Biannual Research Journal *Grassroots*
Vol.58, No.I, 2024: 101-120

ECHOES OF THE PAST: UNRAVELING KARACHI'S IDENTITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH ITS COLONIAL MONUMENTS (1871-1927)

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ABSTRACT

In modern times, the study of the urban development of Karachi has become increasingly focused on its history. The year 1839 saw the arrival of British rule and the subsequent colonization of Karachi. This research aims to highlight the importance of Karachi's colonial monuments in understanding its history. To do so, we must appreciate the significance of historical accounts and memoirs, which help reconstruct the colonial period and reinforce our cultural identity. By conducting comparative archival researches and analyzing primary sources, we can trace the historical significance of these monuments and apply them to Karachi's context. For scholarly comparative analysis, I have included three distinct monuments, Sindh Club (1871), Karachi Port Trust (1912), and Karachi Municipality Office (1927). These colonial monuments are vital components of our cultural heritage, affirming our continuity and establishing our beliefs and rules. It is our responsibility to safeguard them from damage. These monuments exist as cultural artifacts that contribute to our sense of place and identity, representing fragments of history. Failing to protect them will lead to the past becoming unfamiliar and distant. This paper focuses primarily on examining the historical expressions evident in these structures. This research examines how colonial monuments under British modernity adapted to local contexts, and analyzes the strategic use of structures in Karachi by colonial administrations for power and governance consolidation. Moreover, it examines how indigenous cultures adopted and transformed colonial styles to assert their identities. The study emphasizes inclusive and diverse perspectives on memory, history, design, and cultural interaction through the uncovering of layered histories. It enhances historical understanding and offers insights into contemporary global architectural practices.

Keywords: Colonial, Gizri Stone, Heritage, Identity, Indo-Gothic, Kurrachee

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the study of urban development in Karachi has undergone a significant shift towards a deep examination of its historical roots. Karachi witnessed a period of colonization as the British Empire established its rule in 1839 that left an indelible mark on its landscape (Kalmati, 2014:8). This research paper endeavors to shed light on the instrumental part of colonial monuments in understanding Karachi's history. By delving into historical memoirs and accounts, which assist as valuable resources for reconstructing the British Colonial era, this study seeks to acknowledge the significance of these monumental structures and reinforce our city`s cultural identity (Metcalf, 1989:1-2).

The primary objective of this research is to show the historical importance of Karachi's colonial monuments and contextualize their significance to the city's identity. Through meticulous analysis and comparative archival research of primary sources, we can discern their impact and the legacy of these structures on Karachi's urban development. Notable examples of such monuments include the Sindh Club (1871), Karachi Port Trust (1912), and Karachi Municipality (1927). Each a proof of diverse styles and materials that was encapsulate the historical essence of the colonial era.

Colonial monuments of Karachi embody the ideologies and values of the colonizers, and their existence in our city landscapes continues to influence societal and perceptions dynamics. Engaging with these structures allows us to analyze the symbolic language, understanding how it was used to reinforce cultural and domination imperial authority. I have tried to point out that engaging with colonial monument of Karachi can also reveal the selective nature of our historical memory.

While some colonial structures are preserved and celebrated as heritage, others are ignored or even erased. Fergusson's act of "activating" historical monumental landmarks as depictions of the past reminds one of Foucault's analyses of how modern history is constructed (Fergusson, 1855:9).

History in the past, aimed to preserve the memory of monuments by turning them into documents, giving voice to non-verbal traces that often carried meanings beyond their explicit messages (Foucault, 1976:7).

These monuments from the British colonial period offer priceless visual evidence of the profound contributions and impact made by indigenous rulers and commissioners in Karachi from 1845-1927. They richly illustrate the part individuals played in shaping the city's history and development (Kalmati, 2014:13). The history of colonial monument is intricately linked with the art of storytelling in Karachi, considered important aspect of forming the foundation of scholarly pursuits and documenting historical accounts. Any story needs a structure with a beginning, center plot, and conclusion built on the events that happened over time (Leach, 2013:44-45). If we analyze it from the context of 'archival mythos' we get layers of history, memories, and narratives that become embedded in colonial structures of Karachi from 1845-1927 over time (Rajagopalan, 2016:134).

