

The Lost Camp OF Karachi: A Casestudy of Saddar Bazaar- The Earliest British Settlement

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Abstract-The paper sketches the earliest development during the British period in Karachi starting from 17th century and focuses on the architectural and urban character of the initial growth of the camp city. The historic core of Karachi consisted of town system from which Saddar Bazaar was the oldest. This earliest development acted as a camp for British Settlers and first to be organized on grid iron pattern.

With time, Saddar bazaar becomes the major commercial hub due to which the area faces degradation and become threat for the deterioration of the heritage building.

Keywords: Saddar Bazaar; historic town; Karachi; conservation; deterioration

I. INTRODUCTION

Karachi, being the largest metropolitan city of Pakistan, based on historical development earlier by the Mirs and Talpurs and later established by the British which marked their architectural as well as urban practices and planning trends. Initially Karachi was the old city known as Old Town which was ruled by Talpurs, Kalhoras and some Hindus, after British annexation and their architectural and urban development, it brought extreme cultural transformations in the city [1, pp.41]. In contrast to the Old Town's haphazard planning, British settled a camp area based on grid iron pattern-Sadder Bazaar which is earliest in urban planning principles and architectural variation.

Sadder Bazaars were the first major urban elements introduced by the British in the cities which they occupied. Initially, the quarter been laid out to accommodate the tents of the large number of sutlers and camp followers during the encampment of 1839. The prerequisites of the early colonial planning in this area are, in the first place, of a defensive and social nature, the aesthetic effect is quite clear, but of second importance and the third important factor is climate [1, pp. 58-59].

In India, the military camp was considered as the stability of the settlement [2, pp.214-216]. The earliest of such examples were seen in permanent military station at Berhampore (Baharampur) near Cossim Bazaar (Kasim Bazaar). Following the same layout as Saddar Bazaar, Berhampore also has large inner field with a parade ground based on square grid pattern which are clear precedents in Western military practices [3, pp.15-16]. In Pakistan, the oldest development was seen in Karachi which was afterwards followed to other fifty six cities with the same planning guidelines [4].

The paper discusses two aspects, initially the historic Saddar Bazaar and the concepts generated by the British in terms of urban and architectural formations which become prosperous enough to mark their achievements for the future generations to witness. Whereas, on the other hand, gives an overview of growing population changing the land use of the area and the variety and uniqueness brought by the British destroyed by the flow of corruption and land grabbers.

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF KARACHI

Karachi was first conquered by Mohammad bin Qasim in 712 A.D [24, p.4]. By the time, the area emerged as a small fishing settlement then known as Kolachi jo Kun or the ditch of Kolachi (figure 1). Afterwards walled construction with two primary gates were developed converted the area into a small fort. The area, eventually referred as "Old Town" characterized by narrow winding streets, seldom provision of open spaces and residences of Hindus and Muslims primarily [11, p.32].

Three factors influenced the policy of the English

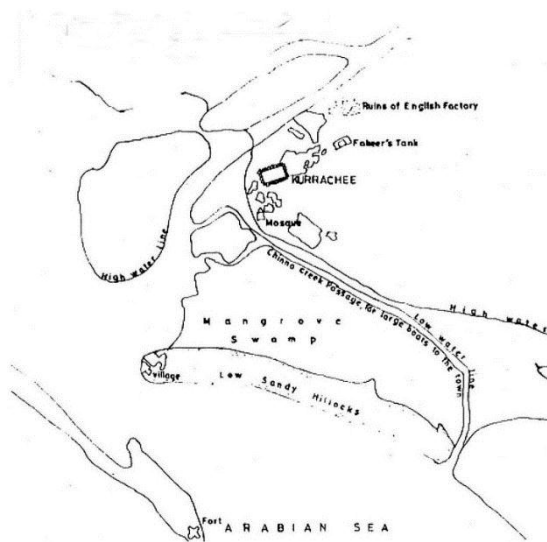


Figure 2 Karachi Map: 1838 Population 14,000 Source: Arif Hasan (2008)

towards Sindh. One was that they could have facility for trade with Punjab and north-west India through the river Indus. The second was that Sindh could be occupied by Ranjit Singh which they never desired. The third was the fear of Russian attack on India [25]. To understand the development phases in Karachi, a timeline has been developed as shown in Figure 2.

The British took interest in Sind around 1629, when they decided to open a factoryⁱ at Thatta [6, p.12]. British authorities were keen to occupy Karachi. Therefore, a British force consisting of warships and sea-borne troops sailed for Karachi from Bombay^j in 1839. After the English conquest of Sind, Charles Napier was appointed Governor of this province [5, p. 45]. Their organizational versatility allowed them to form enclosed garrisons, to sprawl as massive camps, to reconfigure forts, and to become

