

A STUDY OF FORTS AND FORTIFICATION IN THE PUNJAB REGION (1799-1839)

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**in
History**

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**LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB
2024**

DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled “_A Study of Forts and Fortifications of Punjab Region (1799-1839)_____” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of _____Dr. Mohd Ashraf Dar_____, working as _____Assistant Professor_____, in the _____Department Of History_____of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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Abstract

From the final years of “18th century CE to the mid-19th century CE”, Punjab experienced the grandeur of a great “Sikh Empire founded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh”. In making of a great empire, forts and fortifications played a crucial role in this crossroad region of India, which this research explores. Being a considerable power in northern India in the early 19th century external threats were always there, mainly from the expanding British Empire in the south and east and the Afghan forces in the northwest. In response, Ranjit Singh implemented a series of fortification strategies across Punjab, constructing new forts and strengthening existing ones to serve as defensive structures, logistical hubs, and symbols of power and control. This research assesses these forts from a military, logistical and socio-political perspective to find out how they functioned not only as bastions of defense but also as administrative centers, command posts and focal points for regional governance. Under the leadership of “Ranjit Singh”, the Sikh Empire united the diverse regions of the Punjab, stretching from the Indus River in the west to the “Sutlej River” in the east, into one central state. This unity was reinforced by a network of strategically placed forts that guarded the empire's borders and ensured control over its territories. Ranjit Singh's approach to fortification was defensive and proactive.

He recognized the importance of the military structure in consolidating his rule and projecting his power. Forts include prominent structures such as “Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar”, “Phillaur Fort” on the banks of the Sutlej, “Dinanagar Fort” in Gurdaspur and Bajwara Fort in Hoshiarpur. These were located to control critical trade routes, monitor important rivers, and protect fragile frontiers. Each fort served a specific purpose in the empire's military and administrative network and together they provided a defensive structure that enabled the empire to withstand external pressures and respond effectively to threats. This study provides a detailed analysis of each fort, examining their architectural design, defensive capabilities and strategic location within the empire. For example, Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar was the center of Ranjit Singh's strategy. Originally known as the "Fort of Bhangis", it was expanded and strengthened during his reign, becoming a focal point for defense, administration and finance, including the Sikh treasury and arms. There was a weapon. The proximity of the Gobindgarh fort to the Golden Temple also underscored its symbolic importance, linking the empire's political power to its spiritual center. Phillaur Fort was another critical structure located along the Grand Trunk Road and near the Sutlej River, which marked the border between British-controlled territory and the Sikh Empire. The fort was heavily fortified with European military techniques, turning it into a modern defensive stronghold capable of

withstanding artillery attacks and stopping British advances. During this period, each fort in Punjab served a unique purpose for the defense and administration of the empire.

The “Dinanagar fort” served as a northern command center, enabling Ranjit Singh to oversee military operations in the northern regions and launch campaigns in Jammu and Kashmir. Its location near the Himalayan foothills allowed it to act as a buffer against potential attacks from the northwest, especially by Afghan forces. Bajwara Fort, located in Hoshiarpur, was strategically located for the defense of eastern Punjab, securing trade routes and access points through the Shivalik Hills. The location and structure of the fort made it an ideal base for managing resources, protecting key agricultural areas and responding to regional threats. Smaller forts such as the Patti Fort in Tarn Taran and the Lodhi Fort in Ludhiana supported these larger structures by acting as outposts for local defense enabling rapid troop deployment and providing surveillance over specific areas within the empire. The fortification strategy of the Sikh Empire incorporated indigenous architectural traditions and European military innovations, reflecting Ranjit Singh's openness to new defensive techniques. European consultants such as Jean-Francois Allard and Paolo Avitabile contributed to the modernization of Punjab's forts. He introduced elements such as bastions, layered walls and artillery installations that increased their resilience against attacks. These adaptations were particularly evident in forts such as Phillaur and Gobindgarh, where Ranjit Singh's engineers integrated European-style defenses while maintaining the forts' compatibility with local architectural styles and materials. This combination of traditional and modern fortification methods exemplifies the practical approach to military defense of the Sikh Empire, blending foreign influence with local ingenuity to create a resilient network of fortifications. Apart from their military functions, forts played an “Important role” in maintaining the fiscal and economic stability of the empire. As logistical hubs, forts stored provisions, weapons and other vital supplies needed for long-term military campaigns and rapid response to threats. Forts such as Phillaur and Gobindgarh were located along major trade routes, facilitating the movement of goods and resources across Punjab and beyond. This control over trade and supply chains not only strengthened the economic base of the empire but also provided a strategic advantage as it allowed Ranjit Singh the flow of resources needed to regulate trade and maintain his military and administrative apparatus. Allowed to ensure Forts were therefore integral to the empire's ability to maintain a high level of mobility and readiness, enabling it to respond effectively to external and internal challenges.

Apart from this, the forts served as a symbol of “Maharaja Ranjit Singh's authority” and the unity of the “Sikh Empire”. Each fort represented a center of governance and

administration, where local leaders and military officers implemented Ranjit Singh's policies and maintained order in their respective territories. "Gobindgarh Fort" is a symbol of the power and wealth of the Sikh Empire, housing the Sikh treasury, including the famous "Koh-i-Noor" diamond and serving as a focal point for "Ranjit Singh's authority". The forts also contributed to the cultural landscape of Punjab as they became symbols of pride and resilience, representing the Sikh community's commitment to defend their sovereignty and way of life against occupying forces. The heritage of these forts goes beyond their historic military functions as they are recognized as symbols of Punjabi resilience and heritage. Today, many of these forts serve as historical monuments, attracting the attention of historians, researchers and tourists who are keen to delve into the architectural and military history of the Sikh Empire. Examining these forts provides valuable insight into the complex fortification strategies of early 19th-century South Asia and underscores the importance of military structures in shaping the socio-political dynamics of the region. By preserving and studying these sites, both scholars and the public can deepen their understanding of the legacy of the Sikh Empire and its lasting impact on Punjab's history and identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The successful completion of this research work would not have been possible without the guidance, encouragement, and support of many individuals and institutions to whom I express my heartfelt gratitude. First and foremost, I bow before the Almighty for granting me the strength, wisdom, patience, and perseverance required to complete this research work successfully. His blessings have always guided me throughout this academic journey. I express my deepest sense of gratitude and sincere indebtedness to my respected Supervisor, **Dr. Mohd Ashraf Dar**, Assistant Professor, Department of History, School of Distance Education, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, for his invaluable guidance, scholarly insight, constructive criticism, and constant encouragement during every stage of this research. His profound knowledge, academic discipline, and generous support greatly enriched this study and inspired me to pursue historical research with sincerity and dedication. I remain deeply thankful for the time and attention he devoted to improving this work. I am equally grateful to my respected Co-Supervisor, **Dr. Amita Gupta**, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Religion and Civilization (CCRC), Central University of Jammu, for her valuable suggestions, intellectual guidance, and continuous encouragement. Her insightful observations and academic support helped me refine several dimensions of this thesis. I extend my sincere thanks to the faculty members of the Department of History, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, for their academic cooperation and encouragement during the course of my research. I also express my gratitude to the administrative staff of the university for their assistance whenever required. I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the support extended by the staff members of various libraries, archives, and institutions whose resources greatly assisted this research. I am particularly thankful to the library staff of the **Lovely Professional University Central Library**, whose cooperation and availability of scholarly resources proved immensely helpful during the preparation of this thesis. I also express my sincere thanks to the officials and staff of archives, museums, district libraries, and archaeological institutions consulted during the course of this work for providing access to important documents, reports, maps, and historical materials.

