

COMMUNITY AND ARCHITECTURE: CONTRIBUTION RETROSPECT IN KARACHI DURING THE BRITISH RAJ

Case of Saddar Bazaar

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Abstract:

Communities play a vital role in the development of any society, both in terms of political and commercial ambiance and culture and social character which contributes in the city formation. Karachi is an excellent example of it. Over the years the city has evolved from wilderness to being the most populous city of the world. It houses many imported traditions, which have mixed with local values over the years. Karachi, in 1900s was dominated by many ethnic communities, which resulted in the rise of a class system, which in turn lead to the emergence of communal enclaves to create a sense of communal values. Until independence of the sub-continent in 1947, these communities worked together and flourish Karachi.

Saddar Bazaar, the city centre of Karachi was mainly occupied by these communities. Saddar was laid as a camp by the British in the late nineteenth century and was later used not only as a marketplace, but also consisted supporting functions like storage facilities, religious places, schools, coffee houses, cinemas, bars, billiard rooms, restaurants and residential areas. The merchants who came from India started their commercial activities here. During the Colonial rule, Saddar flourished not only in terms of trade and commerce, but also in terms of architecture.

By the 19th century the British had already established a design language for the architecture of the public buildings of the sub-continent. But after the involvement of the local communities, this language was transformed and either hybrid forms were created (i.e. blending of European features with balconies and chajjas of different proportions) or purely local architectural forms based on the requirement of the locals were constructed. The transformation of European architectural language and its ornamentation into local buildings were observed in many structures. Some of them were built by British architects and engineers and others by the local firms under the British influence.

This paper documents and analyses two such hybrid design buildings, which reflect the lifestyles of the communities through the built form characteristics, details and formal and spatial characteristics.

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