

Tracing the Ruins of Kusak: Documenting Architectural and Cultural Significance of Kusak Fort, Chakwal



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Abstract: *Nestled in the heart of Chakwal district, near the imposing Jodh Mountain, Kusak Fort stands as a testament to the rich and diverse history of the Indian subcontinent. It was developed by the Janjua Hindu warrior clan dating back to over 1,000 years. This remarkable structure is a vital yet overlooked relic that embodies the cultural evolution of the region. After Independence in 1947, it became a part of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and is presently situated in the Chakwal district of central Punjab. As one of the few surviving remnants of the Hindu period, Kusak Fort and its Temple serves as an irreplaceable bridge between the past and present, offering invaluable insights into an era that has been largely compromised as most of the historical narratives focus on the Buddhist and Islamic periods. Because of decades of negligence it is disheartening to see the Temple within the Fort in dilapidated condition and hence is on the risk of being lost forever. This research seeks to document, protect, and revitalize the heritage of Hindu temple and its surrounding through a comprehensive approach that includes historical research through archives, architectural documentation, and community engagement. The main objective is to stop further damage, prevent vandalism and renovate the Temple within the Fort. Strategies have been suggested to conserve the Temple and develop Kusak Fort into a cultural and tourist destination. Given its proximity to the Katas Raj Temples and Kallar Kahar, Kusak Fort has the potential to become a cornerstone of heritage tourism, drawing attention to the Hindu legacy of the region and enriching Pakistan's multicultural historical narrative.*

Keywords: Kusak, Chakwal, conservation, documentation, Janjua Rajputs, Hindu-era forts, Pakistan

Introduction

Heritage sites serve as tangible links to a region's past, preserving cultural narratives, architectural evolution, and historical significance (Fielden, 2003). One of the partially-known yet important sites of the subcontinent is Kusak Fort, which is situated on the foothills of Jodh Mountain, Chakwal district Punjab, Pakistan. It is one of the many monuments at risk of destruction. While South

Asian Islamic and Mughal architecture is well documented and appreciated, there remains a 'fort kusak' in the region that set aside for Janjua Rajput, a notable combination Hindu and warrior clan. Its preservation is needed as set forth in (Tan, 2016). Still, this fort together with some other sites in Pakistan lacks the efforts of maintenance and restoration, which is extremely horrifying attention seeking fact (Ali & Qureshi,

2019)

Naji has stated that, the post-Partition heritage narrative in Pakistan has predominantly concentrated for a longer period within Islamic and Buddhist historical sites, conveniently ignoring different pre-Islamic structures (Khan A. , 2020). For this reason, segments of the Fort style built by Hindus such as the aforementioned Kusak Fort have become unmarked and therefore very much easily destroyed. The same principle is the source of inadequacies concerning this archaeological site and the rest of the country as research showed via case of the Rohtas fort reconstruction, restoration and further specially guided by UNESCO recommendations and policies (UNESCO, 2018).

The goal of this study is to capture the historical and architectural value of Kusak Fort, evaluate its state today, and create an appropriate conservation plan. The research justifies the enormous potential of preserving heritage sites through conducting historical investigation, physical observation, and stakeholder participation. Moreover, the study supports the idea of Kusak Fort's restoration as a heritage tourism site, similar to what has been done with temples of Katas Raj and Kallar Kahar (Ahmed N. , 2017) . This study, therefore, seeks to demonstrate the need to maintain structures that have been subjected to destruction as well as the neglect of historical monuments vandalism and argue in favor of ensuring the sustainability of Kausk Fort as a significant component in the rich architecture cultural heritage of Pakistan.

Historical Background

Kusak Fort was constructed during the 11th century by Raja Jodh, who was among the six sons of the renowned Janjua Sultan, Raja Mall Khan Janjua, who also constructed Malot Fort during the 10th century (Khan H. , 2003) . Situated atop "Kuh-i-Jud" or Jodh Mountain, the fort occupied around 13 acres of land. The fort was constructed from local soil and red stone. A palace for the king in the classical style, as well as approximately 70 houses for soldiers, was constructed. Two huge northern gates, water reservoirs in the form of ponds, warehouses for

grains, and an enormous boundary wall that was 370 feet high were also a part of the complex (ibid.).