Monuments are not just physical structures; they also hold symbolic meanings and represent the societies, cultures, and ideologies that gave birth to them (Rajagopalan, 2016:135). This study through a thorough analysis, explores how Karachi's colonial monuments are not just living symbols but also relics of the past that continue to shape the city's present and effect its future. Monuments like are archives that store and symbolize the diverse collective memories, heritage, identity and experiences of the people of Karachi and the nation they belong to (Rajagopalan, 2016:135).

Emphasizing the importance of understanding the multi-layered and complex histories of these monuments, the research challenges one-dimensional and simplistic narratives associated with them. The concept of archival mythos helps us to reveal cultural significance, hidden stories and power dynamics that may have been lost, forgotten or overlooked through Karachi colonial repositories (Rajagopalan, 2016:135). The study through this investigation, seeks to appreciate and preserve Karachi's rich colonial heritage and its lasting impact on the city's identity (Rajagopalan, 2016:136).

What was their purpose of monument these monuments? What role did they play as a memorial? Indians could only with great difficulty accept these monuments as representing their own past (Fergusson, 1855:18).

Development of Karachi during the Colonial Rule (1839 CE-1947 CE): The British recognized the commercial and military importance of Karachi. With a resolute determination to realize their

economic and strategic objectives, their earnest intent encompassed the imperative acquisition of Karachi through unwavering commitment. At that time, Karachi port had obtained a critical status, not only for Sindh, Punjab, and Afghanistan`s foreign trade but also had access to reach these areas. Before the occupation of Karachi by the British, a British tourist Richard Hartley Kennedy had toured Karachi and was so impressed by Karachi that he gave the following recommendation to his government to capture it immediately (Kennedy, 1840:124):

"Occupation of Karachi is very valuable for commercial as well as military reasons. This city is the key to Sindh and River Indus and also it is a port for Rajputana, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Afghanistan. Moreover, it is the closest to all ports and capitals of Europe and is a highway of the Middle East, it is also strategically located for military requirements". Further in order to benefit from the port at Karachi, British initiated a scheme aimed at linking Karachi with Kotri by rail. Thus, in 1858, the Sindh Railway Company was established to achieve this objective (Ahmed, S., 2012).

At the point when Karachi was owned by the British, its significance as being the key of Sindh and the Indus was recognized instantly; in the following seventy years, the rather eminent inquiry about bettering the port has hardly bared interruption. However, what can be highlighted here are the measures thus taken. Projected by Sir Charles Napier, the Napier Mol linked Kiamari to the mainland as it was seen to completion in 1850 (Smyth, 1919:84-85).

Exploring the Early Structures: The Army Barracks: The oldest monuments in Karachi were those of the pre-colonial native town, which had been built before the arrival of the troops of the Army of the Indus in 1839 CE. The materials used were simple, comparatively tall structures, which employed a construction technique similar to that still seen in Thatta: a thick woody log structure on which small, intertwined woody strips were located to gather a heavy layer of mud plaster (Baillie, 1890:7). When the troops led by Rear Admiral Frederick Lewis Maitland landed at Karachi in February 1839, they received a lasting impression of Karachi (Neill, 1845:28).

A detailed description of those early houses is provided by Captain J. Martin B. Neill, Acting Adjutant of the 40th Regiment: "The

houses are generally mud-built and flat-roofed; on the top of them are wicker ventilators facing the sea, which perform the double duty of wind sail and skyline" (Neill, 1845:29).

The town was barely a few feet above the high water mark, and its northern boundary sloped sharply down to Lyaree`s dry bed and its high-ways frontage consisted of a cattle market and burial ground (Smyth, 1919:86). In this account of his visits to Karachi in the 1840s, Richard Burton observed with a conqueror's eyes despite being well disposed towards the Orient. The town appeared to him as numerous mud ventilators, windowless mud walls, tall mud houses with flat mud roofs, and a mass of low mud hovels (Burton, 1851:29).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Karachi had acquired the attributes of a colonial city. The urban character consisted of two diverse spatial forms: the organic structure of the native town and the new geometric grid of the cantonment. The Structure also began to appear in an alien grab, and a district's new structure form became apparent (Burton, 1851:67). "A tall, cuboid, flat-roofed monument and the badger seizer of wind that were permanent on the top of many houses, along with the dreary look-alike barrack monuments which had pitched roofs; a form transplanted onto the soil of Sindh which was also used in other Anglo-Indian cantonments especially Bombay" (Lari & Lari, 1996:194).