My heartfelt thanks are also due to all the scholars, historians, archaeologists, authors, and researchers whose published works, articles, books, and reports have contributed directly or indirectly to this study. Their scholarly contributions laid the intellectual foundation upon which this research has been developed. I would also like to acknowledge the support received during field visits to various forts and historical sites across Punjab. The cooperation of local residents, guides, caretakers, and officials at historical monuments greatly helped in collecting field observations and photographic documentation relevant to this research. I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my parents and family members whose unconditional love, prayers, sacrifices, and moral support remained a constant source of strength throughout my academic journey. Their encouragement sustained me during difficult phases of research and writing. I am deeply thankful to my friends, colleagues, and well-wishers who motivated me continuously and extended their help directly or indirectly in the completion of this thesis. Their companionship and encouragement made this long academic journey more meaningful. Finally, I express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed in any manner toward the successful completion of this thesis but whose names may not have been mentioned individually. Their support and goodwill shall always remain remembered with gratitude.

Introduction

Fortification is generally defined as “something that fortifies, defends, or strengthens” an area of a kingdom.¹ A fortification system thus refers to a structured and coordinated set of “defensive structures and measures” designed to protect a specific area, such as a city, “military base, or strategic location”, from external threats, attacks, or invasions. The purpose of a fortification system is to create a strong position that increases the defender's ability to withstand and repel enemy forces. The traces of fortification go back to Indus Valley Civilization in Indian context and to ancient Greece, Mesopotamia etc in the global context. The evolution of fortification can be traced to the *abattis*², the primitive way of creating hurdles using the available natural resources like branches of the trees and stones. The earliest evidence of the *abattis* comes from Bulgaria³, dating back to 4700 BCE, that is almost 2100 years before the “Indus Valley Civilization”.⁴

In the global context, the timeline of the fortification's dates back to prehistoric times. According to David Delfino:

“In large parts of Europe, walls, fences, berms or ditches around settlements or ritual places became increasingly significant from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Several features have been discovered, relieved and interpreted since the 19th century, giving rise to various terminologies used according to the European regions and the archaeological evidence found: Causewayed camp used in the UK (a site with surrounding banks and/or ditches, with entrances, usually not a settlement); Causewayed enclosure used in the UK (a site with surrounding banks and/or ditches, with entrances, usually not a settlement); Crab's claw used in Italy and France (a site surrounded by ditches with 'crab-claw'-like entrances); Ditched enclosure used in the UK (a site surrounded by ditches, usually with entrances); Earthwork used generically in many regions (any feature, such as a bank, which involves the movement of earth); Einhegung used in central Europe (literally an 'enclosure,' a general term used for sites with encircling features); Enceinte used in western Europe (ditch or fortification surrounding a site); Enclosure used

¹ Definition of fortification. (2018). Merriam-Webster.com. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fortification>

² Abattis is a French term which literally means to create a hurdle in the way.

³ Toshkov, V. (2012, November 1). Bulgaria claims to find Europe's oldest town A prehistoric town unearthed in eastern Bulgaria is the oldest urban settlement found to date in Europe, a Bulgarian archaeologist said Thursday. NBC NEWS; NBC. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna49645182>

⁴ Coningham, R., & Young, R. (2015). The Archaeology of South Asia: From the Indus to Asoka, c. 6500 BCE-200 CE (p. 138). Cambridge University Press.

generically in many regions (general term for any feature surrounding a site); Erdwerke used in central Europe (any feature, such as a bank, which involves the movement of earth)”⁵

In context of the “Indian subcontinent”, the earliest traces of the fortifications can be seen at Mehargarh (Balochistan, present day Pakistan). The archaeological studies of the Mehargarh have revealed the existence of the fortifications long before the exalted Harappan Civilization. In this context, Wood states:

“In the fifth millennium BC builders at Mehrgarh used the long plano-convex brick we find later in the Indus cities; and cotton was already cultivated. In the fourth millennium BC the little town was part of a wide common cultural zone extending into Iran. In about 2500 BC it was abandoned, superseded by a large town five miles away at Naushahro which had massive brick fortifications and impressive buildings including a possible temple. By then we are into the Harappan age proper.”⁶

The earliest known form of human settlement reported till date is at Chopani-Mando near Allahabad in “northern India” on the “banks of the Belan River” dating back to 9,000 BCE.⁷ The possibilities that ensured the construction of the fortifications in these earliest settlements range from the ample availability of the water for irrigation, navigation and the common use to the availability of bulk construction material of the period like the pebbles and a mixture of damp soil and sand. One of the most important requirements of a fort was a regular supply of water, as the forts often were the last location to defend the cities or settlements. In most cases this life-saving element was made available through tank systems and two of the most important things were taken care of during the siege. The first is to have water in abundance to withstand a long siege. One of the major tactics often employed by the invaders was to poison the wells and other sources of water.⁸

One of the major features of the IVC was its division of the settlements especially at Mohenjo-Daro in to two: a citadel [elevated settlement, above the level of the Indus] and the lower town [in line with the top level of Indus] (*Plate 1*). The citadel region was strengthened with brick walls. Kot Diji (3300 BCE) also had robust fortifications, featuring an extensive wall constructed of bricks. The settlement comprised both a citadel complex and a lower residential area. Kalibangan (2920-2550 BCE) was encircled by a substantial mud-brick

⁵ Delfino, Davide & Coimbra, Fernando & Cardoso, Daniela & Cruz, Gonçalo. (2020). Late Prehistoric Fortifications in Europe: Defensive, Symbolic and Territorial Aspects from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Pp.1-4

⁶ Wood, M. (2013). In Search of The First Civilizations (p. 57). Random House.

⁷ Durrans, B., & Knox, R. (1982). *India: Past Into Present* (pp. 15–17). British Museum Publications.

⁸ Fass, V., & Servants of Knowledge. (1986). The Forts of India. In *Internet Archive* (p. 8). [Rupa.Co.](http://www.scribd.com/doc/100000000/India-Forts)

fortress. In the rocky terrains of Kutch and Saurashtra, stone was widely employed for constructing fortified walls, as the region was harbouring ample Mesozoic sandstones.⁹ Dholavira in the Rann of Kutch had an impressive wall made of stone rubble in mud mortar to fortify it. The remnants of this extensive fortification wall and the stone pillars within the fortified region are highly distinctive and not observed at any other Harappan site. While some scholars don't view these constructions as defensive measures, considering them either as protective embankments against floods or structures for social functions, the significance of such fortifications, particularly exemplified by sites like Dholavira, cannot be overlooked. It is improbable that force and conflict were entirely absent over such an expansive area and extended period as seen in the Indus Valley Civilization.¹⁰

Not only the archaeological remains attest the practice of fortification in the early historical India, but we have the literary sources dating back to 1500 BCE that inform us about the existence of the fortification in India for defence purpose. The reference comes from the debate over decline of the IVC. As there are many explanations for the decline of the Harappan civilization. Evidence of which is very little. One of the explanations is that this civilization was destroyed by “Aryan invaders”. which was first introduced by “Ramaprasad Chanda” (1926) but later on negated by him, citing a simbotic section between the two. What makes his early assumption important from the prospective of the present work is the mention of *puras* (fortified habitations) belonging to Harapan people. Mostly whatever remnants we find belonging to the Harapan period, certainly shows the strength of being a fortification or attolent well-structured architectural edifices.