During history, the area was a major trade route. As a result of its strategic position, Kusak Fort was invaded by many invading armies. The fort and its kings faced a major setback in 1290 AD when Jalaluddin Firoz Shah Khilji invaded it (ibid). Though the Janjua Rajputs were defeated to begin with, they soon regained control. In 1398 AD, when Amir Taimur moved towards the region, the Janjua Sultans fortified the fort by providing logistical support to his campaign against Delhi. The family still possesses a handwritten parwana from Taimur acknowledging their assistance (Confirmation by family sources; also see (Khan H. , 2003).

There was another grand attack between 1810 when Ranjit Singh's Sikh troops attacked Kusak Fort. Sultan Fateh Muhammad held out for six months and finally arranged a peace treaty. The legend has it that one time, Ranjit Singh had tried to climb up the western wall in secret but was discovered by Sultan Fateh Muhammad, who respected the peace treaty and provided him with safe passage (Ross, 1970).

The long siege created serious water deficiencies, and the Sultan and his subjects were compelled to shift to Haranpur for 40 years. Sultan Fateh Muhammad passed away there in 1830. His ancestors returned in 1850 and founded Lehr Sultanpur village near Kusak (Khan H. , 2003)((Ross, 1970)p. 355).

Nowadays, the ownership of Kusak Fort is in the hands of the descendants of the Janjua Rajput family, such as Mehwish Azmat Hayat, whose ancestors still live in the area. The persistence of ownership highlights the cultural and familial importance of the fort, connecting earlier rulers with contemporary custodians of the site. The long-term connection of the family to the fort and the area around it reflects the Janjua clan's enduring historical presence in regional leadership and property ownership. (Verification by family sources).



Figure 1 Kusak Fort Site and Context

Methodology

This study has adopted a mixed-methods strategy based on the evaluation of the current state of Kusak Fort, architectural documentation, field surveys, and historical research for proposing conservation measures. In more specific terms, the method consists of four components: historical research analysis, site documentation, stakeholder consultation, and case study analysis.

1. Historical Research

To understand the value of Kusak Fort in history, archival materials, historical texts and documents together with previously conducted fort conservation studies were thoroughly reviewed. This research investigated both

primary and secondary sources such as historical manuscripts, archaeological studies, and books concerning South Asian Hindu period fortifications. Important references involve the studies of the Janjua Rajputs (Tan, 2016), Hindu-period architecture in the Punjab (Meister, 2010), and conservation in Pakistan (Khan A., 2020).

In the effort to reconstruct the military, architectural and cultural history of the site, regional historical records together with oral histories from the local community were also analyzed. To formulate an understanding of good and effective conservation practice, comparative studies of other similar sites such as Rohtas Fort, Derawar Fort and Rajput forts of Rajasthan were reviewed (UNESCO, 2018)

(Singh, 2018)

2. Site Documentation and Condition Assessment

To explore the architectural condition and the deterioration level of Kusak Fort, a site survey was performed that included:

- On-site visual inspections to gauge the condition of the structure and its materials and the environmental impacts on it.
- Aerial photography and drone mapping to capture the layout, damages, and architectural aspects of the fort.
- Measured drawings and 3D visuals of the most relevant structures, such as the temple, the fortification walls and the entry gates, were completed for future planning of restorations.
- Determining the accuracy of the stone, mortar, and construction techniques used to ensure that the conservation methods suggested would be accurate to the historical context required material analysis.

The assessment of damage was done through systematic observation which caused to bring light to many detrimental impacts such as weathering, vandalization, and biological growth as well as problems with the structural framework.

3. Stakeholders Involvement

Understanding that conservation of heritage sites has to include the locals, the research incorporated key stakeholders. One of the most important stakeholders in preserving Kusak Fort is Mehwish Azmat Hayat's family, who, with her parents, has taken an active part in the socio-political scene in the region. Her father, Sultan Raja Azmat Hayat, was a member of the Punjab Assembly (1993–1996 and 1997–1999), and her mother, Mrs. Ghazala Farhat, was in office from 2008–2009. Having their political influence and custodianship, the family has significant control over the future of the fort with reference to conservation and

tourism. Their current stance is in line with a restrictive approach, opting for a conservation model driven by private and academic stakeholders as opposed to direct state intervention.