After the annexation of Sindh, structures had to be built in a hurry regardless of resources. For the lodging of troops, large barracks were immediately required, and William Napier noted with worry that everyday soldier life was lost because of which a proper site could not choose (Lari & Lari, 1996:129). In the early stages of British occupation, Karachi was essentially a military settlement. These structures were needed to accommodate three distinct categories of residents: the occupying army, the European administrative staff, and the native camp followers (Baillie, 1890:145). Thus, large single-story barracks and stones were constructed at the north end of the Cantonment to use the European and Indian troops, and single-story houses within spacious compounds were constructed at the opposite end for Napier's soldier-civilians who had been appointed to the newly acquired territory as administer (Lari & Lari, 1996:194-195).

The Indian camp-follow were allowed to construct shops and accommodation in what later became the Saddar Bazar Quarter, was

laid out in a close-knit gridiron pattern (Lari & Lari, 1996:195).

The Army Barracks were the first structures ever to be built. Karachi Cantonment was built on slightly higher ground than the surrounding area and was initially planned to accommodate 5,000 men of all arms, both European and native. All ten structures of the Barracks were originally single-storied. These barracks were constructed of stone and lime masonry and had sloping–tiled roofs, deep arcaded (Lari & Lari, 1996:196).

Traversing: A reflection of colonial legacy and evolving governance structures in Karachi: The captivating blend of diverse local cultures, British colonial influences, and Karachi's strategic significance converged to give rise to the Indo-Gothic styles in the city's colonial monuments, displaying a remarkable synthesis of Indian, Islamic, and European elements. It is interesting to note that this style emerged within the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, a crucial moment in Indian history (Metcalf, 1989:56).

The British rulers during this period were keenly aware of the need to legitimize their authority and dominance in India. The uprising had shaken their confidence, and they wanted a way to strengthen their control over the country, this is where Indo-Gothic style appears (Metcalf, 1989:60).

Sindh Club: During British colonial rule in India, exclusive clubs were established in various cities as social and recreational spaces for the British elite. These clubs provided a platform for the British colonial administrators, military personnel, and expatriates to socialize, network, and engage in various leisure activities. These clubs played a significant role in shaping social hierarchies and power dynamics in colonial India, as well as in reinforcing notions of class and race superiority among the British ruling class (Sinha, 2001).

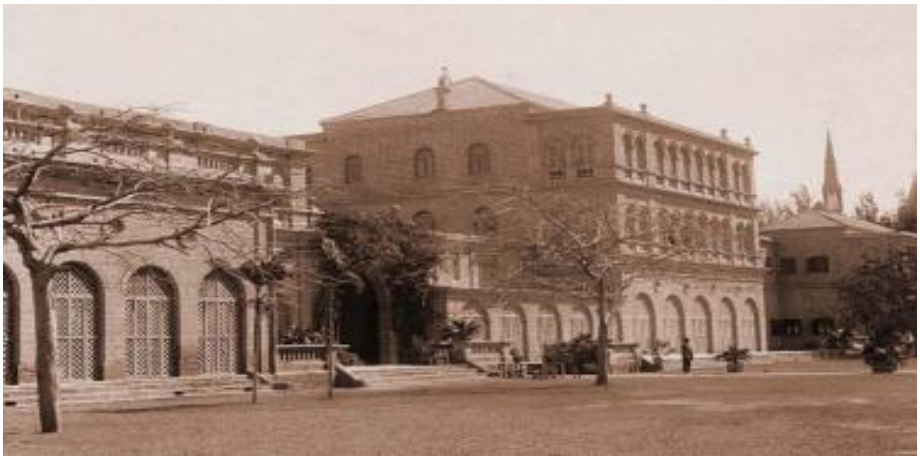
The complex interplay between class, race, and social identity within these colonial clubs examines how different groups of British individuals interacted within these spaces and how these interactions reflected broader colonial attitudes and policies. British colonial administration used these clubs as a means of maintaining social control and reinforcing their dominance over the Indian population (Class, Race and the Colonial Clubs of India, 2018).

On May 25th 1871, the Sindh Club came into being with Sir William Merewether, the commissioner of Sindh, as its first elected Chair (Humphrey, 1946:3-4). The Club became an island of civility in

1901 and home to British Army Officers. In order to select the best design, the competition was held in which Richard Burton emphasized the use of Gothic style for the monument (Humphrey, 1946:5). According to him, the Veneto-Gothic style was a good fit for Venice after seeing the Frere Hall, but it was an unfit style for Karachi. Hence, he expected the Club not to adopt the look of Veneto Gothic style (Humphrey, 1946:5).