Though, Mortimer Wheeler is generally credited with the foundation of the Aryan Invasion theory which he proposed in 1953He substantiated his theory by citing evidence, including 37 skeletons found at various sites at Mohenjo-daro and mentions of battles and forts in the Vedas. However, scholars quickly challenged Wheeler's hypothesis, pointing out that the skeletons date from after the abandonment of the city and were not located near the citadel. Further analysis of the skeleton by “Kenneth Kennedy in 1994” concluded that the marks on the skulls were caused by abrasion rather than violence.¹¹ As elaborated by Wheeler, various types of

⁹ Rajak, P. K., Chaudhuri, A., Prabhakar, N., & Banerjee, S. (2022). Tracking sources and paleotectonic settings of Mesozoic sandstones in interlinked rift basins of western India: An integrated approach using petrography and heavy mineral chemistry. [Journal of Palaeogeography](#), 11(2), 173–193.

¹⁰ Upinder, S. (2008). History Of Ancient and Early Medeival India from The Stone Age to the 12th Century. In *Internet Archive* (pp. 154, 155). Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd.

¹¹ Bryant, E. (2003). The quest for the origins of Vedic culture: the Indo-Aryan migration debate (p. 160). Oxford University Press.

forts and walled cities in the Rigveda were attacked and demolished by the Aryans, indicating that forts had already been built during the Harappan civilization. The defence at Harappa roughly falls within a parallelogram¹² with a complex system of gates and terraces that also had provisions for guardrooms. Along with it was a platform about 10 to 12 feet high, on which the entire bulwark was built, it was very secure. The entire area against rising water levels during monsoons and floods while the settlements at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were shrinking in size during 1900 BCE. There is a site on the banks of river Bhadar in the then district Rajkot, where the state has shown evidence of double fortifications. Where the entire complex was once home to many farmers and herders.¹³

The fortification of Harappa also signifies the increase in defence measure wall increase in the economic prospects. In context of the developments made during the Vedic period, the use of Iron may be considered perhaps the most important. This period marked the transition from the “Janapadas” (principalities) of the Vedic era to the sixteen “Mahajanapadas” (regional kingdoms) of the “early historical period”, culminating in the rise of the “Maurya Empire” in the “4th century BCE”. The advent of the use of iron is traditionally associated with the eastward migration of the “later Vedic peoples”, who played an important role in this transition. The introduction of iron led to a revolution in material culture, especially in “eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar”. “Scholar Rakesh Tewari” emphasizes that the new “discoveries and their revised dating warrant” a fresh assessment of the history of iron working. According to him, “the evidence shows the early use of iron in other parts of India”, establishing the country as an independent center for the development of iron technology.¹⁴

Going to the Rigvedic literature we find tribes living in fortifications called 'pur' an earth-work fortified by a palisade or possibly sometimes by a stone wall. These are the buildings which the invading hosts besieged and destroyed. A separate reference to the existence of forts is also found in Brahmanical literature. In the annual sacrificial portion of the Aitreya Brahmana the three fires are depicted as three fortresses to prevent the asuras from interrupting the sacrifice. Thus, the Asuras and Rakshasas were destroyed. Here the idea of

¹² Wheeler, M. (1968). *The Indus civilization: supplementary volume to the Cambridge history of India* (p. 29). University Press

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tewari, R. (2003). [The origins of iron working in India](#); new evidence from the Central Ganga Plain and the Eastern Vindhyas. *Antiquity*, 77(297), 536–544.

setting fire to these buildings as a last resort is also emphasized. It would be fair to say that the people of the Vedic age were well aware of the use of forts.¹⁵

One of the major sources for the Mauryan period and the pearl of Indian literature when it comes to state craft, the Arthshastra of Kautilya¹⁶, stresses upon the forts and fortifications [in terms of defence in the modern vocabulary] says:

“In constructing the rampart, it is imperative to ensure a lack of mobility on the outer edges, while discreet openings should be incorporated, remaining inconspicuous. The inner side of these embankments should feature two platforms, both on the front and rear sides, accompanied by a spacious hall. Additionally, a substantial structure with ascending and descending staircases in two tiers, iron boats, sizable bastions positioned atop pillars, and expansive gates is necessary. These structures, known as Atalkas, served as strategic locations for deploying movable defensive weaponry. The fort was adorned with a lotus pond, ensuring a perennial water source. Kumara held special significance for goddess worship, possibly alluding to Kaitya. Typically, the palace housed the tutelary deities and served as a site for prayers for the kingdom's well-being. A similar reference is found in Ramayana, related to Ravana's palace. Storied buildings flanked the wide streets between towers or bastions, with a separate path dedicated to the passage of deities, possibly used for processions during festivals.”¹⁷

Ancient and medieval Indian scriptures describe four major types of forts (*Jal-Durga*, *Giri-Durga*, *Vana-Durga*, *Dhanva-Durga*).¹⁸ *ArthaShastra* is an important text that presents a comprehensive account of ancient Indian statecraft and economy. Traditionally attributed to Kautilya, this attribution has been a matter of debate. The text itself mentions three names: Chanakya, Kautilya and Vishnugupta. Some scholars argue that these names refer to different persons, while others argue that they refer to the same person. According to the latter view, Kautilya or Chanakya is considered a family name, and Vishnugupta is considered a personal name. The prevailing scholarly consensus supports this interpretation, noting that although the names appear differently in different contexts, they clearly refer to the same person within the text. Though the work is credited to Kautilya, but it is also argued that, but in 1915 R. Shama

¹⁵ Dikshitar V.r. Ramachandra. (1944). [War In Ancient India](#). In *Internet Archive* (p. 248). MACMILLAN AND CO. LIMITED.

¹⁶ "Kautilya" was an ancient Indian polymath, who can be called a teacher, writer, strategist, philosopher, economist, jurist and politician. He is traditionally known as "Chanakya or Vishnugupta". He authored the ancient Indian political treatise "Artha Shastra" between the 4th century BCE and 3rd century CE.

¹⁷ Dikshitar V.r. Ramachandra. (1944). *War In Ancient India*. In *Internet Archive* (p. 248-249). MACMILLAN AND CO. LIMITED.