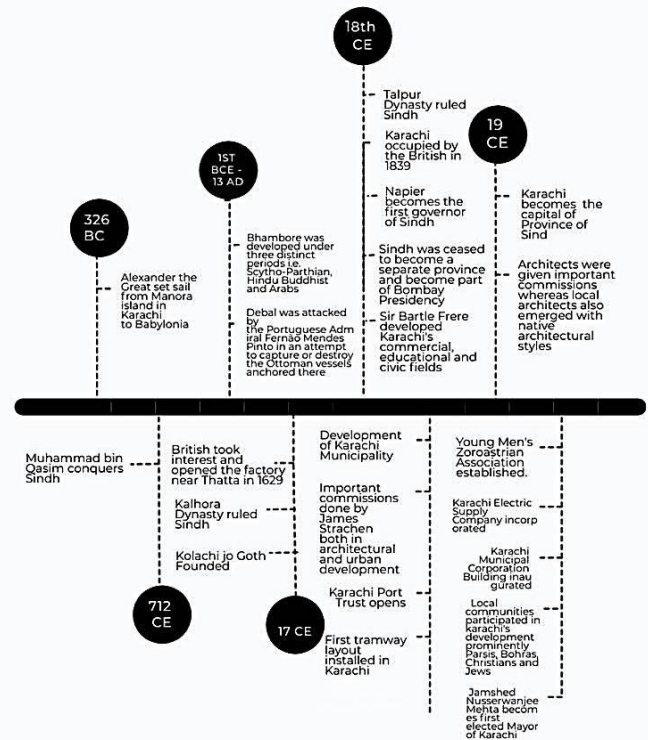


Figure 1 Timeline of Karachi

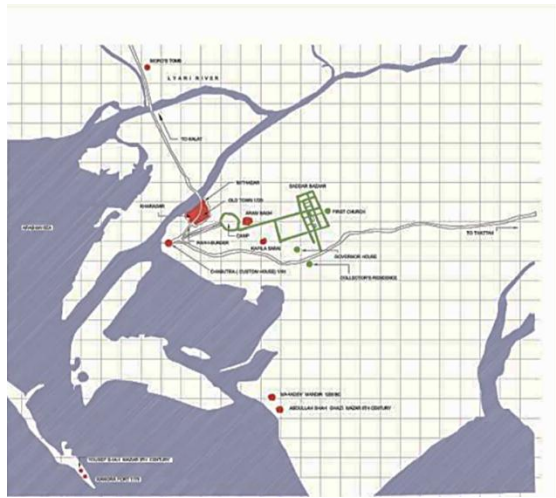
Source: Developed by the Author

sanitarium hill stations. So these camps reveal a peculiar strategy of territorial governance over the subcontinent by the Company [26]. Afterwards, Karachi became the part of Bombay Presidency to rule Sind through a civil agency rather than military officers who mostly controlled the administration in Napier's time [7, p.10]. Totally different from 'Old Town', British planned a distinctive town on grid pattern which was known as 'white town' or 'Saddar Bazaar camp' along the south-east regions of the city for the European lads and British officers. [8, p. 48].

II (A). PLANNING DIFFERENCES- FROM OLD TOWN TO ENGLISH TOWN

The native town of Karachi was not as larger as other towns in Sindh which had been the centre of political or economic activity at one time or the other [1, p. 61] such as Hyderabad. The city which was known as 'Purana Shehr' or the Old Town [5, p. 51] grown organically with narrow streets and small semi-public, semi-private spaces where masjidsⁱⁱ and Hindoo temples acted as a foci of the Mohallasⁱⁱⁱ and the Junna Market^{iv} held a central position [7, p.48]. the trading centre with its markets, caravan serai^v shops and related infrastructure operated within the fortification which had two gates, one facing the sea called 'Kharadar'(salt gate) and other facing the lyari river known as 'MethaDar'(sweet gate) [9, p.15](Map 1).

The structures in old town were simple, tall with a



Map 1 Karachi 1842
Source: Arif Hasan, 2008

frame of heavy wooden logs upon which short interlaced wooden strips were placed to receive a thick layer of mud plaster [10, p.36] (figure 3). After British annexation, local merchants from Bombay seek trade in Karachi which becomes favorable for British. This was helpful to reduce the communication gap among the two and restore a peaceful society. British brought ideas of freedom, equality, liberty and human rights which transforms the livability conditions of the natives [27, p. 459].

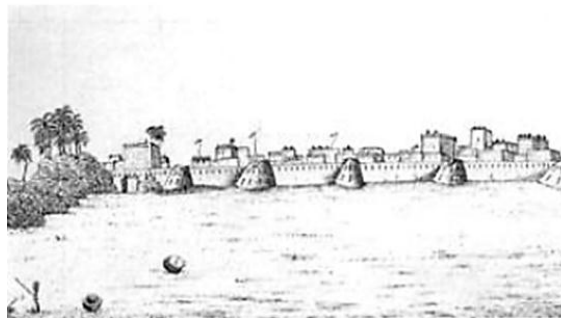


Figure 4 Fortification of the Old town
Source: Arif Hasan, 2008

After the arrival of the British troops, the first physical and spatial distinction between the two sections of the urban population laid the cantonment grid as 'white city'. The new town was laid out in

linear pattern in a square or rectangular grid with the residences at one end and administration blocks for the army on the other end at a distance [1, p.64]. However, between 1839-1843, English forces faced considerable hostility from the local people. Even though they were able to organize the camp according to their needs, but they were dependent on the local population for the procurement of construction and other materials [1, p.76]

During colonial period, the process of urbanization was entirely dependent on the policies devised by the rulers for which the urban centres of the subcontinent thus developed [1, p.66]. The condition of colonialism which A.D. King^{vi} defines as a contact situation between two cultures and two distinct value systems: the two cultures representing different levels of economic, social, technological and political organization and development; and the power structure consisting of a dominance-dependent relationship [12, p.46](figure 4)