Other important stakeholders are:

- Local inhabitants and the historians to capture the history and cultural aspects of the fort.
- Archaeologists and restoration specialists to evaluate the site for the possibility of restoration.
- Representatives of the tourism sector to find ways in which tourism can be used for the revitalization of the site.

Such interactions gave insights, perceptions, and challenges towards conservation, and the chances of applying the necessary interventions.

4. Comparative Case Studies

To inform the documentation and 3D reconstruction of Kusak Fort and its temple, this research draws on four comparative case studies—two local, one national, and one international—providing lessons in material authenticity, community involvement, and integration with the landscape.

4.1 Local Case Studies

Malot Fort, Chakwal (10th century):

Malot Fort, situated in the Salt Range, has Greek-inspired sandstone ashlar masonry. The restoration utilized red and grey sandstone in 1:2 traditional lime–sand mortar, supplemented with lime concrete terracing and stone flooring, which reiterates the importance of materials and construction techniques employed originally (Awan, 2023).

Jain Mandir, Anarkali, Lahore (c. 1940; restored 2022):

This Shikhara-type temple, which was destroyed in 1992, was renovated at the behest of the Supreme Court in 2021. Overseen by the Evacuee Trust Property Board, the undertaking restored the temple to its historic 13-meter shape

and reopened it for religious activities in 2022, highlighting the significance of legal support and cultural renewal in conservation of heritage (Rizwan, 2022) (Youlin Magazine, 2022).

4.2 International Case Study

Mount Taishan, China (UNESCO World Heritage):

Mount Taishan demonstrates the blending of religious traditions with natural geology, more than 3 billion years old in evolutionary process and 2,000 years old in religious veneration. Its conservation strategy is prioritizing harmony between landscape and built heritage, providing a quality reference for restoration environmentally and symbolically contextualized (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2023) .

5. Proposed Conservation Framework for Kusak Fort and Temple

In light of the comparative case studies and the unique stakeholder dynamics surrounding Kusak Fort, a non-governmental, documentation-driven conservation strategy is proposed. Therefore, the conservation framework prioritizes autonomous heritage stewardship, community-led tourism, and digital and physical documentation, bypassing bureaucratic constraints while ensuring cultural continuity.

5.1 Key Components of the Framework

Material Conservation Using Traditional Techniques

- Adopt the Malot Fort approach to conservation—rebuilding only where necessary using red and grey sandstone ashlar masonry and lime-based mortars (Awan, 2023).
- Focus on minimal intervention with maximum respect for material authenticity and historical layering.

Heritage Without Bureaucracy: Family-Led Conservation Create a conservation strategy that remains under the control of the owning family. In the absence of formal governmental involvement, non-profit partnerships, private academic institutions, or heritage NGOs may

serve as technical advisors.

Reference can be drawn from private shrine restoration efforts in Lahore, which have operated independently with community and diaspora support (Youlin Magazine, 2022)

Cultural Tourism Development

Inspired by Mount Taishan, the site's potential as a cultural pilgrimage and eco-tourism destination can be gradually developed without commercial overexposure.

Small-scale tourism models can be implemented, such as:

- Guided heritage walks,
- On-site interpretation signage and QR-based info,
- Local craft and hospitality integration.

These strategies foster local economy growth while keeping the site's control with the family.

Community-Led Heritage Education

Offer site-based storytelling, oral histories, and guided interpretation, using the knowledge and memories of the family and surrounding community.

Documenting and publicly presenting the fort's significance (similar to the Jain Mandir case, where its reopening was driven by cultural need rather than tourism alone) builds public value while keeping ownership intact (Rizwan, 2022)

Literature Review

The preservation of historical sites like forts forms an important part of cultural heritage management because it encompasses a nation's history, identity, as well as progress in architectural ingenuity. Heritage scholars argue that the preservation of forts necessitates an interdisciplinary approach that combines architectural conservation, social participation, and responsible tourism (Jokilehto, 2007). This review studies the literature on fort restoration, heritage conservation in Pakistan, and successful models of the international preservation system to support the case of restoring Kusak Fort.