¹⁸ Umair Mirza. (2006). Indian Castles 1206–1526: [The Rise and Fall of the Delhi Sultanate](#). In *Internet Archive* (pp. 8–9). Osprey Publishing; Illustrated edition

Shastri discusses its authenticity and antiquity in the preface to the translated text. He said that Kautilya lived and wrote his famous work Kautilya's Arthashastra between 321 and 300 BCE. In support of his claim, he cites certain religious practices and style and vocabulary in Kautilya's Arthashastra to reflect the state of social milieu depicted in Kautilya's Arthashastra¹⁹. These texts “discuss many aspects of politics and also give advice to rulers”. Mayamat and Mansar are the treatises on the fort building. Among these, the latter identifies eight fort categories as Shivir, Sthaniya, Sanvindhathak, Nigam, Vahineemukh, Dronak, Kolak, and Skandhavar.²⁰ Furthermore, these forts are classified into seven categories based on their surroundings: *Hill Fort*, *Mixed Fort*, *Water Fort*, *Forest Fort*, *Dev Durg*, *Mud Fort*, and *Airin Durg*. *Giri Durg*, or the hill fort, is further classified into three categories, distinguishing whether the fort is situated at the hill's summit, on its slopes, or on the plateau of a hillock surrounded by hills. Bhoja's *Ykti Kalptaru* probes into the specificities of these forts' situations and constructions, encompassing both natural and artificial forms. Samarangan introduces six fort types, namely *Jal Durg*, *Pank Durg*, *Vana Durg*, *Airin Durg*, *Parvtiya Durg*, and *Guha Durg*, corresponding to water, mud, forest, desert, hill, and cave forts.²¹

Nearly all the forts were equipped with covert passages, providing the royal family with an escape route during emergencies without attracting the enemy's attention. For instance, the clandestine route from Nagarkot led the royal family to the riverbank, where a concealed cave-like structure surrounded by shrubs awaited. A boat stationed there was always prepared to transport the royal family to the opposite side of the river. Historical records recount that Raja Sansar Chand utilized this secret path when besieged by enemies, evacuating the fort along with his relatives. Hidden passages from the palaces in Jammu and Bahu fort also directed members of the royal family to the Tawi River, facilitating their transfer to secure locations. The concealed route from Bahu fort is essentially a cave-like structure linking the subterranean chambers of the pyramid-shaped structure designed for ammunition storage with the dungeon, ultimately leading to the outside world. Similarly, a secret path from Jasrota fort guided individuals to the Ujh River, while from Ramnagar palace, it traversed to a nullah behind the palace, opening into a cave that has since been transformed into a religious shrine. This cave is situated beside the nullah, nourished by water flowing from a natural spring named Aksharkund.²² If we look at the fortifications in the geographical form of Indian history, it is

¹⁹ Mishra, S. C. (1989). [A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CRITIQUE OF THE ARTHAŚĀSTRA OF KAUTILYA](#). *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 70(1/4), 145–162

²⁰ Jeratha, A. (2000). *Forts and Palaces of the Western Himalaya*. (p. 13). Indus Publishing.

²¹ *Ibid.* p.13.

²² *Ibid.* p.15

surrounded by natural resources on all sides. It is bounded by the Himalayan Mountain range to the north, “the Bay of Bengal to the east, the Indian Ocean to the south, the Arabian Sea and the desert to the west”. The Indian subcontinent saw many migrant invasions. Here every attacker keeps track of his time. By occupying the lands here, he established his kingdom and built buildings such as temples, palaces, mosques, tombs, inns, forts, etc. From time to time whoever attacked this land would rebuild these buildings. Due to which the appearance of these buildings used to change from time to time. Enhancing existing monuments and capitalizing on trends. Similarly, to make his kingdom stronger, the fort and the city walls were strengthened so that these walls could withstand cannon balls. An important role in this is military dominance which was supported by fortifications. Originally a town was a fort and a fort was a town. These two were synonymous²³. The earliest stone building traditions in the Indian subcontinent had their roots in caves and rock-cut architecture inspired by the practices of itinerant Buddhist monks. These monks later decorated the interior of the caves with intricate carvings. Over time, there was a gradual evolution from rock-cut designs to structures made entirely of stone throughout the region. Monumental architecture of this era was deliberately designed to endure, creating a lasting legacy where most structures were either carved or built using stones.²⁴

“*Muhammad bin Qasim*” was reportedly the “first Muslim to invade India during the Ummayyid period”. He was an Arab general of the Umayyad Khalifa, “Waleed bin Abdul Mulk” and the ‘Nephew and son in law’ of the Governor of Hijaz, Hujaj bin Yousuf who, at the age of 17, invaded the western regions of “the Indian subcontinent” between 708–711 and captured the territories of Sindh and Punjab.²⁵ This was perhaps the first Islamic venture with political backing in India. But, the contacts of India with Arabs predate even rise of Islam. These contacts were economic in nature. The Arab traders regularly visited Gujarat for trade and the even established themselves in the coastal Gujarat which is attested by the existence of a Masjid, the Barwaada or Juni Masjid in Gogha, Bhavnagar, Gujarat. According to local tradition, the masjid belongs to pre-hijra period, the early seventh century.²⁶ According to this

²³ Binod Behri, d. (2020, November 3). [Town Planning in Ancient India: Dutt, Binod Bihari: Free Download, Lending, and Streaming](#): In Chapter VI of this book the author points out that in Vedic literature the word "Puiya" was used as a Sanskrit synonym of a town, a fort or a fort. But later as the area of the towns increased, these fort-towns became obsolete and were replaced by fort-cities.

²⁴ Thapar, B. (2012). *Introduction To Indian Architecture* (p. 16). Tuttle Publishing.

²⁵ Gabrieli, F. (1965). [Muh ammad ibn Qāsim ath-Thaqafi and the Arab Conquest of Sind. East and West](#), 15(3/4), 281–295.

²⁶ Desai, P. M. (2012, May 13). *Oldest Mosque Of India: Village Ghogha, Dist.Bhavnagar,Gujarat,India*.

tradition, the mosque becomes the oldest mosque in India even earlier than the Cheraman Juma mosque of Kerala.²⁷

The Hindu Shahi dynasty emerged in Punjab in the ninth century. Who ruled Punjab and most parts of eastern side of 'Afghanistan'. In the beginning of the "tenth century", the "Turkish Ghaznavi Mahmud Ghazni" attacked India. In that, India was attacked seventeen times from 1000 to 1026 AD. Mahmud Ghazni fought the first war in India against the Hindu ruler Jaipal in 1001 AD. During 1004 and 1006, Ghazni attacked the rulers of Multan and soon Punjab also came under Ghazni. Mahmud Ghazni attacked Nagarkot, Thanesar, Mathura, Kannauj and Saurashtra in the south for the purpose of plunder. He looted the temples wherever he attacked. Some rulers of the Ghazni dynasty-controlled parts of Punjab and Sindh. Which continued till 1135 AD. Ghazni's rule as a power gradually declined and in 1173, Shahabuddin Mohammad Ghori ascended the throne. Mohammad Ghori launched his first campaign towards Multan in 1175 CE and freed Multan from its ruler. Under this campaign he won Kutch from Bhati Rajput's.

The arrival of Muslims (Turks) led to an immense contribution to the architectural activities of India. Their architectural system was quite different. The Muslims introduced a new architectural framework to the existing structures, incorporating the arcuate system as well as the trabeated system of beams, columns and lintels, characterized by arches and domes. In addition, they brought a unique decorative style that emphasized geometric patterns and calligraphy, complementing the traditional iconography of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Over the subsequent 700 years, a synthesis of artistic, architectural, musical, and literary traditions from these religions occurred, giving rise to a unique aesthetic style, a syncretic form generally known as Indo-Islamic architecture. While Islam initially established its Indian empire in Delhi, other regions, including the Deccan, witnessed the emergence of smaller provincial governments. Periodic conflicts arose between Islamic rulers and established Hindu states, yet architecturally, a resilient and enduring cross-cultural influence prevailed.

