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Built Heritage of Mansehra through the Ages and Prospects of Tourism

Adnan Anwar *

Junaid Bashir †

Anas Mahmud Arif ‡

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Abstract: *The district of Mansehra, which is located on the historic Silk Road, has a long history of traditions. Several dynasties governed this region in the past, leaving their footprints in the form of heritage remnants. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and British are the most noticeable among them. The current paper examines a few of these monuments and makes recommendations for how they may be used as tourist attractions. The current state of most structures is deplorable, and comprehensive conservation and tourist management strategy are urgently needed to optimize the benefits of cultural legacy.*

Key Words: Heritage, Tourism, Mansehra, Sikhs, British, Pakistan, KP

Introduction

Mansehra is a district in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Muzaffarabad, Abbottabad, and Haripur are all within the district's boundaries (Khan et al., 2020). Mansehra is historically located on the old Silk Route, which connects China to various parts of the world via picturesque mountains (Qamar 1990). The Silk Road played a significant role in the evolution of social, political, economic, cultural, and religious beliefs toward this region. This area has never been isolated, from ancient times to the present. Many invaders and explorers in the past crossed the Indus River using western routes to

reach the valley. This spot has traditionally been a gathering spot for social events (Sardar 1995).

The remnants of Greeks, Mauryans, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, Hindu-Shahi, Islamic, Sikh and British eras have all been confirmed in the Mansehra region (Ali et al. 2009). Buildings from many past civilizations that resided in the region may now be seen, such as four Hindu temples in the main bazaar, a three-story high Sikh Gurudwara (Bansal 2015) and several British colonial-era buildings and a Turkish Court in Fort Feroza. Mansehra city has always been a tourist attraction because it connects to the valleys of Naran, Kaghan, and Kashmir through the Karakoram highway, a former Silk route that passes through its western border to

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

Email: adnananwar@hu.edu.pk

† Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Foundation University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism & Hospitality, Hazara University, Mansehra, KP, Pakistan.

Kohistan and Gilgit in the north (TTF 2018), but unfortunately no consideration has been given to the historical and cultural significance of the city for its protection and promotion as a cultural tourism asset.

Heritage tourism development, in addition to boosting local economies, also aids in the marketing of local businesses and other tourist sites (Ashworth 2000). The region under consideration is home to several civilizations and is ruled by a number of religions and tribes. As a result, the contemporary Mansehra city's elegance, as well as its historical significance, must be rejuvenated in terms of heritage tourism development.

Objectives of the Study

The current studies have the following objectives:

- To identify and document the existing built monuments from different legacies passed in the region
- To identify and highlight the major problems that hinder their recognition for cultural tourism

Research Methodology

This analysis was done using an exploratory and descriptive research style. Primary and secondary sources were used to compile the review. A systematic survey was used to gather primary data. To discover on-the-ground issues, present the state, and also get photographs of the buildings, the summary relies on the heritage assessment report.

In addition, stakeholders such as tourism specialists, history and preservation professionals, hoteliers, travel planners, visitors, and surrounding communities were interviewed. Individual perspectives were supplemented using secondary data to make the information stand out and to provide an exact outline of facts. To understand the

issues, secondary data on heritage management and tourist advancement in Mansehra was studied. Literature, books, official reports, research papers and articles, government planning documents, and other reports related to heritage management and the advancement of the tourism industry in Mansehra are included in these records. In this spirit, the formulated data was surveyed and concluded with the help of the following discussion.

Mansehra and its Historical Image

As discussed earlier, the region of Mansehra passed through various kingdoms and dynasties in the past. Each of them left their influence in the region and modified architecture and culture with reverence to their own culture and traditions. Some of the most influential reigns were Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and British Colonials.

After a detailed study of the difference in the elements, built structures and their details, it was proposed to select the following buildings for a detailed Architectural analysis.

