in Lahore Cantt. It was a scrupulous process that spanned over four months to gain access to these records. Through this

research, the researcher aimed to keep in view the significance of this architectural gem, shedding light on its past and cultural importance in Lahore's and Rawalpindi's landscape, more scholarly work would be done keeping this study as a candlelight on the table of other scholars.

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