

**SHIKARPOOR: HISTORIC CITY, SINDH, PAKISTAN  
INVENTORY AND MAPPING OF HERITAGE PROPERTIES, VOLUMES 1 AND 2**

**Anila Naeem\***

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A Review by

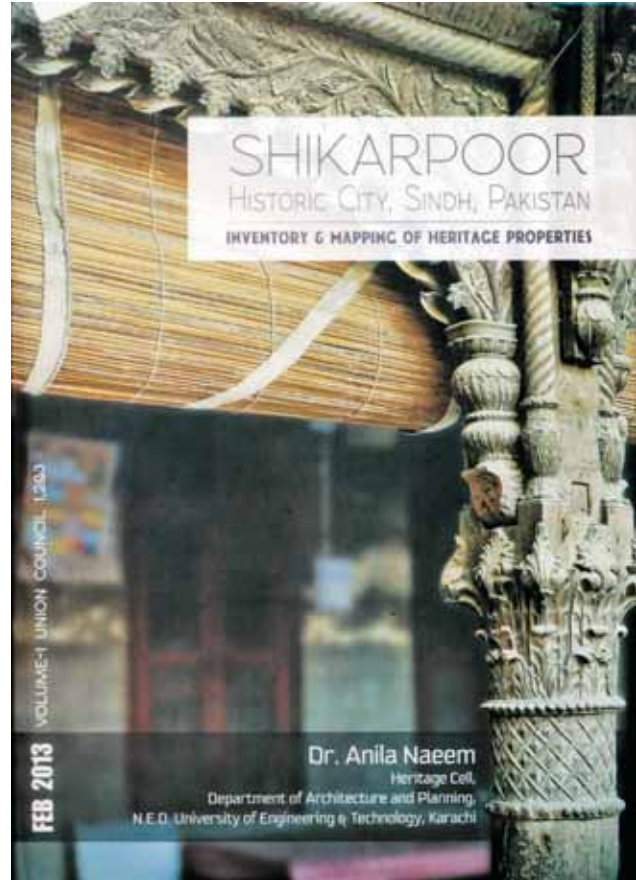
Mukhtar Hussain, Architect in Private Practice, Karachi.

Dr. Anila Naeem, the author of this exhaustive two-volume study, prefers to call it a monograph rather than a book. Volume 1 was launched somewhat hurriedly by the EFT in Karachi in February 2013, whereas Volume 2 became available a few months later.

Naeem is an architect who also has a Master's degree in Conservation and Historic Preservation from the Middle East Technical University, Turkey, and a Doctorate from the Oxford Brookes University, UK. She has been a consultant to various conservation and research projects undertaken by the Heritage Cell at the Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University, Karachi.

Her interest in Shikarpoor was awakened in 1999 while she was touring around Sindh with a group of students, and paid a visit to this remarkably unusual city which left a lasting impact on her. She took it up as her research study for her Doctorate in 2006. Since then it has been a long and passionate involvement, resulting in these two volumes after nearly a decade of intensive study, involving several visits, starting with no maps available.

Shikarpoor was established in 1617AD by the Daoodpotras. At the height of its prosperity in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the city developed as an important hub of trade, commerce, banking, as well as political clout. It became one of the two cities of Sindh (the other being Karachi) having a Hindu majority in an otherwise Muslim dominated region. Although the city never enjoyed the distinction of being a capital or seat of administrative power, it had an influential control on the economics and politics of the region. Following Independence in 1947, exodus of the Hindu population from



Shikarpoor brought a drastic decline in the state of the city. Although remnants of its unique historic past are still evident today, these are rapidly disappearing due to market forces and lack of administrative control, leading to a change in architectural vocabulary and lack of aesthetic value in the new constructions throughout.

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The author realized during her field work that, in spite of the socio-economic degeneration and demographic changes, a sizable percentage of the resident community (the educated elite as well as the common man on the street) still holds appreciation for the historic fabric and feels a sense of loss at the continuing pillage of the city's antiquarian assets for the benefit of a privileged few.

The two-volume monograph is basically a compilation of inventories of 1203 properties notified as protected heritage of Shikarpoor Historic City. These include 1163 buildings/historic structures, 27 urban elements and 13 open spaces. Volume 1 comprises properties in Union Councils 1, 2 and 3. Volume 2 continues with properties in UCs 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Being a true academic, Naeem explains her methodology and the structure of the monograph in an Author's Note at the beginning of Volume 1. She describes Shikarpoor in its historic perspective, goes on to explain her documentation process, her criteria for the listing of properties and, lastly, her format and connotations for the inventory forms. Each one of the 1203 properties has a separate standard inventory form that gives comprehensive information related to that particular entry, including pictures and a location map with analytical information enabling the understanding of the significance and value of that specific entry.

Each Union Council starts as a separate section with a key map, followed by the single page inventory of all properties that lie within that UC. The whole study has been compiled into two volumes following the same format, mainly for easy handling, as these are meant to be used as field catalogs and tools for the management and monitoring of the listed properties. Whereas Volume 1 contains an introductory section (described earlier), Volume 2 ends with a set of carefully compiled appendices, which would assist any scholar, researcher or field worker to locate a specific property.

Appendix A lists buildings already demolished. Appendix B is a list of properties sorted by unique ID. Appendix C is a list of properties sorted by degree of value while Appendix D, the last, is a list of properties sorted by threat level. It must be acknowledged that, for a scholarly work such as this, the contents have been made easy to search and locate. For Naeem, the effort in compiling the Appendices is itself a significant achievement.

Naeem's contribution is thus a first step to achieve the following objectives:

- Capture and record the fast disappearing historic environment.
- Make a comprehensive database on cultural properties in the form of a handy manual for city managers, planners and decision makers supporting the cause of heritage conservation.
- Provide a resource for researchers, scholars and students interested in the history and traditional built environment of the region and, above all, raise public awareness towards the historic significance of the city and build a sense of pride among its residents and other stakeholders.

This pair of smartly printed and bound volumes, impressive and commendable at the same time, albeit a tad heavy, leave no doubt about their usefulness in the academic environment or out in the field. They may well serve as a precursor to similar studies of other historic towns and cities in Pakistan.