As part of their building plans, the British administration included Indian-style elements. Thus, they aimed to create a sense of continuity with India's rich history. They presented themselves as heirs to the legacy of India's past rulers and cultural heritage (Metcalf, 1989:60). While maintaining control and dominance, the British were able to portray themselves as respectful and appreciative of Indian culture. Their architectural endeavors incorporated Indian motifs, styles, and materials to justify their presence in the country.

To counter potential resistance against their rule, it was a calculated move to win over the hearts and minds of the Indian population (Metcalf, 1989:61). As limited funds were available, a small committee was made Le Mesurier (Metcalf, 1989:61) prepared the design. The monument was considered a princely residence after its completion. Initially, it was designed in Southern Italian Style (Fergusson, 1855), which consists of a ladies' bar and a dining room (Humphrey, 1946:4). The monument lays on spacious grounds with its façade having semicircular, arcade-like openings on the ground and first floors while letting go of their pitched roofs (Humphrey, 1946:5).



Source: www.sindclub.org,2020

To build the Sindh Club and to select the most refined design, a competition was held for the Sindh Club of Karachi. At first, Strachan's design was rejected. However, the design he submitted was likely to be Gothic (Lari & Lari, 1996:142). The use of Gothic after seeing the Frere Hall was warned by Richard Burton and asked him not to use it in Sindh Club: "the Veneto-Gothic, so fit for Venice, so unfit for Karachi – it is to be hoped that the new club will not adopt Veneto-Gothic" (Lari & Lari, 1996:242). Unfortunately, additions to the club executed since 1947 have not been handled with the sensitivity this charming group of monument deserves. The extensions have been carried out with little feeling for the nineteenth-century Italianate, a style which appears to blend more agreeably into the soil of the subcontinent than the Gothic or Classical transplants (Class, Race and the Colonial Clubs of India, 2018). Sindh Club was still used in 1950 by the Europeans almost excusably, even though across the road lived the Pakistani Prime Minister.

A recent pamphlet reinforced by Karachi Development Authority had an impression that Strachan designed Sindh Club, which according to some sources found to be incorrect. Le Mesurier was the brain behind it. A princely residency and occupied by the club on November 30, 1883 (Lari & Lari, 1996:143). Intact in the grounds was Snubby`s tomb with the engraving: "In memory of Snubby, My small Dog, 1934-45" (Humphrey, 1946:9).

The sign, which says "*Natives and dogs not allowed*", (Humphrey, 1946:10) was detached in 1944. On August 15, 1947, the first local became a member of the club. In 1965 Mausd Karim, a Pakistani became Chairman of the club almost two decades later (Gilmour, 2007:39).

Members of these institutions were determined by seniority or occupation, creating hierarchical environments bordering on pomposity at times. Varieties of amenities were available in the clubs, from basic billiards and bridge to swimming pools and gymkhana clubs (Gilmour, 2007:102). However, such exclusivity also led to isolation among educated Indians, resentment, and a negative perception of British rule. Through viceroys and governors, efforts were made to create inclusive clubs that included both British and Indian members, while women's clubs emerged as spaces that are more egalitarian (Gilmour, 2007:102).

The clubs provided much-needed respite from the demands of work within civil stations and cantonments. An example of this phenomenon was the Sindh Club, which was an exclusive space that reflected the dynamics of a broader club culture (Gilmour, 2018:395).

Karachi's foundation of the Sindh Club, a hub of colonial activity, exemplified this dynamic. While they remained exclusive, viceroys and governors supported efforts to create more inclusive spaces for British and Indian members, as seen in the Sindh Club's case (Gilmour, 2018:399). Women's clubs also arose, promoting a relatively more egalitarian atmosphere. When examining instances like the Sindh Club, it underscores the complex interaction of race, class and social dynamics within the broader context of British colonial society (Gilmour, 2018:399).

Karachi Port Trust Monument: The Karachi Port Trust (KPT) was incorporated in the subcontinent in the era of the British government in 1912. At the very first glance, it reminds us of the Renaissance of the British Raj. The amalgamation of Gothic, Hindu, and British cultures looks extraordinary on the monument (Smyth, 1919:83-85).