1. Heritage Conservation and Fort Revitalization

The conservation of historical forts is a well debated topic among the international heritage community. As Fielden (2003) noted, conservation of a site should not be regarded as only a structural intervention but must include preservation of its cultural significance as well as historical credibility in terms of its remains. Stubbs (2009) fort preservation study contended that adaptive reuse of historic places can serve two important goals: reversing neglect and decay of the monument, as well as increasing its economic utilization (Stubbs, 2009). This model has been successfully applied at Amer Fort, India and Edinburgh Castle, Scotland, where sufficient controlled tourism and historical interpretation centers guarantee sustainability (Menon, 2014).

In the South-Asian region, the conservation of forts has remained troublesome owing to a lack of adequate attention, funding, and environmental preservation policies. Research suggested on the preservation of Rohtas Fort in Pakistan exemplifies how a UNESCO-led program where locals are involved, as well as genuine materials are utilized, can yield successful results (UNESCO, 2018). Like Ghaffar (2016), I argue that there is insufficient participation from the community when it comes to conserving forts in Pakistan, which makes it difficult to develop sustainable practices in managing heritage sites (Ghaffar, 2016).

2. Hindu-era Forts in Pakistan: The Need for Documentation

The academic literature on the Hindu-period forts in Pakistan is lacking. While scholars have given attention to Mughal and Islamic architectural history (Koch, 1991), other structures such as the Hindu and Pre-Islamic ones seemed to have been ignored (Meister, 2010). While the Katas Raj Temples have gotten some level of attention as one of the few Hindu heritage sites located in Punjab, lesser-known forts such as Kusak Fort remain neglected (Ahmed N. , 2017). Nath (2013) suggests that there is an impending need for the preservation of Hindu and Rajput forts in Pakistan that directly parallel similar structures in India, as they face the threat of environmental damage and willful destruction.

The Janjua Rajputs, who have long been associated with the Kusak Fort, were an important player in the socio-political and military framework of pre-Mughal Punjab (Tan, 2016). There is little systematic documentation of their fortifications, which renders Kusak Fort to be an appealing study for reconstructing the historical architecture and military of the region.

3. Challenges in Conservation and Vandalism Prevention

According to Ali & Qureshi (2019), preservation efforts for the forts in Pakistan face significant issues including vandalism, illegal digging, and insufficient understanding of one's culture (Ali & Qureshi, 2019). In the same line of thought, studies about Derawar Fort and the Walled City of Lahore suggest that absence of legal protection, poor management, and metropolitan growth often lead to destruction of heritage sites in Pakistan (Khan A. , 2020). To make sure residents feel responsible for protecting the heritage sites in their vicinity, ICOMOS (2019) suggests that local community participation should be an integral part of fort preservation (ICOMOS, 2019).

Moreover, conservation efforts in Pakistan have shown that protecting the heritage sites is not often backed by the government or solid funding strategies (Choudhry, 2015). While ASI in India proactively engages in the rehabilitation of historical forts, Pakistan remains undeveloped and fragmented, lacking a cohesive approach to national heritage sites.

4. Sustainable Tourism and Community Involvement

Conservation through tourism is rather complex; it can help meet the funds required for conservation activities, while poorly controlled tourism can lead to enhancement in its destruction (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Research conducted on fort tourism in Rajasthan, India proved that a strategy that combines conservation tourism with local entrepreneurship is the most sustainable over the long term (Singh, 2018). This is so in parallel with the studies conducted on Shalimar Gardens in Lahore that underline that awareness programs help in the enhancement of

conservation activities (Rizvi, 2015).

The case of Kusak Fort Kasam leads to the greater debate of the conservation of forts as celebrated monuments and sustainable conservation of neglected Hindu period heritage. Based on the success of Rohtas, Amer, and Derawar Forts, this research proposes the need for a structurally innovative, community-based, tourism-centered approach to restoration. This research, in response to the steps of destruction, pollution, and lack of scholarly concern, furthers the understanding and conservation of Pakistan's rich, multifaceted architectural heritage.

Findings and Discussion

The results of this analysis indicate that environmental neglect alongside structural mismanagement has led to the advanced deterioration of Kusak Fort in Chakwal. The site remains largely unattended and further destruction continues to be a threat despite its notable history and architecture. Some of the major challenges along with opportunities that could help in conserving the fort have been

documented through field surveys, historical research and stakeholder consultations.