So, the British army brought its own system of controls to administer the population [1, p.69]. For that purpose, they created buffers through new institutions, methods of social control, technologies and occupational roles [12, p.12]. They developed a major thoroughfare to access the native town and the port i.e. Bunder Road^{vii} and on the other hand they

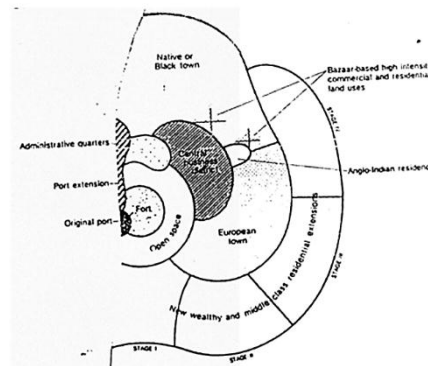


Figure 3 Location of Saddar in British Colonial Cities

Source: Sabahat Ali, 2001

developed the white city as the major hub for trade and merchandise [8, p.71] (figure 5). To witness the earliest trade in white city, the first four shops were opened by Naomal Hotchand^{viii} in 1841 and induced other traders to open grain, cloth and other shops for the convenience of the residents of the camp [5, p. 53].

II (B). SADDAR BAZAAR- ITS ORIGINS

Saddar bazaars or regimental bazaars as originally known were the first major urban elements introduced by the British in the towns which they occupied [5, p. 49]. Baillie define bazaar as:

“A bazaar is not a market, it is a quarter containing a number of stores and shops, the property of distinct owners, but it is not unusual to find a market situated in its midst” [13, pp-60].

In British town (white towns), markets were built in cantonment and civil lines, but among all these markets, one of them was considered as their main or super market where all kind of imported and local goods are available known as Saddar [14,

invasion, they have to shift their camp 2 miles away from Old Town which was later known as cantonment [11, p.13] (figure 10&11). The construction of five major streets were developed by the British army in Saddar Bazaar which defines the grid were Elphinstone Street, Victoria Road and Frere Street which are on y-axis and Preedy Street and Inverarity Road which are on x-axis [8, p.6]

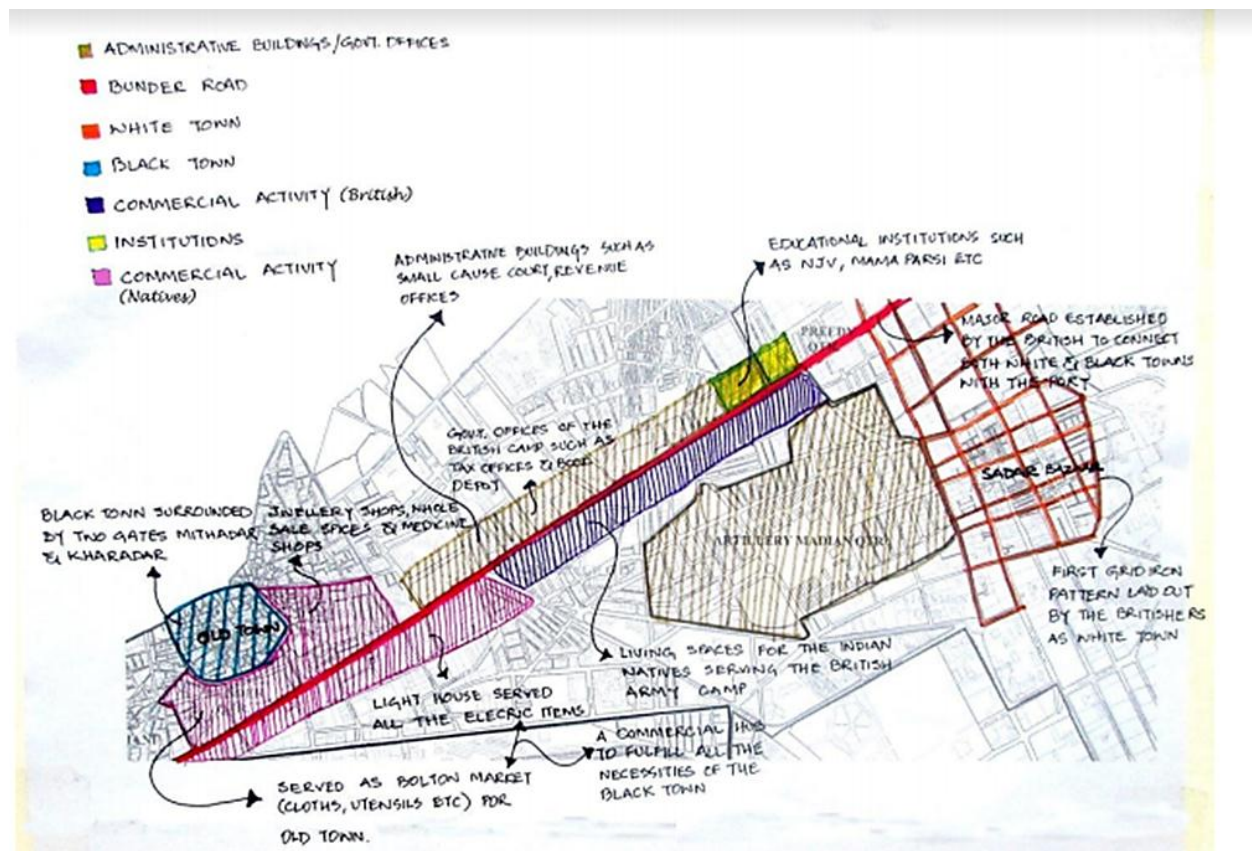


Figure 5 Showing buffers between the black and the white town
Source Drawn by the Author

p.286](Figure 8&9). The beginning of Saddar bazaar dates back in 1839, when camp followers were settled during British arrival in Karachi [8, p.10]. Initially when the British army annexed in Karachi, the camp was between Rambagh and the Old Town, but as the natives were not accepting this forced