G. Witted, a consultant architect of the Government of Bombay, designed the KPT head office. Witted was the brains behind the Gate Way of India constructed in 1908. With the cost of Rs.9,74,990 and under the supervision of G. Witted, the monument was completed in 1915 and inaugurated by Lord Willingdon, Bombay`s Governor, in 1916 (Lari & Lari, 1996:324).

The area covered is around 1400 square meters. If we trace the history of the monument, according to the archival sources, it was transformed into a hospital with 500 beds in the First World War from 7th February - 6th May 1916-1919 to serve the injured people (Lari & Lari, 1996:324). The material history of the monument is still very distinctive as it was Sepia, stone-based yellowish. To make it stand tall amongst many structures, the monument has an unmatchable curvature. On the center curve of the monument, there is a large dome placed (Lari & Lari, 1996:324).

The color combination of green and yellow enhances the beauty of the monument, the Greco-Roman feature exceptionally inspires the structure and design, and the most prominent ones are domes (Lari & Lari, 1996:324).

Source: www.arifhasan.org,2020

It is astonishing that a builder, little recognized at that period, was requested to make a monument like this (Lari & Lari, 1996:308). However, it is likely that well-known architects such as Strachan were busy with commissions that are more significant and could no longer devote their time to relatively modest structures (Lari & Lari, 1996: 309). The house was probably built in the 1890s and not 1865 as erroneously recorded by Karachi Development Authority`s documentation (Lari & Lari, 1996:319-310).

It is clear from the large-scale map published in 1874 and other maps of 1869-70 that the present house was constructed later. He had the practice of signing his structures by engraving his name (Lari & Lari, 1996:310). The most imposing monument of all, the Karachi Custom House Monument & Port Trust, was completed during World War I was built by Karachi Port Trust (KPT). Marquess of Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, later becoming viceroy, declared this impressive structure open on 5th January 1916 (Burton, 1877:41). This is the same Willingdon whose wife disapproving comment regarding Ruttie Jinnah`s dress caused Mohammed Ali Jinnah to walk out of the Government House and never set foot in it again as long as Willingdon was Governor (Lari & Lari, 1996:325). The Custom House and the Port Trust Offices switched the original structure of the Custom House; Burton described it as a handsome monument (Burton, 1877:41).

Nevertheless, as the port's importance grew further through its cotton and wheat exports and military uses, Sindh's authorities

requested the Commissioner to propose the creation of a Port Trust to replace the harbor board. Although the Port Trust bill was intact in 1887, in 1909, the Port Trust acquired its full-time chairperson, Charles Mules (Smyth, 1919:83). George Wittet of the consulting Architects of Bombay design the Port Trust monument that was considered one of the two most important monuments built in the subcontinent that year, the other being the science college in Bombay (Burton, 1877:85).

The domes are also a common feature in Islamic art and architecture but are designed differently. The monuments' doors, arches, and windows are all huge in size and green in color, which is also inspired by the Classical period (Lari & Lari, 1996:324-325). The monument has a straightforward yet unique exterior and interior. The rooms are spacious and have high ceilings. It seems as if the monument would consist of three to four floors, but practically there are colossal gaps between the two floors (Lari & Lari, 1996: 324-325). Another exciting element of the monument is the teak woodwork. It is excessively used in the monument and is a costly material (Lari & Lari, 1996:324-325).

To further add to the decoration, dark green color woodwork is used on the windows. The monument had a massive door with a single entrance, and on either side, there were two large anchors (Lari & Lari, 1996:324-325). The arches on both the exterior and interior corridors were crafted in the style of Roman Structures (Lari & Lari, 1996:325).

There is only one railing on the back of the elevator with a visible mechanism attached to it. On the second floor, under the dome, there is Board Room for meetings and other administrative stuff (Lari & Lari, 1996:325). The monument has beautiful glass paintings done on two huge arch-shaped windows. There is also an old clock there which has the name of the Elliot Brother Company (Lari & Lari, 1996), London. Adjacent to the Board Room, there is a large Conference Room where all the meetings are held now. There is a Record Room on the same floor where all original proceedings and records from 1893 till now are kept as secret files (Lari & Lari, 1996:325).