During the 'British colonial period' in India, forts played a different role compared to their historical purpose. Instead of being used primarily for defence, the British focused on

²⁷ Location of Cheraman mosque (latitude and longitude- [10.213029996028224, 76.20207808157103](https://www.google.com/maps/place/10.213029996028224,76.20207808157103)) and Google Map Location is ([Cheraman Juma Masjid](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Cheraman+Juma+Masjid))

establishing strategic military installations and administrative centers. The British built many forts and military structures during their rule.²⁸ Some notable examples include:

- Fort William in Kolkata was built to serve as the headquarters of the “British East India Company” and later the British Empire in Bengal²⁹.
- The Red Fort in Delhi which was originally built by the Mughals was used by the British as a military garrison and administrative centre.³⁰
- The British made changes in the Lahore Fort and used it as a regional headquarters.³¹
- Kolkata's Howrah Fort was built by the British during the 19th century for defence purposes.³²

Apart from these several other forts were strategically important to the British as they helped maintain colonial control and functioned as enforcers of law and order. Many of these forts have become popular tourist centers, which reflect the architectural and historical influences of different periods. Punjab, often referred to as the "Land of Five Rivers", Occupies an important place in the “history and geography of India”. Located in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, Punjab has served as an “important gateway for various civilizations” entering the Indian subcontinent. Its strategic importance throughout history is underlined by the presence of strong forts and fortress that guarded its borders. This article shows the historical importance of Punjab as a gateway to India and explores the role played by its forts in protecting this important region. The geographical location of Punjab has given it the status of a crossroads of civilizations. From ancient times Punjab served as a transit route or gateway for many invading armies, traders and settlers. Its fertile plains attracted the attention of empires seeking agricultural prosperity and strategic dominance. As a result, Punjab saw “the rise and fall of various dynasties and each left its mark on the history of the region”. Recognizing the strategic importance of Punjab, the rulers-built forts and fortifications to secure their territorial boundaries and gain control over the region. These forts served as military strongholds, administrative centers and symbols of power. They were strategically

²⁸ Chopra, P.N., & Chopra, P. (1999). Monuments of the Raj: British buildings in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka and Myanmar.

²⁹ Travers, R. (2005). [Ideology and British expansion in Bengal](#), 1757–72. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33, 27 - 7.

³⁰ Mukherji, A.S. (2003). The Red Fort of Shahjahanabad.

³¹ Glover, W.J. (2007). Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City.

³² Bose, S. (2012). [Historic Buildings at Chitpur in Kolkata](#): Problems and Prospects Through Urban Conservation and Planning. *disP - The Planning Review*, 48, 68 - 82.

located along trade routes, riverbanks and mountain sides, serving as bastions against external threats.

One of the most famous forts in Punjab is the Gobindgarh Fort³³ in Amritsar, which was originally built by Gujjar Singh, the chief of the Bhangi Misl, in the 18th century “Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire”, later strengthened and expanded the Gobindgarh Fort, which became an important element in the defense of Amritsar and a powerful symbol of Sikh sovereignty in the region. Similarly, Phillaur fort located in Phillaur town of Jalandhar district has historical importance since the Sikh era. It was built in the 17th century by Diwan Mohakam Chand, a prominent military general under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The fort served as a military stronghold and a major administrative center. The fort's strategic location facilitated control over the Grand Trunk Road, an important artery connecting Delhi with Lahore. It played a “major role in the defense of the region against external attacks and served as a base for military operations during various conflicts. Ramgarh Fort is located in Fatehgarh Sahib and was initially built during the “16th century”.

It played an “important role” during the battles between the “Sikh and Mughal armies”. The fort holds historical and religious significance and attracts pilgrims and history buffs. Bahadurgarh Fort³⁴ located near Patiala was built in the “18th century by Maharaja karam Singh”. The fort served, as a “defense stronghold and played a role in conflicts” with other princely states. It now stands as a major tourist destination, offering spectacular views of the surrounding area. Qila Mubarak in Patiala is a historic fort that “dates back to the 18th century”. It was built under the reign of Baba Aala Singh³⁵ and served as the seat of the Patiala royal family. The fort represents a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architectural styles and is now a museum displaying artifacts from the imperial era. Another important fort is Qila Mubarak in Bathinda. The history of which “dates back to the Kushan period”³⁶. Over the centuries, Fort Mubarak was fortified by various rulers including “the Mughals and the British”, standing as a testament to the region's rich “heritage and architectural heritage”. The importance of the forts of Punjab goes beyond their military functions; They also served as centers of culture, commerce, and governance, promoting the exchange of ideas and goods among diverse civilizations. The intricate design and sturdy construction of these forts shows the ingenuity and craftsmanship of the builders. Fortification played an important role in the Punjab during

³³ Punjab Government. (1893). [Gazetteer Of the Amritsar District](#). In *Internet Archive* (pp. 13–15). Punjab Govt.

³⁴ Punjab Government. (1904). [Punjab State Gazetteers Vol Xvii A, Phulkian States](#), Patiala Jind And Nabha With Maps. In *Internet Archive* (p. 187). Punjab Government Press, Lahore.

³⁵ Baba Ala Singh (1691–1765) was the [first king of Patiala princely state](#). *Sikh people*. (2016, July 15).

³⁶ Thorley, J. (1979). [The Roman Empire and the Kushans](#). *Greece and Rome*, 26, 181 - 190.

the emerging strength of Sikhism. As “Sikhism started with Guru Nanak Dev Ji” as its first Guru as well as the founder of the city of “Kartarpur”.³⁷

In the beginning Sikhism faced persecution by the Mughal Empire, who controlled much of the Indian subcontinent at that time. Sikh Gurus and their followers often sought refuge in fortified towns and strongholds. An important example is the establishment of Kartarpur by Guru Nanak Sahib, which became an important center of Sikhism³⁸. Now the Kartarpur is in district Narowal, Punjab, Pakistan. It is northeast side of western Punjab on the “bank of Ravi River”. It is around 4 to 5 km in the Indo-Pak border. After the partition of 1947, Kartarpur went to Pakistan. Negotiations for a corridor connecting the Dera Baba Nanak Gurdwara with the Kartarpur Gurdwara in Punjab, India formally began in 1999. On November 26, 2018, India laid the foundation stone of the corridor.³⁹

Guru Nanak Dev ji made four *Udasi*⁴⁰ in which he travelled far from the Indian subcontinent. According to some modern accounts, he traveled extensively through “Tibet, much of South Asia, and Arabia” in 1496 at the age of 27, leaving his family behind for thirty years.⁴¹ These accounts include Guru Nanak's journey to Mount Sumeru, a prominent place in “Indian mythology”, as well as journeys to “Mecca, Baghdad, Achal Batala and Multan”. where he was engaged in discussions on religious philosophies with various opposition groups⁴². These narratives gained significant popularity during the 19th and 20th centuries and have been preserved in many forms.⁴³ In 1508 AD, “Guru Nanak Dev ji” traveled to Sylhet region in Bengal.⁴⁴ The Baghdad inscriptions serve as the basis for the writings of Indian scholars, who suggest that Guru Nanak traveled to the “Middle East”, with some claiming to have visited “Jerusalem, Mecca, the Vatican, Azerbaijan and Sudan”.⁴⁵ Reportedly, Baba Nanak went to

³⁷ Chhabra, G. S. (1960). [Advanced study in History of the Punjab vol.1](#). In Internet Archive (p. 68). Sharanjit.

³⁸ Jacobsen, K.A. (2017). [Sikhism. Sikh Formations](#), 13, 139 - 142.