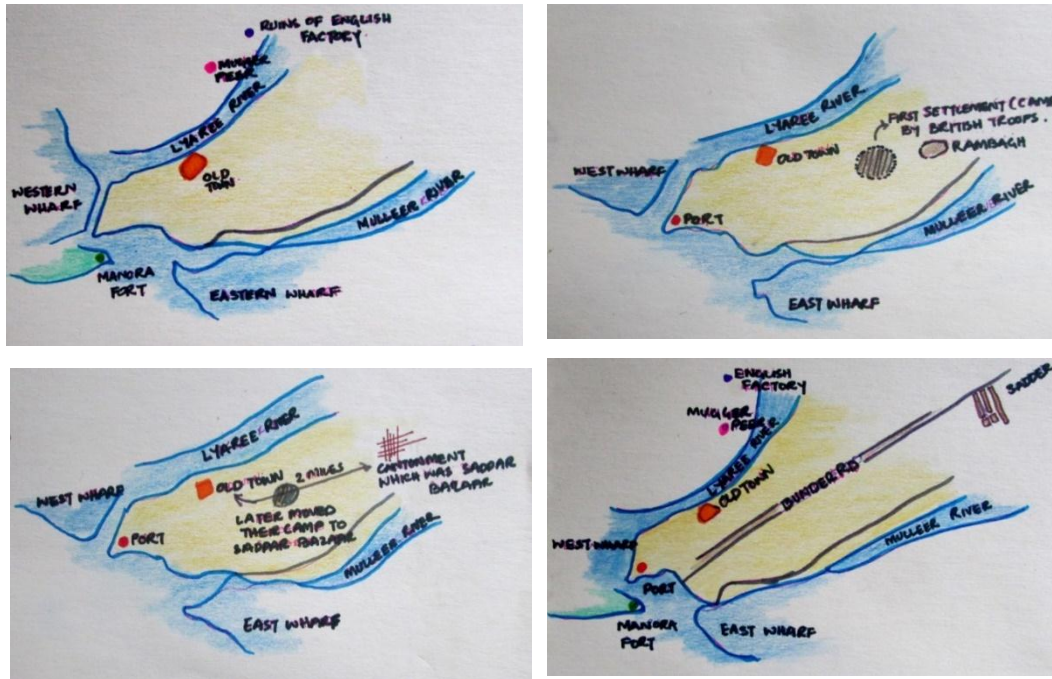


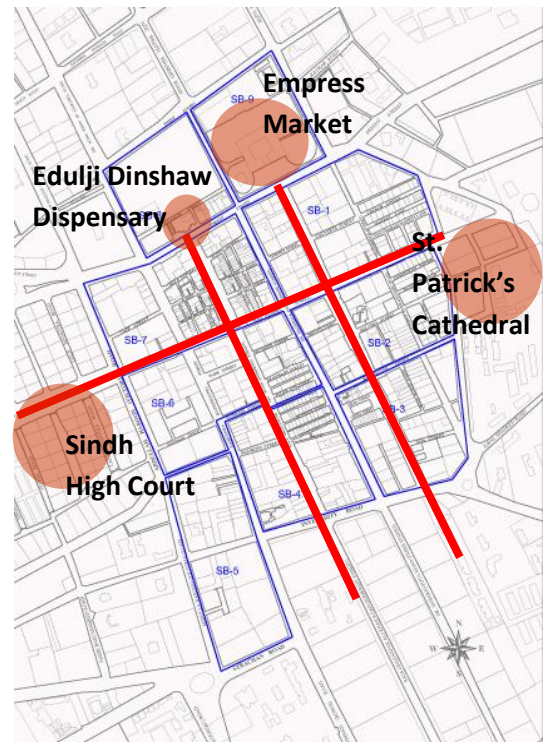
Figure 6 Development of Saddar Bazaar under the British Rule

Source Drawn by the Author

II (C). PHYSICAL URBAN CHARACTER OF SADDAR BAZAAR

Saddar Bazaar acquires an area of 87.92 acres (15, p.81). In 1889 its density was 85 persons/acre which was doubled in 1994 due to the separation of Sind from Bombay and Karachi becomes the capital city (16, p.69).

Although the predominant grid iron plan divided Saddar into regular rectangular plots, it does have a small proportion of oblique streets which cut other circulation arteries at non-orthogonal angles creating asymmetrical vistas and triangular focal points (17, p. 64). For example Clarke Street/ Queensway with the Chief Court Building at one end and the St. Patrick’s Cathedral at the other; Napier Street leading on to the grand clock-tower of the Empress Market and the Somerset Street focusing on the Eduljee Dinshaw Dispensary (17, p. 105) (See Map 2).