The simple treatment of the offices appears to have influenced the other monuments built after the war, which, although constructed

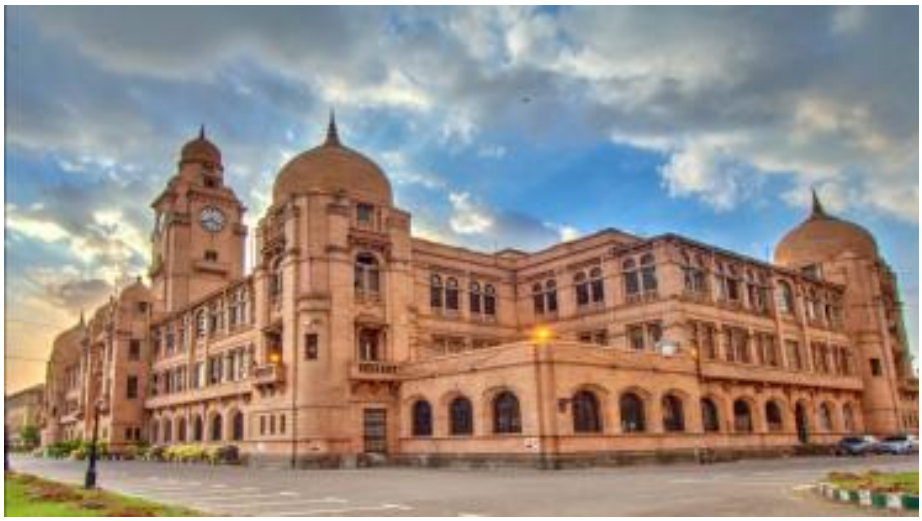
using Gizri stone masonry, showed less reliance on ornamentation. This is reflected in several commercial structures built in Karachi, such as Sega monuments (1919) and the Bliss and Co. monument in 1919 in the Saddar Bazar quarter, and the monument situated on Saleh Mohammed Street the Bunder quarter (Damohi, 1996:126). KPT stands as a remarkable embodiment of the diverse cultural influences and historical shifts that shaped its creation and subsequent transformations.

Erected during the British colonial era in the Indian subcontinent, the monument is a testament to the eclectic amalgamation of Gothic, Hindu, and British architectural elements, reflecting the ethos of the British Raj's Renaissance (Damohi, 1996:126). It's symbolic transition from colonial rule to an independent nation did not diminish its allure, but rather repositioned it as a symbol of Karachi's evolving identity (Kalmati, 2014:244). The monument's influence extended to post-war structures, inspiring functional yet elegant designs. In essence, KPT remains an enduring symbol of architectural excellence, cultural fusion, and historical transformation. Its unique blend of influences, adaptive qualities, and historical significance solidify its place as a monumental landmark that resonates with the past while continuing to shape the present and future of the urban landscape (Scriver & Prakash, 2007:5).

Karachi Municipality Corporation: This splendid and beautiful Karachi Municipality Corporation (KMC) built in 1927 is a monument situated at Bunder Road near City high court. Now the offices of the City district government Karachi are located in this monument. An English engineer by Mr.James Wynnes designed the monument plan of this monument (Damohi, 2016:434). The Governor of Bombay, lord Sand Hurst laid its foundation stone on 14th December 1895. Due to the shortage of funds, its construction was delayed. Its foundation was completed in 1915, the structure was completed in 1927, and it was complete in all respect by 31st December 1931. Jodhpuri stone was used in its construction (Damohi, 2016:434).

However, its opening ceremony was made on 31 December 1931, but this ceremony was conducted again in 1935 to relate it with the silver jubilee ceremonies of King George V. Rupees 17 lacs and 75 thousand were spent on its construction (Damohi, 2016:434).

Executive Engineer Mr. Jahangir N. Sethna supervised its construction work. The contractor for the project was Feroz Construction Co. based in Bombay. The electrical fittings were provided by Oriental Engineering Co. from Karachi. Its tower is 162 feet high. It is one of the beautiful monuments constructed in the British era in the Sub Continent. India's Indo-Gothic builders contributed along with their equivalents at home, in a general movement of extensiveness in style and design (Damohi, 2016:434).



Source: www.wikimedia.org,2020

KMC office spawned a spate of Anglo-Mughal structures. Notable among them were clock Towers that were designed as part of monuments as well as independent structures. According to Imperial Act XXVI, in 1852, the Karachi Municipal Commission (KMC) was established. The KMC consisted of a secretary, a munshi, some sweepers and peons, the total cost of 160 rupees per month (Hughes, 1867:385).