- Turkish Court at Guli Bagh
- Hindu Temples in Mansehra City
- Sikh Gurudwara
- DRO / DCO Office
- Sarae Building in Mansehra Bazar

The major aspect of the research will be covered by these buildings, which will include the study of associations of buildings with different supremacies that have lived in the region, their specific architectural elements, locally available building materials and techniques, and studying influences of different eras on the local architecture of the Mansehra region, as well as determining the region's cultural tourism potential.

GPS Based Survey of the Selected Buildings

The targeted area is initially covered in the research with GPS based survey (Fig 1).

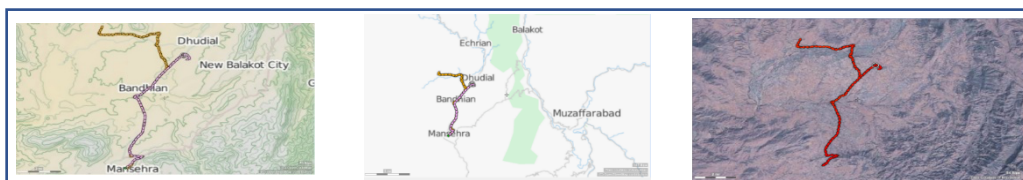


Figure 1. Local area locations on satellite image

The designated heritage sites and significant locations in District Mansehra with their particular value were discovered through path planning using GPS-based survey techniques. Throughout the research, this GPS-based survey assisted in finding the buildings in their context. The majority of the terrain is hilly, and all of the structures under consideration are vulnerable to adverse weather conditions.

All of the above-mentioned buildings and structures are described in detail here in terms of their historical significance, major architectural elements and construction materials. In addition, the true situation of all the buildings is discussed for

consideration and a proposal for suitable preventative measures needed to conserve the legacy for future generations, keeping in view the cultural tourism potential of these heritage sites is highlighted for the long-term development of heritage tourism.

Guli Bagh

This historical site of Guli Bagh is located on Baffa-Khawajgan road; it is about three Kilometers from Baffa and about the same distance from Khawajgan. The site GPS Coordinates are N 34° 26.784" E 073° 0.932" (897M) (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Google images with site location of Guli Bagh Site

Guli Bagh Remained the capital of Pakhli state in old times, situated near Baffa, which is itself an old town, having a history older than Mansehra. Baffa and Guli Bagh are located on the right bank of the Siran River and capture fascinating views of the Kashmir Mountains and Pakhli plains. At a distance of a few kilometers from Guli Bagh is a place where Mughals used to rest their elephants called Hathi Mera (Rehman 1987).

The Court Building within Fort Feroza, reported to have been built by Sultan Shahab ud Din Baburis for defense purposes, is the only extant structure in the Guli Bagh. The fort's other remnants have not survived to this day, and the site has been transformed into agricultural fields and woods. This courtroom, on the other hand, is still standing and spreading the beauty of the past (Rehman 1987).

It is also said that after the passing of Sultan Shadman Khan in AD 1660, his son Sultan Mahmud Khurd was designated as the leader of Pakhli State. He was a valiant competent and insightful ruler. He

presented a few changes in organization for the union of his state and built a tomb alongside a white marble cenotaph for himself during his life to be covered in (Shakirullah 2012). The cenotaph is now preserved and kept in Hazara University Museum.

Present Condition

Due to the continual negligence, this historic landmark is on the verge of collapse. The Turks were dispersed in the 17th century during Sultan Muqarrab Khan's reign. Therefore Guli Bagh was severely damaged. The Court and Shrine were exposed to rainfall, and also no restoration was carried out, causing considerable damage to the structures. Buildings were also devastated by the severe earthquake of 2005, which dragged the bricks at different parts of the structure. The building is being deteriorated by the growing vegetation on the surfaces and roof due to a careless attitude. Tree roots and creepers are readily visible

on the roof and walls of the structure and moreover, the structure is now being utilized for temporary sittings, and a fire is also being burnt in the center of the cell. The interior structure is constantly being damaged by fire and smoke.