1. Structural Deterioration and Material Loss

From the site survey and condition assessment, it was found that Kusak Fort suffers from:

- i. Weathering changes from the environment have led to the deteriorating walls along with the temple foundation.
- ii. Other known factors such as human tampering alongside the decomposition caused by nature has resulted in the temple walls losing their original etches and phrases along with the ceiling.
- iii. The notorious phenomenon of site encroachment without proper construction barriers has not only led to heightened site violation but also increased the damage done through vandalism.
- iv. The uncontrolled temple site vegetation has been known to further contribute to the structural weakening of the fort.



Figure 2 Structural Deterioration and Material Loss

Discussion

Alignment is apparent with the preservation works carried out on the other derelict historical forts of Pakistan like Derawar Fort and neglected sections of Rohtas Fort (UNESCO, 2018) (Khan H. , 2003). If steps are not taken immediately, Kusak Fort runs the risk of being beyond repair. Based on ICOMOS conservation approaches (2019), built heritage needs regular maintenance, restoration with appropriate materials, and undertakes measures for

protective conservation to outlast time. There are no procedures in place at Kusak Fort to provide that level of heritage protection, which exemplifies how poorly non-UNESCO sites in Pakistan are managed.

2. Vandalism and Human Interference

The fort is vandalized in the following ways and is simultaneously being looted:

- i. Graffiti vandalism on temple walls and unauthorized carvings on the fort

structures.

- ii. Removal of historical artifacts, which would be considered illegal, for private collection or trade.
- iii. Modern structures being built by locals within the vicinity of the fort's perimeter.

Discussion

Similar defacing has been noted at Katas Raj Temples due to lack of appropriate security and heritage education (Ahmed N. , 2017). These results make it clear that legal acts awareness, strong campaigns, and local community participation are extremely important in dealing with the issue of defacement of Kusak Fort. Studies regarding the management of heritage sites in Rajasthan suggest active local community involvement on conservation



Figure 3 Unmarked trek of Kusak Fort

Discussion

Sustainable heritage tourism studies (Timothy & Boyd, 2003) argue that the first step towards achieving the economic potential of historical sites depends on providing some basic infrastructure and guided tourism experiences. The results identify that integrating Kusak Fort with the region's existing cultural tourism circuit will increase its prominence and funding for its preservation. However, the lack of regulations and poorly planned or unmanaged mass tourism can have further devastating consequences like some overpopulated heritage sites in India (Menon, 2014). Consequently, there's a need for restriction and tourism

efforts, turning community members into guardians instead of spectators. The use of community-based conservation approach at Kusak Fort may reduce vandalism and enhance site preservation.

3. Lack of Infrastructure and Visitor Facilities

Kusak Fort is inaccessible to many today because of reasons such as:

- i. Unmarked routes and absence of guides make navigation difficult.
- ii. Visitors do not have access to any building facilities. There are no resting places, information centers and no guided tours.
- iii. There is no active tourism marketing for the site despite its proximity to the Katas Raj Temples and Kallar Kahar.

regulations that center on visitor paths, interpretation centers, and takeaway messages built on conservation.

4. Community Perceptions and Engagement Potential

Residents, historians, and environmentalists were interviewed and the following was gathered:

- i. The local population does not seem to know much about the fort's history.
- ii. Historians and some regional scholars' express interest in this site, particularly in relation to its preservation.

- iii. There are fears about the lack of government action and potential commercial exploitation of the site.

Discussion

These findings are relevant to research on community-based heritage conservation (Ali & Qureshi, 2019) that stresses the need for greater local involvement and education to protect these sites. Khan (2020) on the revitalization of Lahore's Walled City noted that community engagement improves the sustainability of conservation projects. A similar system could be used for Kusak Fort such as creating programs aimed at promoting awareness of the fort, local conservation programs, and school-based educational programs. This could help the local community take responsibility, thus reducing vandalism and increasing conservation efforts.

5. Opportunities for Conservation and Sustainable Development

Kusak Fort is currently neglected, but it still provides various opportunities for tourism development and conservation. This includes:

- i. Restoration Possibility: The architectural features of the site are partially intact, which makes restoration possible.