> "The municipal income was derived from town duties, wheel-tax, market and registration fees, municipal fines, as well as fees for cutting grass in the Moach plain, surrendered by Government to the municipality in 1853. The Chungi or weighing fees, were abolished in favor of town duties in December 1856. From this date up to 1859, when the constitution of the Karachi municipality was reorganized, the commission consisted of the

> Commissioner in Sindh, as President, a number of Government servants as official members, with several European and native merchants and others to represent the mercantile interests of the place" (Hughes, 1867:385-386).

The need for improved urban and sanitation administration in Karachi prompted the establishment of the KMC. Preceding its formation, Charles Napier's involvement and the Board of Conservancy's role in addressing the city's sanitary concerns in 1846 underscored the initial recognition of the need for structured governance. The formal establishment of the KMC marked a transition from ad hoc arrangements to a more organized administrative framework (Hughes, 1867:387).

The KMC's composition during its initial years was diverse, combining government officials, European and native merchants, and other stakeholders. This composition reflected an attempt to balance administrative expertise with representation of local interests, particularly the mercantile sector. This eclectic composition points to the complexities inherent in establishing governance structures that bridge colonial rule with local dynamics (Hughes, 1867:387). The primary functions of the KMC encompassed various aspects of urban management, including sanitation, revenue collection, and market regulation. Its responsibilities extended beyond mere administrative tasks to addressing fundamental issues affecting urban life. The KMC's early responsibilities mirror the evolving understanding of municipal governance, whereby local bodies were increasingly entrusted with broader societal functions (Hughes, 1867:385).

KMC's financial sustenance relied on multiple revenue streams. These included town duties, market fees, registration fees, municipal fines, and fees associated with the utilization of public spaces, such as cutting grass in the Moach plain. The financial model was adaptive, as seen in the abolition of weighing fees in favor of town duties. This adaptability underscores the KMC's efforts to align revenue collection with the prevailing economic activities and the changing needs of the city (Damohi, 2016:435).

The period between 1852 and 1859 witnessed a gradual transformation in the KMC's governance structure. The presence of government officials, including the Commissioner of Sindh as the President, indicates the direct involvement of colonial authorities.

Simultaneously, the inclusion of European and native merchants points to the recognition of commercial interests in urban governance. This transitional phase underscores the negotiation between colonial administration and local stakeholders in shaping municipal governance (Hughes, 1867:385).

The Karachi Municipality Corporation stands as a remarkable testament to the architectural prowess of its time, displaying a splendid fusion of design elements that echo the Indo-Gothic style. Situated along Bunder Road in close proximity to the City High Court Monument, this structure holds historical significance as it currently houses the offices of the City District Government Karachi. The monument's inception can be attributed to the visionary English engineer, Mr. James Wynnes, who meticulously planned its layout (Damohi, 2016:435).

The Karachi Municipal Commission's establishment and early years provide valuable insights into the dynamics of colonial urban governance during the mid-19th century. Its diverse composition, financial mechanisms, and evolving functions offer a glimpse into the complexities of blending colonial administration with local interests (Hughes, 1867:385). This analysis serves as a foundation for understanding the roots of municipal governance in Karachi and sheds light on the challenges and opportunities encountered in the formation of urban administrative structures in colonial India (Damohi, 2016: 435).

The Karachi Municipality Corporation conceived and brought to life through the collaboration of visionary designers, engineers, and artisans, remains an enduring symbol of the harmonious coexistence of architectural influences and a living reminder of the history and evolution of Karachi's urban landscape (Hughes, 1867:385).

Supremacy Through Monuments

Between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the period witnessed an age of British imperial self-awareness in Sindh that included an ambitious vision for different kinds of monuments in Karachi. The iconic monuments of this era displayed an approach to the built environment that was both bold in conception and massive in scale—one that was self-consciously aesthetic, drawing on earlier precedent, while occasionally being inventive (Maudlin & Herman,

2016:8). The paper embarks on a thoughtful exploration of the duality inherent in architectural monuments — not only as tangible structures but also as embodiments of broader ideals, ideologies, and historical contexts. Through this lens, these monuments emerge as symbols brimming with cultural and symbolic significance.

It offers a multidimensional and rich perspective on how the colonial monuments in Karachi serves as a lens through which to understand the complex dynamics of colonial encounters and their enduring consequences (Scriver & Prakash, 2007:5).