³⁹ Syed, F., Waris, M., Alvi, A., & Ali, U. (2021). [Kartarpur Corridor: A Step Towards Indo-Pak Peace](#). *Journal of Historical Studies*, VII.No.II, 256–278. [21_Article%2015%20v7-2.pdf_17.pdf](#)

⁴⁰ Guru Nanak Dev ji traveled 28000 km in all four directions on foot in East, West, North, South, he has been addressed with the word 'Udasi'.

⁴¹ BBC NEWS. (2011). [BBC - Religions - Sikhism: Guru Nanak](#). [Bbc.co.uk](#).

⁴² Callewaert, W. M., & Snell, R. (1994). [According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India](#). In *Google Books* (pp. 26–27). Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.

⁴³ Dilgeer, H. S. (2008). [Sikh Twareekh: Who are the SIKHS](#) (p. 172). THE SIKH UNIVERSITY PRESS.

⁴⁴ Garg, A. (2019, November 12). [How Guru Nanak played a “role” in Ayodhya verdict](#). *The Times of India*.

⁴⁵ Gulati, M. N. (2008). [Comparative Religious And Philosophies: Anthropomorphism And Divinity](#). In *Google Books* (pp. 316–317). Atlantic Publishers & Dist.

see the great Muslim *faqeer* of the period, Bahlul. The place visible in this photo is Guru Nanak Sahib in Baghdad which is shown by the picture of 1931 AD.

When Guru Nanak Dev Ji returned from his journey, he settled in Kartarpur. There he gathered the Sikh community and established Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in 1522. From that time there is a shrine in the Kartarpur Gurdwara that commemorates his last days in 1539. Many consider



Place of guru nanak dev ji in bagdad in 1931, (Source- Inderjit Singh Jhaji , Guru Nanak's Journeys to the Middle East An eyewitness account based on the diary of an Arabic writer who accompanied him, p.42

Kartarpur to be the second holiest place for Sikhs after “Nankana Sahib”, the “*Gurdwara Janam Asthan* (Birthplace)” in Pakistan. Because “Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born” in that Place. “The *Kartarpur Corridor*” on the India-Pakistan border is a ‘visa-free border crossing’ and “religious corridor”. It connects “Gurdwara Darbar Sahib” near “Narowal in Pakistan” with “Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak” in Gurdaspur District, Punjab, India. This crossing enables pilgrims from India to visit the “Kartarpur shrine” in Pakistan. It’s located 4.7 kilometers (2.9 mi) from the “Indo-Pakistan border” on the Pakistani side, without the need for a visa. However, the Pakistan side is not allowed to use this border crossing.

After him, “Guru Angad Dev Ji”, “Guru Amar Das Ji”, and then “Guru Ram Das Ji”, who laid the foundation of the “city of Amritsar and built the ‘Sarovar’⁴⁶ (Holy Pond)”. After him, Guru Arjan Dev ji built the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar⁴⁷, the first brick of which was laid from Sai

⁴⁶ Sarovar, also known as Amrit Sarovar, is a venerable and historic reservoir located in Amritsar, Punjab, India. It holds great religious and historical significance for Sikhs all over the world. This holy lake is famous for the Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple, which stands at its center. Together, the reservoir and the surrounding complex form an important spiritual and cultural center. The reservoir is a large, square-shaped pond measuring about 150 by 150 meters. Its construction began in the 16th century under the leadership of the fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ramdas Ji, and was later expanded and beautified by the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Designed to represent the Sikh principles of equality, unity and purity, the tank is believed to possess healing properties, with its waters said to purify the souls of those who bathe in it. goes

⁴⁷ Shackle, C., & Mandair, A. (2013). [Teachings of the Sikh Gurus](#): Selections from the Sikh Scriptures. In *Google Books* (p. 15). Routledge.

Mian Mir.⁴⁸ This event may be understood in the larger context of universalization of faiths or the unique way of unity in diversity especially in Indian context along with the diversity of the dialects as well as the contributors cutting across all the major faiths and interestingly, the castes. This is the place where Guru Arjan Dev ji compiled the religious scripture of Sikhs "Aadi Granth" or "Guru Granth Sahib". The compilation of the "Guru Granth Sahib" was completed on "29 August 1604" and was first placed in the "Golden Temple in Amritsar" on "1 September 1604". "Baba Buddha" was appointed as the 'first Granthi of Harmandir Sahib'. Later, verses of" Guru Hargobind Ji and Guru Teg Bahadur Ji" were included in the Granth. This holy book has "1,430 pages and contains 5,894 words". It is written in "31 ragas", in which the verses are composed. The Guru Granth Sahib is written in the "Gurmukhi script" and there are many dialects and sub-dialects – such as "Lahindi (westran) Punjabi, Braj, Khadi Boli, Sanskrit and Persian", which together are called "Sant Bhasha" (Language) . The authors of the works of Guru Granth Sahib belonged to different classes and sects, including Hindus, Muslims and low and high castes. The Guru Granth Sahib contains the verses of "six Sikh Gurus: Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Guru Angad Dev Ji, Guru Amar Das Ji, Guru Ram Das Ji, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, and Guru Teg Bahadur Ji". In addition, it contains hymns of "15 Bhagats (such as Bhagat Namdev, Kabir, Ravidas, Sheikh Farid, Trilochan, Dhanna, Beni, Sheikh Bhikan, Jayadeva, Surdas, Parmananda, Pippa, Ramananda, Sadhana and Sen) and 17 Bhattas. are (Including Kal Bhat, Kalashar, Tal, Jalap, Jal, Kirat, Sal, Bhal, Nal, Bhikha, Jalan, Das, Gayand, Sevak, Mathura, Bal and Harbans)". Apart from this, the verse of 'Bhai Mardana, Sundar, Satta aur Balwad' is also included. The "Guru Granth Sahib" is the central "holy book of Sikhism". When the tenth Guru, "Guru Gobind Singh Ji", passed on the torch of leadership, he conferred the title of Guru on the "Adi Granth", thus giving it the name Guru Granth Sahib.⁴⁹

In 1606 AD, Mughal Emperor Jahangir ordered Guru Arjun Dev to be martyred by torture. The 'Guru Arjun dev' was placed on a 'red-hot iron sheet' and boiling hot sand was

⁴⁸ Mir Muhammad Mu'ayinul Islam (1550–1635), [popularly known as Mian Mir](#), was a prominent Muslim Sufi saint who lived in Lahore. He was associated with the Qadiriya order of Sufism and is credited with founding the Mian Khail branch of the Qadiriya order. Deeply spiritual from an early age, he became a disciple of Sheikh Khizr of Qadiriya. At the age of 25, Mian Mir moved to Lahore and settled in the suburb of Begampura, where he became famous by his name. Among his famous disciples was Mulla Shah Badakhshi, while the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh and his sister, Princess Jahanra, were devout followers. Mian Mir was known for his religious tolerance, including Sikhism, and was a close friend of Guru Arjan Dev. In 1589, when Guru Arjan Dev ji planned to build a Gurdwara in the center of the sacred Amrit Sarovar, intended to welcome people of all castes, races and religions, he invited Mian Mir to lay its foundation stone. *Mian Mir | Famous Muslim Sufi saint who settled at Lahore*. (2019, July 5). Web.archive.org.

