INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PLACES:
A SYSTEMATIC METHOD FOR THEIR IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION AND DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE
PART II: CASE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Systematic inventory and recording of historic places is an effective tool for facilitating good management and understanding of historic towns, cities and areas. This paper presents a method developed for inventory recording in the context of countries that are under resourced, and thus do not have effective management procedures for definition, protection and preservation of their heritage properties. The paper focuses on an inventory format designed as an outcome of a research undertaken in Sindh, the southeastern region of Pakistan, taking its historic towns as case studies. The research outcomes are presented in two parts: in the first part the inventory form was discussed in detail. This second part presents a comparison of two case study towns, having very different situations in terms of scale and management structure, where the developed method of heritage inventory was applied for documentation.

Key words: Heritage inventory, significance of historic places, Karachi, Shikarpoor, Sindh.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Systematic and methodical inventory documentation is a key to develop in-depth understanding for historic places - their significance, values and potentials. It is through comprehensive documentation that a holistic perspective on places can be achieved to guide a way for preservation, sustainable growth and economic viability (Lichfield, 1988; Burman, 1995; Pickard, 2002). Part I of this paper presented the method developed through a research undertaken in the context of Sindh, Pakistan, for systematic documentation of historic towns; a 'Core Data Index Form' (CDIF) discussed in detail in that part. This method for town scale inventory and documentation was pilot tested in a small area within the prime commercial zone of Karachi, and then applied through extensive field research to two historic towns of

Sindh, Karachi and Shikarpoor, both having very different development patterns and characteristics of the built environment. This paper presents a comparison of the two case studies and discusses the potentials and constraints of the developed method in the light of experiences gained through inventory documentation undertaken in the two towns. The aim is to bring forth issues that require to be taken into account while dealing with disparate case studies, as the varying context may require flexible adaptation in spite of a standardized format.

METHODOLOGY

The developed method (as discussed in part I) includes several stages; a literature review of secondary sources to develop an understanding of the historical background of case study towns, focused primarily on identifying different periods of history, stages of development and period influences on built fabric; collection of available information including previous listings, maps, survey sheets; collection of updated field data through survey; analysis of data; and finally the identification of problems and causes of threat to historic places. For Karachi an existing listing of 581 protected heritage properties was taken as a starting point for preparation of the field survey, whereas for Shikarpoor only an official notification declaring the entire city as protected existed without any supportive listings to identify historic properties.

Data Compilation[1]

The field data collected through the standardized CDIF was compiled as an Excel database maintained as a master file including all available information on listed properties compiled together. The layout of database fields is designed to keep all building information clustered together and socio-economic information placed together. Pictures of properties are compiled separately, with identification numbers assigned

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1   The choice of specific softwares mentioned here is due to their availability in the existing working environment at the researchers' base. However, in expansion of the process to national level where similar facilities do not exist, other possibilities of free software and web options for dissemination of information should be explored to make the compiled database more accessible and easily usable.