Construction Material

Bricks and stone were utilized to build the court, and lime was utilized as a binding agent. In many places of the building, traces of lime mortar and plaster can be seen.

Architectural Features

The courtroom is constructed out of cut bricks from the Mughal era. The entire construction is built on

a square brick base, with stone slabs added at the corners to prevent mud bricks from eroding and to strengthen the structure. The structure has a square layout with dimensions of 8.78m X 8.78m. The dome is modest in height and supported by sturdy walls with arched and straight niches on both sides. The stated structure has a total covered area of 77.08 m² and originally had four entrances on each side. Two of them are now entry and exit ways, while the other two have been replaced with metal windows. The dome has a radius of 2.6 metres and all of the entrances are 1.7 metres wide. All of the walls are 1.29 metres thick and made of bricks (See Figure 3).

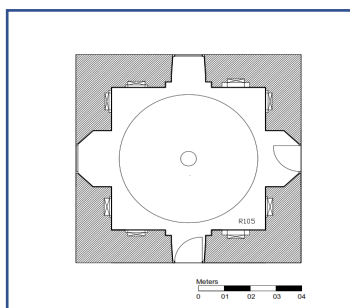


Figure 3. Floor Plan – Turkish Court at Guli Bagh (Covered Area 77.08m²)

The overall height of the building is 7.62 metres. However, the dome is only 1.21 metres high, as seen in the section figure below (See Figure 4).

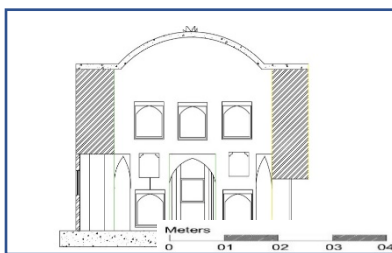


Figure 4. Section AA' Turkish Court at Guli Bagh

The court was built on a raised platform in the region, which was elevated on all four sides, as seen in a three-dimensional view (Figure 5 - 7).

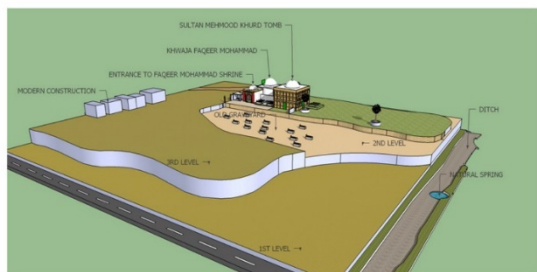


Figure 5. 3-Dimensional View Turkish Court at Guli Bagh

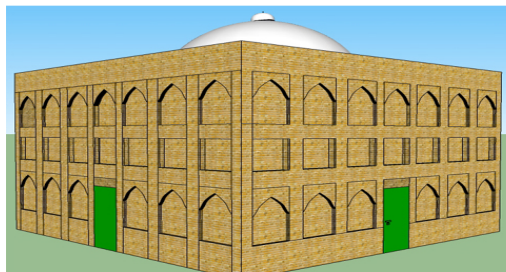


Figure 6. Re- Developed view of Turkish Court at Guli Bagh

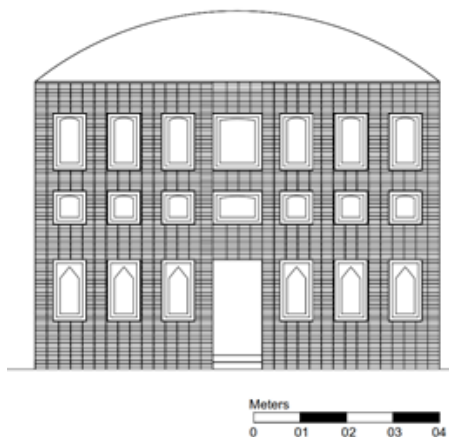


Figure 7. Front Elevation of Turkish Court at Guli Bagh

A natural spring was also discovered near the location. The dome of the building, as shown in images of the building, is significantly damaged and requires an immediate preventive measures to safeguard the structure from major collapse. Signs on new limewash on the exterior and interior of the

building, in addition to natural threats, also reflect the community's stern attitude toward the preservation of the historic asset. The outside and interior views of the building are shown in photographs (Figure 8-11).