⁴⁹ Keene, M. (1999). [New Steps in Religious Education](#): Teacher's Support. In *Google Books* (pp. 27–30). Nelson Thornes.

poured over his body⁵⁰. After enduring “five days of continuous torture”, Guru Arjan Dev Ji's body was taken to the banks of the “Ravi River” and immersed in the ‘Ravi River’. Every year “since 1606”, on June 16, Sikhs commemorate the “martyrdom of the fifth Guru and the first Sikh martyr Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji”. Before the arrest, torture and martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Sikhs had nothing to do with weapons or violence. From the time of the first Guru till the time of the fifth Guru, none of the Sikh Gurus carried arms. His teachings emphasized compassion, love, dedication, hard work, devotion to one God, and commitment to peace, harmony, and learning, promoting these values to people of all faiths. As Sikhism developed, especially under the leadership of ‘Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh’, forts were built not only for defense but also served as centers of Sikh authority. The construction of forts within Sikhism began during the leadership of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind Ji. His tenure marked a significant shift in the approach of the Sikh community, integrating spiritual and temporal responsibilities while laying a strong foundation for defense and governance. Guru Hargobind Ji assumed the role of the sixth Sikh Guru in 1606 after the martyrdom of his father Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Who were martyred by Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Recognizing the need to protect the Sikh nation from Mughal oppression, “Guru Hargobind” introduced the concept of “Miri-Piri”, symbolizing the dual aspects of temporal (political/military) and spiritual authority. He wore two swords representing these two aspects and began to militarize the Sikh community. One of the first important constructions started by Guru Hargobind Ji was the "Akal Takht"⁵¹ in 1606 adjacent to the Harimandar Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. The Akal Takht was not a fortress but a symbol of the temporal authority of the Sikhs and served as a central rallying point for the community. The construction of defensive forts, such as Lohgarh Fort and Kesgarh Sahib Fort, symbolized Sikh resistance against oppression and the assertion of their sovereignty. This initiative gained further momentum during the tenure of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Guru Gobind Singh ji not only preserved the existing forts but also expanded and built new forts including Anandgarh and Fatehgarh to strengthen Sikh security. These forts played an important role in protecting the community during times

⁵⁰ Latif, S. M. (1891). [History Of The Panjab](#). In *Internet Archive* (p. 254). THE CALCUTTA CENTRAL PRESS COMPANY, LIMITED.

⁵¹ Akal Takht, originally called Akal Bunga, was built by Guru Hargobind Ji. Located in front of the Harmandir Sahib, this structure was established by the Sixth Sikh Guru as a symbol of political sovereignty and a place to address the spiritual and temporal concerns of the Sikh community. Guru Hargobind Ji along with Baba Budha and Bhai Gurdas built a nine feet high concrete platform. On June 15, 1606, Guru Hargobind Sahib appeared on this platform, holding two swords—one symbolizing spiritual authority (piri) and the other temporal authority (miri). According to historian Kanwarjit Singh Kang, the platform was completed later in 1609. Initially, the place had an open brick platform consecrated by Guru Hargobind Ji, which was later expanded by the construction of a hall. Kanwarjit Singh Kang. (1988). *Punjab, Art and Culture* (pp. 63–74). AATMA RAM & SONS.

of oppression and conflict, facilitating administration, and acting as a powerful symbol of the strength and autonomy of the Sikh community.

Punjab's geographical location made it an important battleground during various conflicts between the Mughal Empire, Afghan invaders and later the emerging Sikh power.⁵² Forts were strategically built to control key trade routes and defend against invading armies. During the Mughal Empire, Punjab was an important region due to its agricultural wealth and major transport routes. It was subject to frequent wars as the Mughals tried to maintain control over it. The fall of the “Mughal Empire” in the 18th century opened the door to Afghan invaders, especially Ahmad Shah Durrani.⁵³ These attacks further destabilized the region but also set the stage for the rise of Sikh power. Led by figures like Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur, and later Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs successfully resisted both the Mughal and Afghan armies. By the early 19th century, the establishment of the Sikh Empire brought stability and prosperity to Punjab. Sikh leaders recognized the important role of military force in protecting their community and faith. Fortifications became a key part of a broader military strategy that included guerrilla warfare, soldier training, and alliances with regional powers. Many forts built during the Sikh era still stand in Punjab today, serving as important historical sites and places of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. Among them is the Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar, which was initially built by Gujar Singh Bhangi and later renovated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire. The culmination of Sikh fortification efforts can be seen during the Sikh Empire (1799-1849) founded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh⁵⁴. Many forts were built and renovated under his rule, not only for defense but also as a symbol of Sikh power and sovereignty.

⁵² Khoja, N. (2018). [*Sovereignty, Space, and Identity: the Politics of Power in Eighteenth Century Punjab*](#). (pp. 4)

⁵³ Banga, I. (1967). [AHMAD SHAH ABDALI'S DESIGNS OVER THE PUNJAB](#). *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 29, 185–190.

⁵⁴ Singh, P., & Fenech, L. E. (2014). [The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies](#). In *Google Books* (p. 59). OUP Oxford.

Forts have been of great importance in the history of Sikhism in Punjab, serving as a means of protecting rights and as lasting symbols of resistance against oppression. They remind us of the challenges faced and overcome by the Sikh community in its journey towards self-determination and religious freedom.

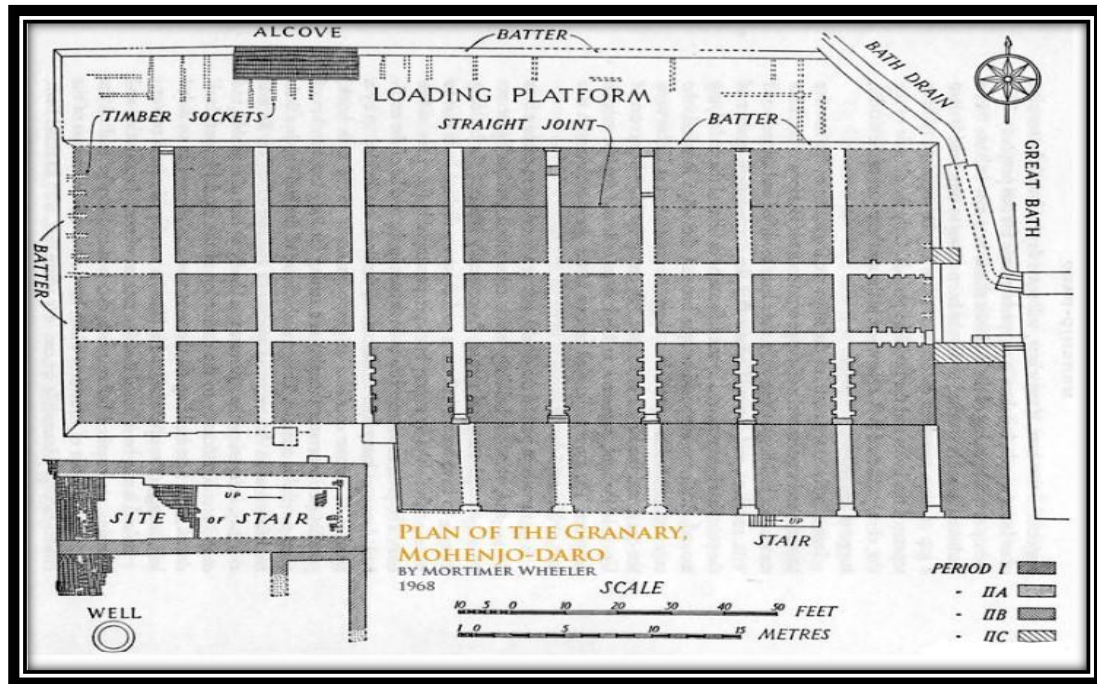


Plate 1: Plan of the Granary at Mohenjo-daro illustrating the organized storage architecture and structural planning of the Indus Valley Civilization. The layout reflects the advanced urban planning, storage management, and architectural engineering practices of the Harappan period, which laid the foundation for later developments in fortified settlements and defensive architecture in the Indian subcontinent.