Map 2 Showing Vistas of the camp area

Source: Drawn by the Author

Buildings in Saddar contain the labyrinth formed on the ground floor of the building. These spaces, serve

merely as auxiliary connecting passages between the streets used only by the shopkeepers (18, p.76)

II (D). ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF SADDAR BAZAAR

The buildings in Saddar Bazaar consists of different architectural styles depicting the dominance of the British rule (8, p.70). In most of the buildings, intermingling of various styles is present and they have been blended harmoniously, aesthetically and functionally, giving unique character to the environment (5, p.60). The architecture in the camp ranges from the lattice-work balcony structures to the pure renaissance and gothic tyle stone structures of the colonial era (19, p.20).

II (E). MATERIAL APPROACH IN BUILDINGS IN SADDAR BAZAAR

British planners used Gizri stone which is locally available in Karachi due to two important factors i.e. hot and humid climate and second, native response towards adaptability of the local material (20, p. 32). The treatment of stone on the façade of the buildings was categorized into two types i.e. rubble masonry and ashlar masonry (1, p.83). Most of the institutional buildings including military or administrative were furnished in ashlar masonry where approximately 60% of the residential and commercial buildings were treated in rubble masonry. In some cases, the mortar joints were seen and become part of the building surface decoration whereas in others, the stone is finely placed with each other edge to edge (21, pp.12-15) (see figure 7).



Figure 7 Material treatments on the Building Surface

Source: Photographed by the Author

II (F). ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS OF SADDAR BAZAAR

Architectural ornamentation comprised of three main types.

1. Victorian details- taken from different forms of Gothic and Renaissance Revival. Buildings were constructed on the same proportions as they were constructed in other cities under British influence (22, pp 178-199).
2. Hybrid details depend upon the typology of the building such as residential buildings which acquire balconies, Iron grills and terraces which were inspired by the British architectural ornamentation but modified according to the local climate (22, p. 88).
3. Local details which were taken from the British buildings and alter those features according to their building scales/ proportions (23, p.60).

The building details were the result of the change in municipal authorities and thus formed a new architectural vocabulary in each phase. The possible buildings in Saddar bazaar with listed detail types are shown in table1.
















STYLE	Classical Details	Victorian Details			Hybrid & Local Details
		Gothic	Renaissance	Romanesque	
BUILDINGS	 Sir Jahangir Kothari Building	 Empress Market	 Edujjee Dinshaw Dispensary	 Speechly Building	 Nabi Manzil
DETAILS	 	 	 	 	 

Table 1 Showing types of styles and details in Saddar Bazaar

III. METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT ADOPTED IN SADDAR BAZAAR

British architects developed urban layout for the allocation of different uses in the Bazaar. They created focal points and vistas for the important monuments and loop streets for the commercial activities. Amenities, holy places, markets and living apartments were allotted as primary divisions. The plot sizes for the public buildings are larger than the residential and commercial plots. The internal planning was wisely done in terms of function, circulation, ventilation and axiality.

The below flowchart gives brief understanding of the methods developed during the British rule (See table 2)