Kusak fort



Figure 4 Bird's eye view of Kusak Fort with its surroundings

Site photography

Existing Condition

- ii. Strategic Positioning: The location is close to other heritage sites, meaning it can be placed in a larger tourism package.
- iii. Interest from Government and NGO: Conversations with heritage bodies and universities reveal readiness to support the documentation and restoration processes.

Discussion

Preservation efforts for historical sites in Pakistan and India (Singh, 2018; UNESCO, 2018) demonstrate that many neglected sites can be revived with collaborative support from various stakeholders. While these initiatives offer a general guide, the context of Kusak Fort provides a unique case where accuracy in restoration needs to perform a delicate dance with authenticity. Modern developments should not erase the site's historical essence. Public-private partnerships (PPP) may work in this context, as the government can offer policy support while privately funded organizations and NGOs are more suited for providing the necessary finances and expertise (ICOMOS, 2019).



Figure 5 View into the Site



Figure 6 Temple atop the Fort



Figure 7 Damage to the structure



Figure 8 Temple condition



Figure 9 Fort walls in ruined state

Recommended Materials for Restoration

Restoration of Kusak Fort needs the application

of historically suitable and environmentally sustainable materials. Choice should be guided by local availability, conformity with existing

fabric, and long-term viability. Following regional building traditions and local site conditions, these are suggested materials:

Stone: Walls, gateways, and foundation should be built using locally available limestone or sandstone. These stones are in line with traditional ornamentation and possess resistance against weathering.

Lime Mortar: Lime-sand mortar in a 1:2 proportion needs to be utilized for masonry. It provides flexibility, permeability, and compatibility with the original structure, as opposed to cement products that make the structure crack or produce salt deposits.

Timber: Locally sourced, sustainably harvested timber may be utilized for door frames, beams, and roofing. It is representative of the local architectural vocabulary and contributes warmth to reconstructed interiors.

Earth: Rammed earth or adobe can be incorporated in non-structural walls or interior details, particularly where traditional methods were traditionally employed. Such materials

have thermal mass and are compatible with historic practice.

Metalwork: Forged iron or mild steel can be employed for reinforcement, gates, brackets, and hinges. Where they are to be exposed, wrought iron is most suitable for historical character and decorative detailing.

Roofing Materials: Sloping roofs or pavilions can use clay tiles, stone slabs, or timber shingles. The materials ensure both aesthetic balance and climatic performance.

Conservation Materials: During repair or conservation, heritage-grade materials and conservation-compatible binders must be employed. Materials are to be selected very carefully to replicate historic textures, strength, and moisture characteristics.

The material palette guarantees restoration work that honors the original construction method while promoting structural integrity and ease of maintenance in the future.