Figure 8. Exterior View of Turkish Court at Guli Bagh



Figure 9. Interior View of Dome of Turkish Court at Guli Bagh



Figure 10. Interior View of Turkish Court at Guli Bagh



Figure 11. Interior View of Turkish Court at Guli Bagh

Mansehra Hindu Temple 1

The GPS coordinates: N 34° 19.938" E 73° 12.012" (1083M). This Hindu Temple is located in

Mansehra, near Chakiah, on a link road approximately fifty metres off Kashmir road, in the city of Mansehra (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Google images with marked location of Hindu Temple

Present Condition

Four temples, all built in the 17th century, were found close to the above-mentioned area. Because the majority of the architectural characteristics are identical, it may be assumed that they were all constructed within the same time period. However, because these structures were also neglected by the relevant stakeholders, they have been very much deteriorated and severely damaged.

Building Material

Stone is a major building material that was extensively accessible in the region. Temples and

other buildings erected during the era used mud-lime-thatch mortar as a binding material.

Architectural Features

All of these temple structures are single chambers built on stone platforms. Because stone is a local material, it was widely used in almost all of the Era's buildings. Other notable elements of these temples include the following:

1. Raised on a stone platform
2. Stone is the major building material
3. Other building materials used are lime, mud and thatch mortar

4. Islamic pointed (Ogee) arch is used in the detailing of the buildings
5. A ribbed dome crowned all the buildings/temples
6. Frescos are done on the buildings in natural materials, but they are rarely seen now as buildings went through severe weather without any care and preservation. These frescos are usually floral patterns done in white color on a blue base.

7. Domes have high relief detail, resulting in a beautiful flowery basis for the ribbed domes.

The building has an octagonal garbhagriha plan with a dome in the centre, as seen in the image below. The Temple's entire dimensions are 3.96m X 3.96m, with only one side open. There are a total of 05 Niches in the building, each measuring 0.3m in depth (See Figure 13).

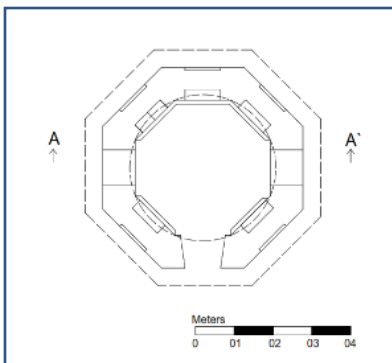


Figure 13. Floor Plan – Hindu temple on Chakiah Road

When viewed in section, the building is built on a 1.16m high stone platform, with the main building standing at 4.26m. The dome, on the other hand,

stands at the height of 3.0 meters (See Figure 14 – 16).