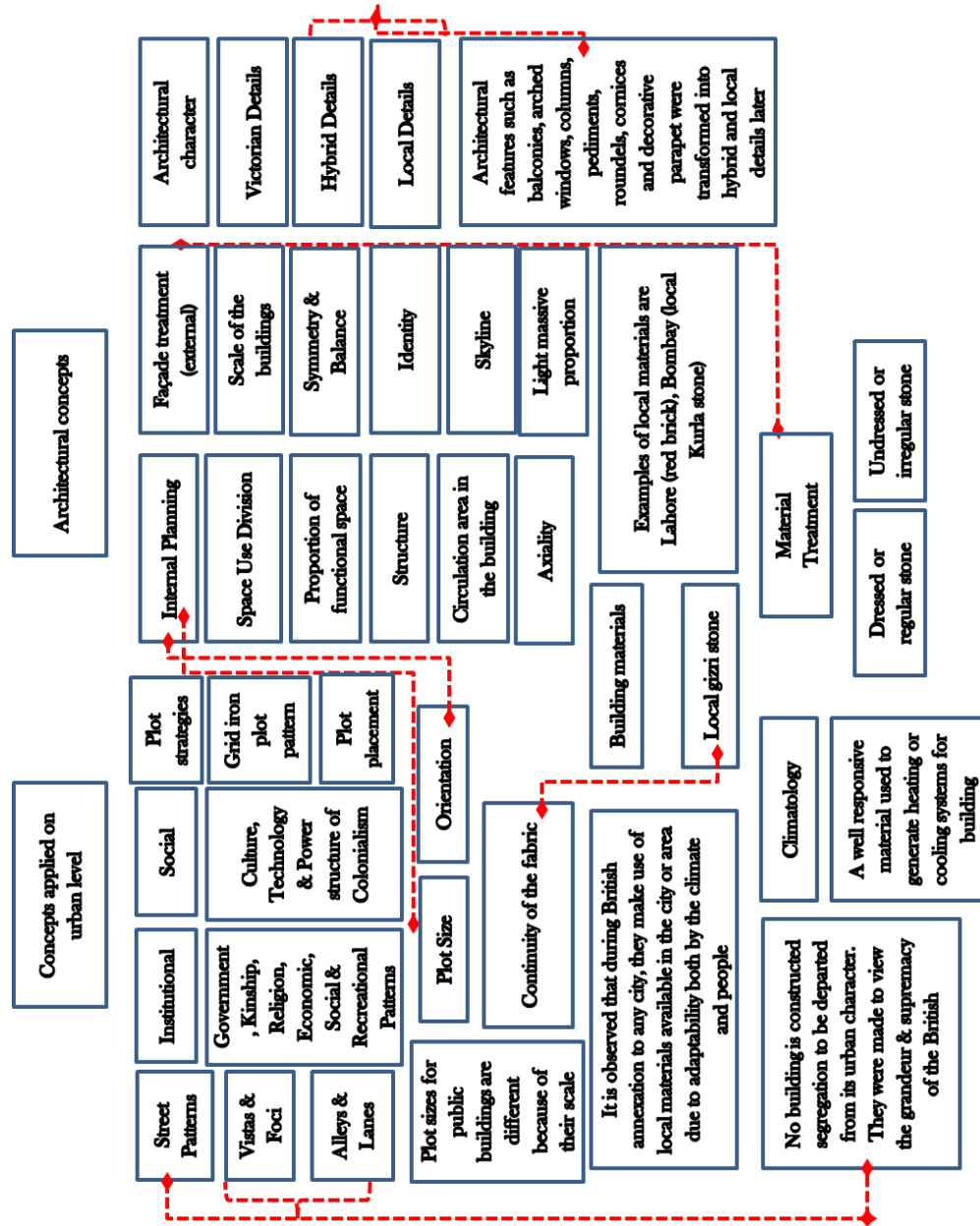


Table 2 Methods adopted for the development during the British Empire

IV. PRESENT TREPIDATIONS IN SADDAR BAZAAR

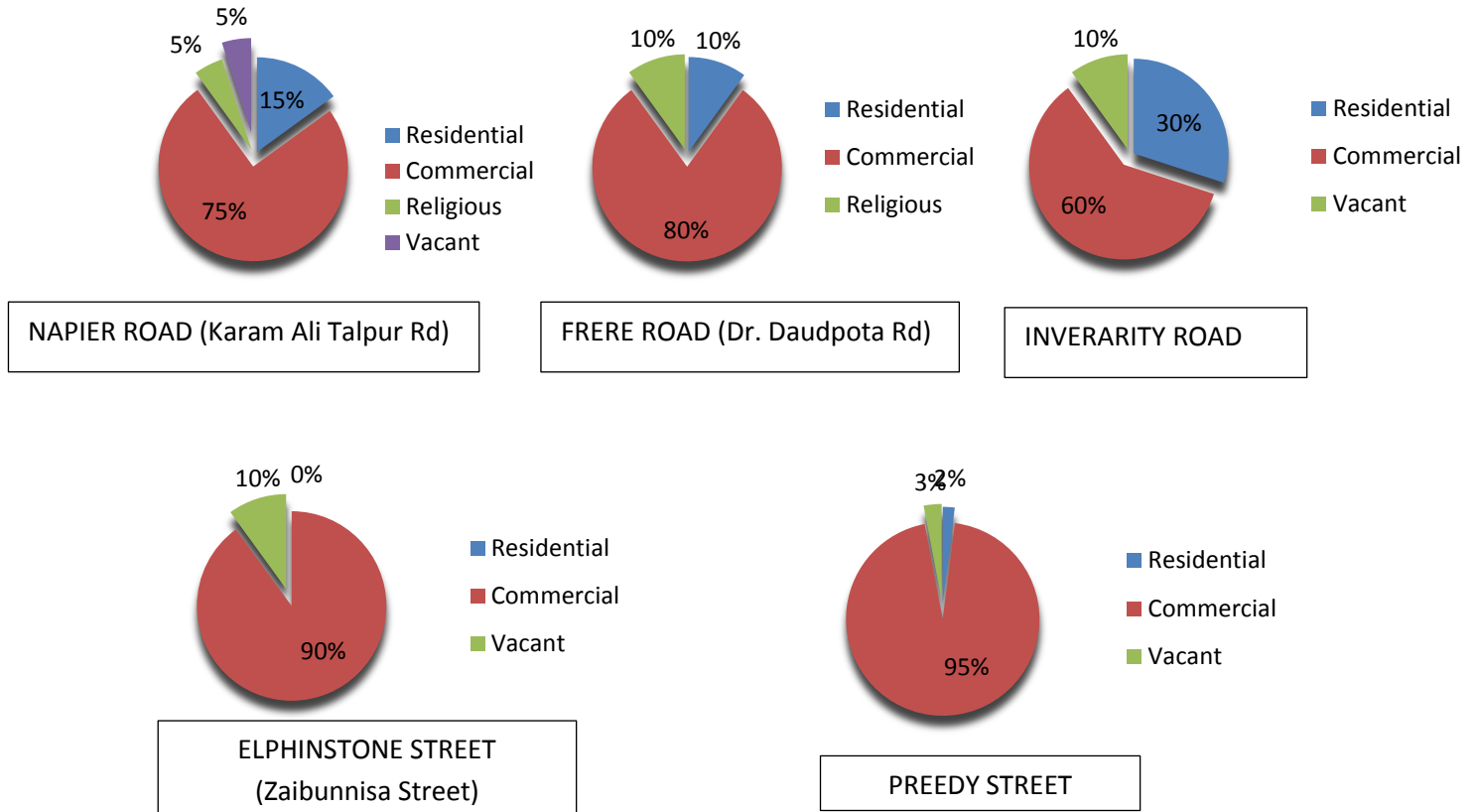
Sadder bazaar is facing threats of decay and damages which fades the legacy of the historic camp. These damages, on one hand are physical in which biological growth, environmental pollution and rising dampness are the major ones. On the other hand are non-physical issues consists of vandalism, encroachments and purposeful alterations. Due to

these threats two main factors are effecting the composure of the bazaar¹ i.e. land use and building heights.