Measured Drawings of Temple for proposed conservation

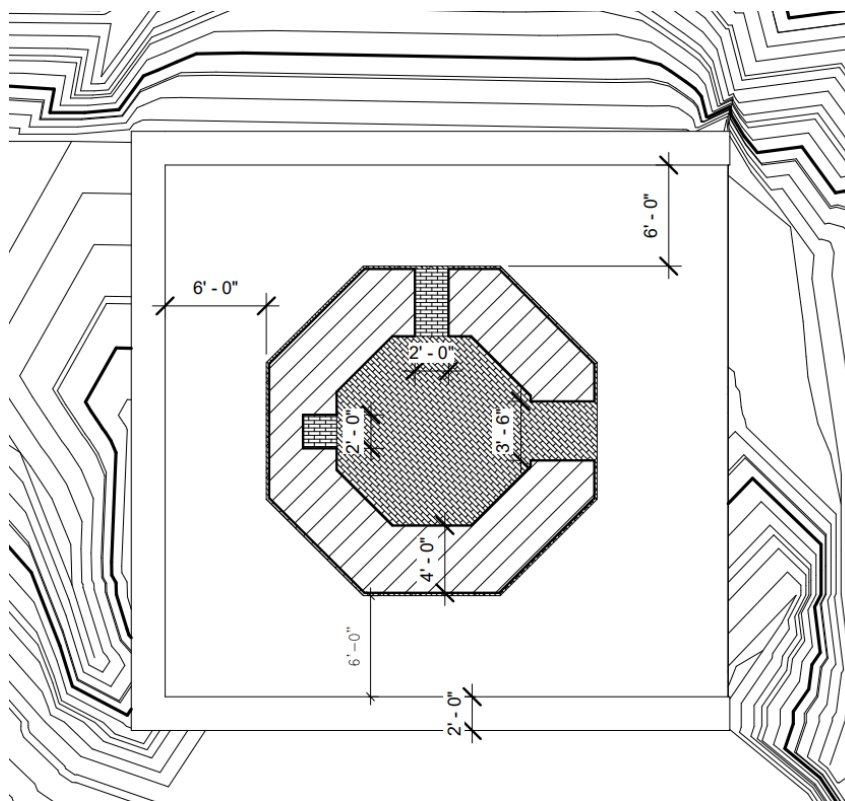


Figure 10 Plan of the Temple

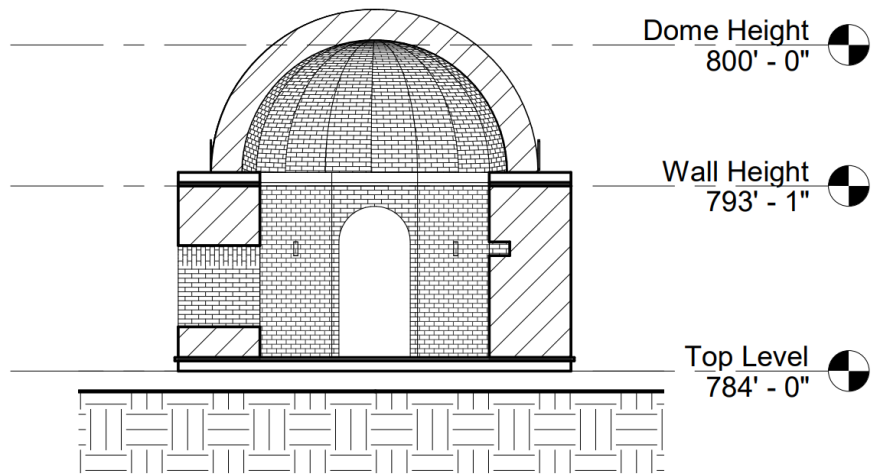


Figure 11 Section of Temple

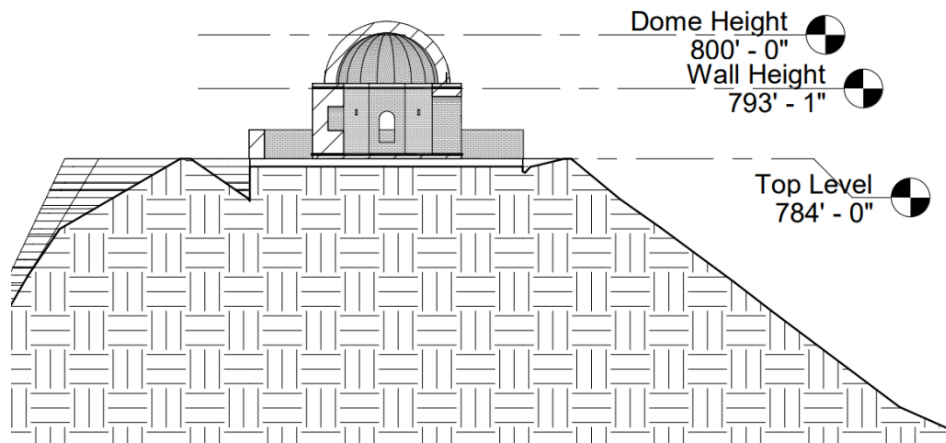


Figure 12 Site Section

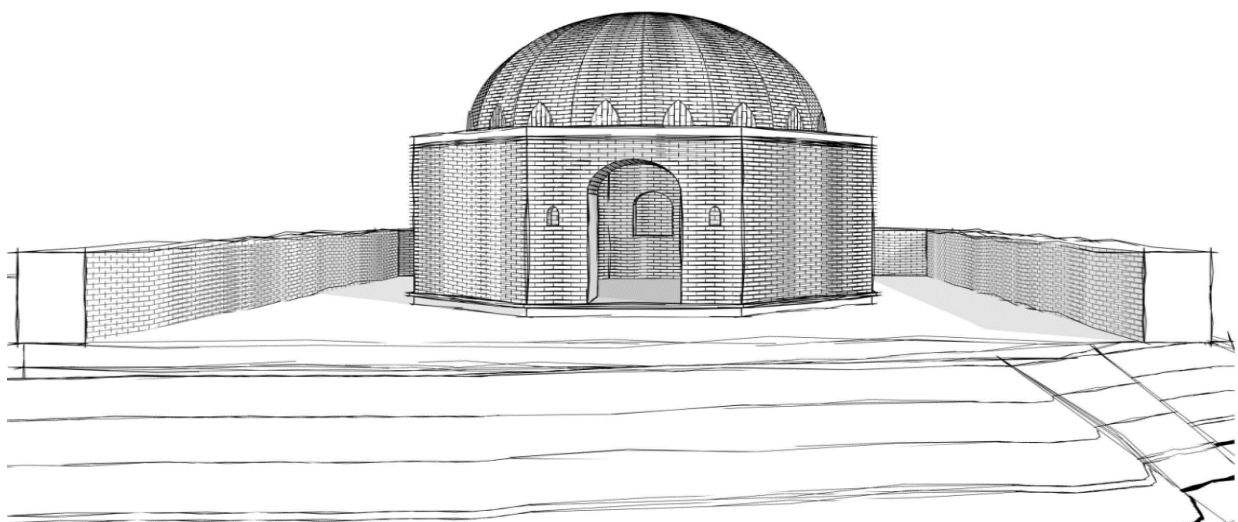


Figure 13 3D of temple

Conclusion

The architectural abandonment of Kusak Fort illustrates a larger epistemic and institutional malfunction within Pakistan's conservation heritage discourse—one that systemically excludes pre-Islamic architecture and disregards community-based stewardship models. This study disrupts the prevalent preservation paradigm, which continues to be grounded in bureaucratic stagnation, religious bias, and urbanism-centric prejudices (Khan A. , 2020) (Meister, 2010). In spite of its rich historical stratification and architectural elaboration, Kusak Fort has been left out both of official conservation lists and collective memory, evidencing a structural lack of interest in pluralistic heritage in the country's architectural history.

In terms of methodology, the research promotes a hybrid model of conservation that favors localized agency and documentation-based preservation over state-driven interventions. The provision of spaces for players like the custodian Janjua Rajput family, both legitimizes ownership of heritage and militates against the homogenizing impulses of top-down restoration policy that tends to reconstruct and sanitize historical truth (UNESCO, 2018) (Tan, 2016). Herein lies the proposed conservation framework. It is not merely technical—indeed, it is political. It exercises a right to tell and conserve a site's past in its own terms, guided by architectural authenticity, vernacular materiality, and ancestral continuity.