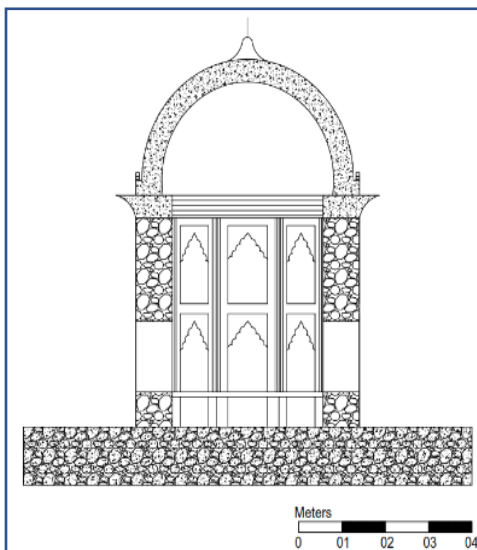


Figure 14. Sectional View – Hindu temple on Chakiah Road

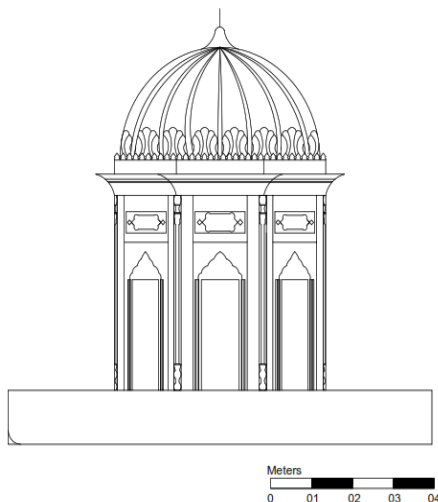


Figure 15. Front Elevation – Hindu Temple on Chakiah Road



Figure 16. Exterior View– Hindu temple on Chakiah Road

This beautiful yet neglected the historical Temple is a remarkable architectural and artistic effort. The Temple is symmetrical and rests on a square platform with one major entrance facing west. The

Temple's skillfully built dome, striped to the top, is related to the Temple's little bubbling building style in the middle (See Figure 17-18).



Figure 17. Interior View– Hindu temple on Chakiah Road



Figure 18. Exterior View (Fresco Painting) – Hindu Temple on Chakiah Road

The main entrance of the Temple is delightfully designed and fresco painted to expose the artwork prominently – floral patterns are very much exposed. Acanthus leaf decoration at the springing point of the dome or śikhara is also found.

Temple in Kashmiri Bazar 2

The GPS coordinates: N 34o 19.949" E 073o 11.282" (1180M). This is a beautiful architectural work that has been significantly destroyed by the city's pollution, poor weather conditions, ignorance and unawareness. It is located in Mansehra city's Kashmiri Bazar on Kashmir Road (See Figure 19).



Figure 19. Google images with marked location of Hindu temple in Kashmiri bazar

Similar architectural features can be seen in the Temple as described for temple 1 at Chakiah Road

(See Figure 20 – 21). Currently, this Temple is left abandoned.



Figure 20. Exterior View– Hindu temple In Kashmiri Bazar



Figure 21. Exterior View– Hindu temple In Kashmiri Bazar

Temple on Kashmir Road 3

The GPS coordinates: N 34° 19.901” E 073° 11.956” (1072M). This is a significant historical building in

Mansehra city, which is also extensively damaged and is located opposite Khalla Bazar on Kashmir road (See Figure 22).



Figure 22. Google images with marked location of Hindu temple on Kashmir road.

This Hindu Temple is in a deplorable condition of repair and is now occupied and used as a private building by a merchant (See Figure 23).



Figure 23. Exterior View– Hindu temple on Kashmir Road

Sikh Gurudwara (Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha)

The GPS coordinates: N 34° 19.933" E 073° 11.978" (1067M). This is the most prominent structure in the history of Mansehra and is currently in use. The building went through many uses in history and

was left intact and well preserved, located on Kashmir Road near Kashmiri Bazar, Mansehra city. This is currently used as a public library; it is one of the fantastic artwork and architectural displays in the middle of the city. The top Seattleite view can be seen following in a very congested/populated area (See Figure 24).



Figure 24. Google images with marked location of Sikh Gurudwara

The existing building of the Gurudwara was built in AD 1904–05 by Sardar Gopal Singh Sethi of Hazro who died in AD 1937. But in the past, there

existed a Gurudwara of Sahib Guru Hargobind Ji, dated back to the late 1600s. He built this place while he was returning from Kashmir.

Present Condition

The building is presently being used as a public library; it was formerly used by many departments following the partition, including Education, Food and Police. As a public library and reading room,

this building is now safeguarded and maintained, and it has been demonstrated to be the best re-adaptive use of the building in this case because it is accessible to all in terms of a visit to a historical site, and it is maintained by library employees.