The land use of Saddar is totally changed to what it was previously subjected to. 90% buildings are used as commercial plus residential or commercial entities whereas 7% of the buildings are vacant. 2%-3% buildings are religious, educational and health care buildings. Buildings having commercial activity are

limited to ground floor and the upper floors are left vacant.

The analysis below (figure 8) will help to understand



the amount of commercial activity in the main spines of Saddar bazaar.

Figure 8 Pie Charts showing commercial activity on Saddar streets
Source: Drawn by the Author

The building heights and usage patterns effects the performance of heritage building. Sustaining the environmental pressures, the old buildings are also threatened by deliberate damages and demolition. The charts show the building heights and present status accompanying the degree of threat in the historic camp (figure 9 & 10).

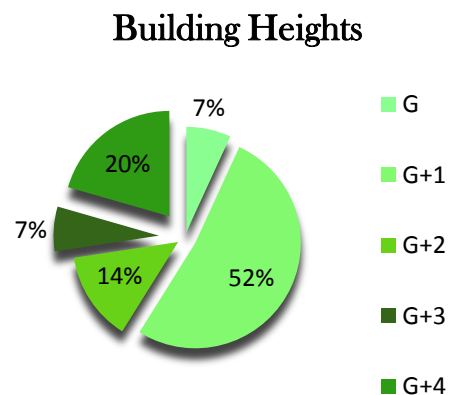
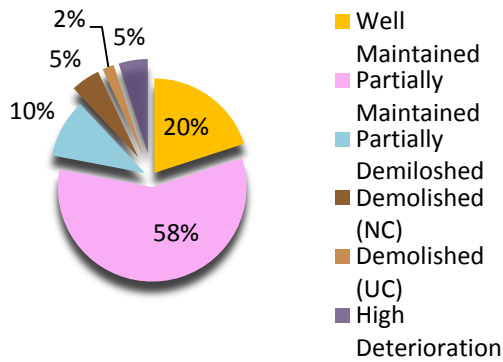


Figure 9 Building Heights shown in Saddar Bazaar

Source: Drawn by the Author

Present Status



The area presently is facing enormous alterations and decay issues which can be seen in historic buildings of the camp area which can be seen below (table 2).

Figure 10 Present Status of the Buildings in Saddar Bazaar

Source: Drawn by the Author

Alterations/Causes of Decay in Heritage Buildings in Saddar Bazaar			
<p>Eduljee Dinshaw Building Type of damage: mass addition (major Alteration) > Rooms added on first floor</p>		<p>Speechly Building Type of damage: mass addition (major Alteration) > Balcony added on first and second floor</p>	
<p>Rangoonwala Building Type of damage: mass addition (major alteration) > Floor addition on the third floor</p>		<p>SBQ-7/ 38, Ghazanfar Ali Road Type of damage: minor alteration > Addition of signboards and canvas sheets</p>	
<p>Gopaldas Building Type of damage: minor alteration > Addition of metal corrugated sheet on roof</p>		<p>Empress Market Type of damage: degradation > Rising of damp water damages the ground floor fabrication of the building</p>	
<p>Mohammad Ali Building Type of damage: degradation > Environmental and physical vandalism > First floor is standing as a façade only</p>		<p>Victoria Furnishing Mart Type of damage: degradation > Physical damage by burning the first floor</p>	
<p>Sunderji Hameji Building Type of damage: degradation > Physical vandalism by removing the façade elements</p>		<p>Hassan Ali Building Type of damage: Degradation > Damaging the original character of the building by applying paint on façade</p>	

Table 3 Showing alterations and causes of decay in buildings of Saddar Bazaar

The damage analysis shows typology of alteration and causes of decay in the area. The alterations ranges from minor to major in which minor alterations are generally addition of signboards, grills, tiles and balcony whereas major alterations are addition of room and floors. The cause of decay and damages consists of dampness, pollution, vandalism, biological growth and black crust.

a strong presence with its large and well- modulated façade details (figure 11).

The front of the building was given to the shops whereas warehouses were situated at the back. The planning is symmetrical with the internal courtyard provided in the centre of the building. Currently, the