Apart from the British use of gunpowder and arms to express its supremacy, colonial monuments were also used to announce the ruling race's sovereignty. With the construction of these colonial monuments herald the transformation of John Watts's Company into the East India Company (Smith, 1999), the symbolism of power expressed through monuments had come to stay in the subcontinent. (Bremner, 2016:280).

The early iconic monuments marked a break from the plain, functional structures that served the English East India Company (EIC). Through their details, functions, and massing, the monument was designed to impress the local inhabitants and other European powers, speaking to ideas of imperial presence, military conquest, and even collaboration. Indeed, from the last 18th CE, just as the East India Company (EIC) was establishing itself as a foreign ruling presence in Karachi, it began founding trading outposts in other parts of Sindh (Postans, 1843:55). Despite their newfound significance as cultural symbols, Karachi's landmarks also reaffirmed the power of historical records as a tool for communication. However, in order to comprehend this heritage archive, its specific historical context must be considered (Lari & Lari, 1996:244).

This domestic sphere sheds light on how natives and colonial elite of Karachi constructed their homes and the cultural symbolism surrounded in these monumental structures. Understanding how the native population responded to these intrusions and how forms transformed or persisted provides valuable insights into the dynamics of Karachi colonial societies. Karachi faces the question of whether they should aspire to historical continuity with the colonial past. This complex issue requires careful consideration (Lari & Lari, 1996:280).

CONCLUSION

Colonial monuments have been understood and engaged with in a distinct manner by the Indian class. It has been argued that the traditional building crafts of colonial South Asia conflicted with modern European design principles, which has been the focus of architectural discourse on colonial South Asia for centuries (Metcalf, 1989:5). It has taken the labor and passion of Indian crafts enthusiasts to compel colonial building practices to reflect the artistic riches of a "living" medieval society. While this engagement served the colonial project, it also served to justify anti-progressivism in the context of power and agency within colonialism (Metcalf, 1989:8).

The Karachiites have engaged with colonial monuments as sites of memory and remembrance. There are some colonial buildings that have been repurposed into museums or cultural centers, provoking discussion about colonialism.

These engagements can offer a platform for challenging the violence of the past, opening up as well as redefining identity and space, dialogues about restitution, reparations, and acknowledgement of historical injustices (Metcalf, 1989:9). The Pakistani engagement with colonial structures is a complex interchange of historical aesthetics, memory and socio-political considerations.

The conclusion likely underscores the importance of critically analyzing how colonial structure is understood and represented, while navigating the challenges of addressing the violence of the colonial past. It encourages a balanced approach that acknowledges the architectural and historical value of these structures, while also confronting the traumatic aspects of their colonial origins (Metcalf, 1989:23). As we continue to preserve and appreciate these marvelous structures, we also honor the rich narratives they hold, bridging the past with the present and inspiring future dialogues on architectural evolution and cross-cultural expression.

The colonial monuments are part of a colonial legacy that engages with our senses and mind. They help us look at colonial Karachi's visual images, venues, and physical condition and connect it to contemporary times and different groups. The interiors and exteriors of the monuments reveal how people of colonial Karachi met the basic needs of shelter, comfort, personal security, privacy, and how their taste improved over time. These monuments convey the sensory view

of the past through texture, sight, and touch.

Monuments play an essential role in shaping the memory and can be seen as a dialogue between the past, present, and future. The process of archiving and recording holds the future by expecting its needs. Our desire to pass that future as a legacy to the generation can only be done by presenting appropriate past memories. The primary objective of historians is not to just honor the memories of Karachi and its individuals, groups, or events through these colonial monuments but instead use it as a text to study the critical historical events archived in them.

There is a sense in which these monuments perpetuate a narrative of colonial superiority and dominance. This ambiguity must be acknowledged for a comprehensive analysis to take place. There is a wide range of interpretations that can be applied to colonial monuments. While some may view them as symbols of heritage and continuity, others may see them as painful reminders of a traumatic past. It is not uncommon for societies to wrestle with competing narratives about their colonial past, and colonial monuments can serve as focal points for these discussions.

It is crucial to examine the political dimensions. Powerful individuals often erected colonial monuments to legitimize certain political ideologies or agendas. Consequently, they become tools for reinforcing specific narratives of national history that may marginalize or silence dissenting voices.

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