Architectural Features

It embodies a high point of Sikh architectural ornamentation. The Samadi motifs are drawn in different materials and techniques including relief work using sandstone and white marble, frescoes, mirror mosaic and carving in wood. Perfect craftsmanship can be seen in all the works, and everything reflects the Sikh mythology. Sikhs were very concerned with the problems of the world. This was symbolized by an inverted lotus flower pointing back to earth.

A particular fenestration detail called Jhoroka is used on the front façade of the building. This is a

semi-enclosed overhang and is used in Islamic architecture and traditional Indian architecture. These are of monumental scale and make outstanding architectural characteristics of the building façade.

This Sikh Gurudwara is constructed in a three-story building and is a beautiful example of art and architecture. Some parts of the building are damaged due to weather and pollution. The marble and woodwork are very prominent. The overall height of the building exceeds 12.20m and the overall building footprint is 183.9m² (See Figure 25-28).

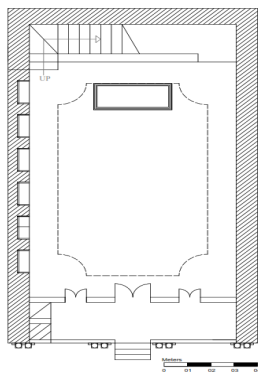


Figure 25. Ground Floor Plan – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

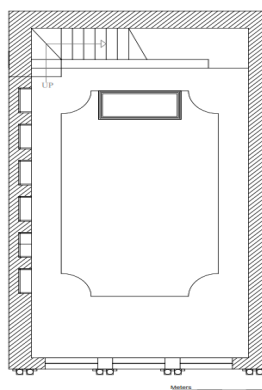


Figure 26. First Floor Plan – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

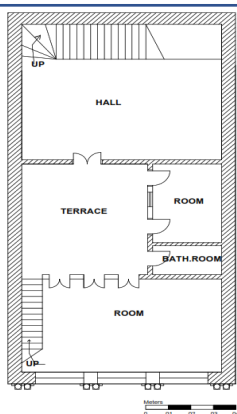


Figure 27. Second Floor Plan – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

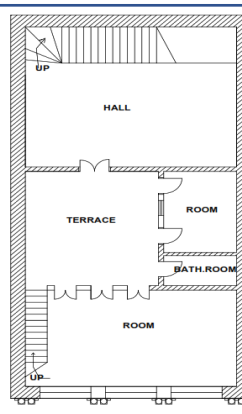


Figure 28. Exterior View – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

The wooden door is beautifully carved and fitted into marble slabs. Both sides of the door pillars are decorated with flowery designs. The floor is very

much visible and beautified with marble, stone and tiles. These tiles were arranged beautifully and designed attractive (See Figure 29).



Figure 29. Entrance – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

Stone mosaics and wooden almirahs are visit-worthy in the building on the first floor of the building (See Figure 30).

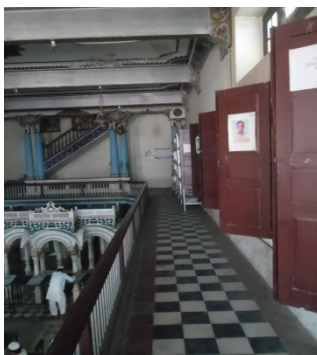


Figure 30. Gallery on First Floor – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

The fantastic artwork can be seen which is beautifully carved into stone (See Figure 31). This building is in a good state of preservation.