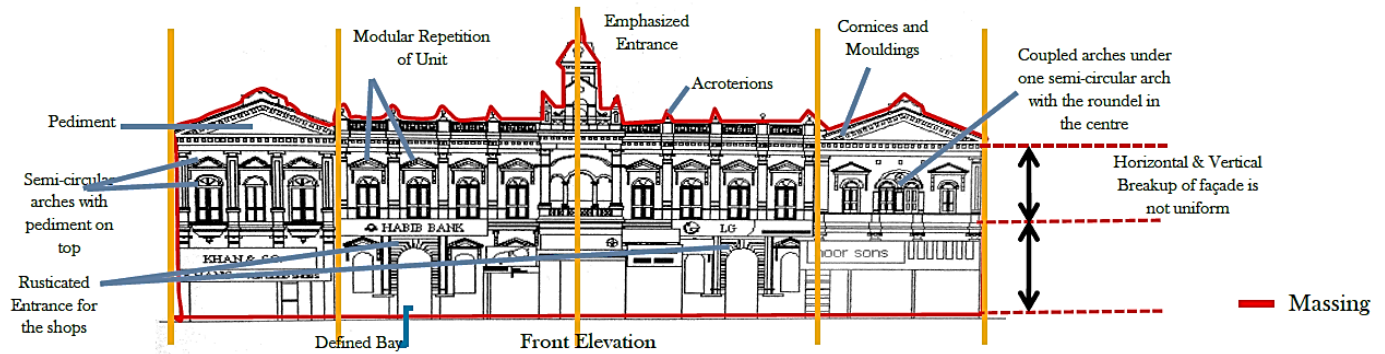


Figure 11 Showing contextual cues and architectural details

Source: Drawn by the Author

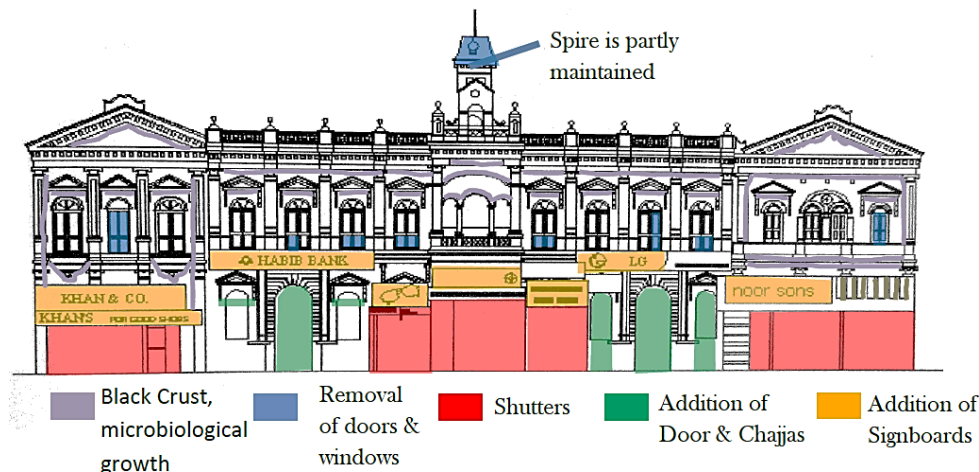


Figure 12 Showing Alterations and Damages in Mohammad Ali Building

Source: Drawn by the Author

For understanding the scenario of deterioration in Saddar Bazaar, the case of Mohammad Ali Building is taken which is located at Zaibunnisa (Elphinstone) Street. The building was owned by a Tram Service owner who bought the building in an auction. It gives

building is partially maintained continuing degradation due to alterations and removals (figure 12)

V. CONCLUSION

Sadder bazaar was the first planned town of Karachi under the administration of British Army. The area was designed both for the administrative and residential purposes later known as the elite town.

Systematic architectural and urban approaches were applied in the planning of the camp. The area witnessed three distinct styles: classical, hybrid and local with which it is represented in the building's grandeur.

The heritage building of saddar bazaar still expresses the legacy and glory of the past. Intricate details and finest ornamentation by the artisans increased the splendor of every building. Symmetrical arrangement of spaces, verandah in the center with the rooms or shops in its surroundings and grand entrances are still part of Saddar Bazaar.

The old bazaar indicates the cultural identity of city. It serves from past 8 decades, and most focusing thing is to gather different communities on a single platform. These communities are still serving who wanted to save the area from further degradation. They know the beautiful history the area possesses in terms of its urban character when the tramway was launched by the British and the construction of the architectural edifices with magnificent details which were once in their use. The process of making timber trellises, stucco ornamentation, wood carving and stone decorations by the artisans reminded of the glorious past. During interviewsⁱⁱ it is observed that British development patterns were admired by the area residents.

Presently, Saddar Bazaar becomes the busiest quarter due to wholesale and retail goods of all types range from clothes, jewelry to household items. Traffic causes air and noise pollution becomes major threat which affects the outer fabric of the heritage buildings. Vandalism is another physical hazard caused to the buildings intentionally to build the new structures. Though, today's conditions are quite fragile, but these architectural edifices can be protected through proper conservation strategy and management plans to ensure the safeguard of British legacy.

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VII. ENDNOTES

ⁱ As English traders wanted to have good relation with Sind, and thought that Thatta would be good place for trade so they opened an English Factory in 1629 with the purpose to export textiles to England and to have commercial contact through laribunder to the coastal areas of India and Persian Gulf.

ⁱⁱ After British annexed in Karachi, they declared Bombay and Karachi as international ports, for the exchange of goods and people, a ship Dwarka was started commissioned from the port of Gwadar on the western Makran coast which then sailed between Karachi and Bombay. Other ships such as Sarasvati and Sabarmati were also used. After partition in 1947, the activity was snapped and ends all the links.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mosques for Muslims

^{iv} Mohallah means neighborhoods containing its own markets, schools, mosques and temples

^v Type of street market where wholesale and retail products either used or un-used can be sold

^{vi} Used as travelers inn, these travelers were mostly from Bombay, India who come to sell their products in Karachi

^{vii} A renowned writer of the book; "colonial urban development on culture, social power and environment".

^{viii} Now known as M.A.Jinaah Road

^{ix} A Hindu native, living in the old town precinct, later shifted his shops to the camp area and become one of the loyal personnel of the British.

^x Bazaar is a marketplace where people buy goods for their daily usage.

^{xi} Interviews conducted with Parsi trader from Bombay Mr. Jalpowala and Bohri merchant Mr. Behloul

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