Condition survey established that structural deterioration at Kusak Fort is not just an effect of time or weather, but of purposeful abandonment and policy complicity. Material decay of the fort, from weathering of sandstone masonry to biological encroachment in temple foundations, is a symptom of a national conservation regime that prioritizes chosen monuments over others while the latter silently die (Ali & Qureshi, 2019). This selectivity is reflective of heritage hierarchies seen in other post-colonial settings, with preservation repeatedly being equated with national identity such that subaltern architectural histories are left vulnerable.

Critically, the study prioritizes the necessity of a postcolonial architectural historiography that recuperates and re-centers buildings such as Kusak Fort, not as marginal exceptions but as a vital part of grasping the multi-faith architectural continuum of the region. The research findings justify demands for the inclusion of Hindu-era architecture in national conservation practices and academic curricula, thus challenging monolithic narratives and institutional amnesia (Jokilehto, 2007) (Nath, 2013).

Lastly, the example of Kusak Fort raises concerns about the ethical duties of architects, conservators, and policymakers. By prioritizing documentation, community memory, and material fidelity over spectacle or tourism commodification, this research is consonant with critical conservation ethics and offers a useful counter-model for abandoned sites of heritage. The success of efforts like these, however, is contingent upon the greater disciplinary interest in pushing back against ideological exclusions and redefining the canon of what can be considered architectural heritage in Pakistan.

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