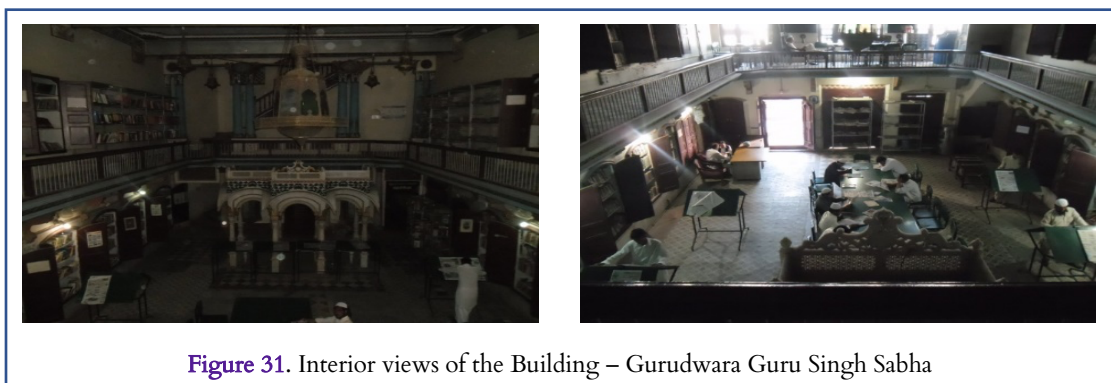


Figure 31. Interior views of the Building – Gurudwara Guru Singh Sabha

DRO / DCO Office

GPS coordinates: N 34° 20.048" E 073° 12.220" (1088M). This building is located on Zaffar Road in

Mansehra, which connects to Kashmir Road. Figure 32 illustrates this point.



Figure 32. Google images with marked location of DRO/DCO Office

The DRO office building was built under the British Empire. The design incorporates several features of colonial architecture. The front veranda is low-pitched, and the hipped roof has gabled edge windows made of GI Sheets. The structure has a rectangular layout and is made of chiselled dressed

stone. Cut stone flat arches are an important structural element that protects a building from destruction and damage. The structure is in its original state; some minor additions have been made, but they have no impact on the structure. The government is now occupying this building (See Figure 33 – 34).



Figure 33. Exterior View – DCO /DRO Office Mansehra



Figure 34. Exterior View – DCO /DRO Office Mansehra

Sarae Building in Bazar

GPS coordinates: N 34° 20.093" E 073° 12.147" (1081M). On Kashmir road in Mansehra city, there

is a Sarae or transit or temporary resting site for travelers (See Figure 35).



Figure 35. Google images with marked location of Sarae building in bazar

Sarae were commonly utilized as motels by travelers in the past. The building is located on Kashmir Road in front of the current PTCL headquarters. The timber and Jali work on the parapet depict the pinnacle of Sikh architecture. The structure has been partially dismantled and is now being used as a warehouse for the businesses underneath it. The lower floor had a variety of shops, while the upper story served as a hotel/Sarae. A wooden Jharoka is visible solely on a single side, indicating that the

other half has been dismantled and is currently being used as a car park.

The structure is made of burnt bricks, and ornamental columns on the façade add to the building's characteristics. Various frescoes may be seen on the front. Sun in the middle with long rays represents some kind of protection or illumination for the visitors. Due to the continued ignorance, just a small part of the work is now visible (See Figure 36).

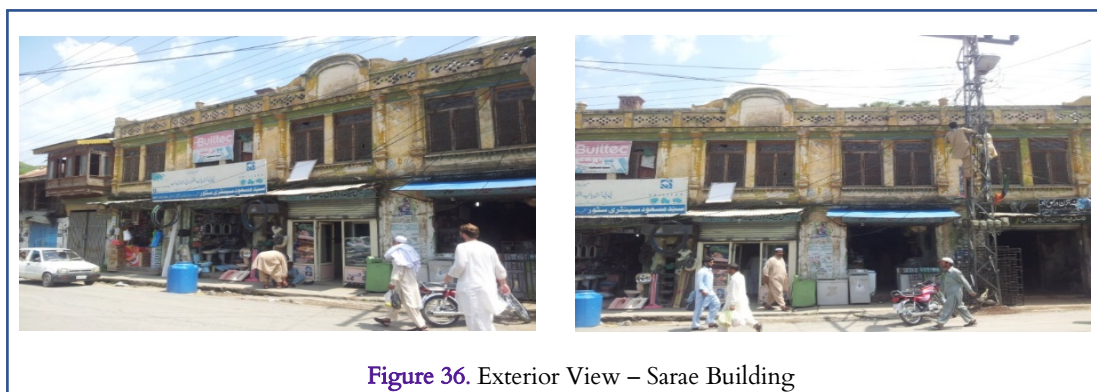


Figure 36. Exterior View – Sarae Building

This building was most likely used for tourists or guests who came to the region for business. It's near the major route heading to Kashmir at Mansehra Bazar. It is wonderfully embellished with floral patterns and geometrical impressions. The building's artwork is quite appealing and recalls

Buddhist and indigenous schools.

Prospects of Tourism

The study shows the rich heritage of District Mansehra which can be utilized for tourism. Every year thousands of tourists visit Kaghan valley,

located in District Mansehra and Northern Areas of Pakistan to enjoy the natural and cultural beauty of the region. These heritage sites of Mansehra, if properly planned and promoted may prove very good tourist destinations, creating awareness about the history and architecture of the region.

The religious sites i.e. Temples and Gurudwaras have the potential to attract thousands of Hindu and Sikh pilgrims from adjacent regions to visit these heritage sites. Similarly, visitors and students interested in history and architecture may visit these sites to learn and enrich their knowledge.

To keep these buildings alive, there is a need to rehabilitate these buildings like the Sikh Gurudwara of Mansehra City. Hindu Temple at Chakiah Road may also be revived through public use. This may be in the form of a small library or heritage gallery. Similarly, Sarae building in Mansehra Bazar can be rehabilitated through a heritage hotel. Similarly, other buildings like the Turkish Court at Guli Bagh and DCO/ DRO Office Mansehra may also be converted into public libraries/ heritage galleries to survive and serve for a longer period.

The poor state of preservation of these buildings, negligence of the relevant departments and ignorance and unawareness of the local community and local government, are the major problems in developing these potential destinations as cultural tourist destinations. Following measures are important to be taken to make these sites visitors' friendly destinations:

- Conservation plans for these sites should be prepared on a priority basis
- Tourist facilities should be provided
- Relevant departments should own and take care of these sites
- The local community should be aware of the importance of these heritage assets and the benefits associated with these sites
- Local heritage guides should be trained/ prepared to guide the visitors
- Guided trips should be arranged to these sites
- Promotion in the adjacent regions where the followers of Hinduism and Sikhism reside may be beneficial to attract a fair number of visitors and earn revenue after proper

conservation and execution of facilities.

Conclusion

District Mansehra of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is rich in cultural heritage. It is located on the ancient Silk Road, connecting China and other parts of the world. This region shows the imprints of Greeks, Mauryans, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, Hindu Shahi, Islamic, Sikh and British reigns. These dynasties are still alive in the form of material remains in the area. The most visible remains are Temples, Gurudwaras, British period heritage and Islamic monuments.

Almost all the heritage buildings of District Mansehra are in a poor state of preservation and are decaying rapidly during the negligence of the relevant departments and the unawareness of the local community. These heritage sites have the potential to attract thousands of national and international visitors every year, including pilgrims from the adjacent regions. Similarly, millions of tourists mark their way to Kaghan valley, Northern Areas of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir through Mansehra every year and these tourists may be attracted towards these heritage resources, increasing their tourist experience.

Conservation plans for these heritage sites on a priority basis and provision of tourists facilities are crucial. Similarly, relevant departments should take their responsibilities and own these heritage sites by taking good care of them. The local community should be aware of the importance of these heritage sites and the benefits associated with them for the locals. The local community may be trained as heritage guides. Nearby schools and other educational institutes may be offered guided tours to create awareness among the masses. After proper conservation and provision of tourist facilities, these heritage resources of district Mansehra can be promoted through electronic and print media in and outside the country to attract heritage lovers and pilgrims. By following some of the aforementioned measures, these monuments may better serve as cultural heritage attractions, contributing to the local and national development

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