Source: Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), *Plan of the Granary at Mohenjo-daro*. P. 45
<https://archive.org/details/induscivilizatio0003whee/page/n15/mode/2up?q=granary>

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to understand the strategic, political, and cultural significance of forts in the Punjab region. By examining the historical context and architectural features of these forts, the research will explore how they served as crucial military strongholds, centers of political power, and symbols of cultural identity. The investigation will also analyze the role these forts played in shaping the region's socio-political landscape and their enduring legacy in contemporary Punjab. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the research will contribute to the preservation and appreciation of Punjab's historical heritage.

Review of Literature

The study of forts and fortifications has occupied an important place in historical and archaeological scholarship because fortified structures historically functioned not merely as defensive constructions but also as centres of political authority, military organization, administration, and economic control. Historians working on ancient and medieval India have examined fortifications in relation to warfare, kingship, territorial expansion, and urbanization. However, despite the considerable scholarship available on Indian military history and architecture, the forts and fortifications of Punjab during the Sikh period have not received sufficient independent scholarly attention.

One of the earliest important scholarly works dealing with warfare and military organization in ancient India is V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar's *War in Ancient India*.⁵⁵ Dikshitar discusses the strategic importance of forts in ancient Indian polity and explains that fortifications constituted an essential component of statecraft and defence. Drawing extensively from literary texts such as the *Arthashastra*, the *Mahabharata*, and various Puranic references, he argues that forts in ancient India performed multiple functions including military defence, storage of provisions, protection of rulers, and administrative regulation. His work is particularly valuable in tracing the evolution of Indian fortification traditions from the Vedic period to the early medieval period. However, Dikshitar's analysis remains largely confined to ancient India and does not engage with the regional military developments of Punjab during the nineteenth century. Similarly, Satish Chandra, in his study of medieval Indian polity and administration, highlights the strategic role of forts under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.⁵⁶ According to Chandra, forts became indispensable instruments for maintaining imperial authority over distant provinces and securing important trade and communication routes. He further observes that the increasing use of artillery during the medieval period brought substantial changes in the architectural design of forts, especially with regard to thicker defensive walls, bastions, and artillery platforms. His work provides a broader military context for understanding the later development of Sikh fortifications in Punjab.

The architectural dimension of fortification has been examined by scholars such as Percy Brown and Catherine B. Asher. Percy Brown's *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* provides an important account of the evolution of Indo-Islamic military architecture, including forts, citadels, and fortified urban centres.⁵⁷ Brown analyses the transformation of Indian military

⁵⁵ V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1944)

⁵⁶ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2007)

⁵⁷ Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (Mumbai: D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1981)

architecture after the establishment of Turkish and Mughal rule and explains how military structures gradually adapted to gunpowder warfare. Likewise, Catherine Asher's *Architecture of Mughal India* examines Mughal military architecture in detail and discusses the influence of artillery on the planning and construction of forts in northern India.⁵⁸ These studies are significant for understanding the architectural traditions that later influenced Sikh-period forts in Punjab. However, their primary focus remains Mughal architecture, while Sikh military architecture receives only limited treatment. Burton Stein's *A History of India* also contributes to the understanding of military structures within the larger framework of state formation and political authority in Indian history.⁵⁹ Stein explains how fortified centres emerged as instruments of political consolidation and regional control under different dynasties. Similarly, studies of medieval India by scholars such as Satish Chandra emphasize the relationship between military organization, territorial expansion, and fortification systems. However, Punjab's fortification network during the Sikh period remains insufficiently explored within these broader historical narratives.

With regard to Punjab and the Sikh Empire, important contributions have been made by historians such as J.S. Grewal, Hari Ram Gupta, Khushwant Singh, and Jean-Marie Lafont. J.S. Grewal's *The Sikhs of the Punjab* provides a comprehensive account of the rise of Sikh political authority and the consolidation of the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁶⁰ Grewal discusses the administrative structure, military expansion, and political developments of the Sikh state while also referring to important centres such as Lahore and Amritsar. However, the fortification system itself is not examined in detail as an independent subject of historical enquiry. Hari Ram Gupta's multi-volume *History of the Sikhs* remains one of the most detailed works on the political and military history of the Sikh Empire.⁶¹ Gupta extensively discusses the military campaigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the expansion of Sikh territories, and relations with the Afghans and the British. His work contains important references to forts such as Gobindgarh, Attock, Multan, and Phillaur, yet these forts are discussed mainly in the context of military campaigns rather than as part of an integrated network of military and administrative institutions. Khushwant Singh's *A History of the Sikhs* also provides important insights into the military and political organization of the Sikh Empire.⁶² Singh highlights the modernization of the Sikh army and the employment of European officers for military training and reorganization. His work demonstrates how the Sikh

⁵⁸ Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

⁵⁹ Burton Stein, *A History of India* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998)

⁶⁰ J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

⁶¹ Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. V (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982)

⁶² Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs: 1469–1839* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Empire adopted several European military practices in order to strengthen its defence system against external threats. However, detailed analysis of fortification architecture and strategic military geography remains outside the principal scope of his work. Jean-Marie Lafont's *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Lord of the Five Rivers* is particularly important in understanding the modernization of the Sikh military system during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁶³ Lafont discusses the contribution of European officers such as Jean-Baptiste Ventura, Jean-François Allard, Paolo Avitabile, and Claude Auguste Court in reorganizing the Sikh army along European lines. He explains how European military techniques influenced artillery organization, infantry drill systems, and frontier defence. Although Lafont's work indirectly contributes to understanding Sikh fortifications, it does not specifically analyse the architecture, distribution, and socio-economic role of forts in Punjab.

Apart from political histories, archaeological and architectural surveys conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India and various Punjab District Gazetteers provide descriptive accounts of important forts such as Gobindgarh Fort, Phillaur Fort, Lahore Fort, and Qila Mubarak.⁶⁴ These reports contain useful details regarding construction style, restoration history, architectural features, and historical background. However, they remain largely descriptive and do not adequately explore the broader strategic, economic, and political significance of these forts during the Sikh period.

A review of the existing historiography therefore reveals that most scholars have concentrated either on the political history of the Sikh Empire or on broader themes of Indian military architecture. Very few studies have attempted to examine forts and fortifications in Punjab as interconnected centres of military strategy, governance, trade regulation, communication, and regional integration. Furthermore, the relationship between geography, military architecture, frontier defence, and imperial consolidation during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has not been studied comprehensively. The present study seeks to address this historiographical gap by undertaking a detailed examination of forts and fortifications in Punjab between 1799 and 1839. Unlike previous studies that focus only on political narratives or architectural description, the present research analyses forts as multifunctional institutions that played an important role in military defence, administration, economy, communication, and imperial authority. By integrating historical, architectural, military, and geographical perspectives, the study attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the fortification system of Punjab during the Sikh period.

Historiographical Positioning

⁶³ Jean-Marie Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Lord of the Five Rivers* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁶⁴ Archaeological Survey of India Reports, Punjab Circle; Punjab District Gazetteers.

The existing historiography on Punjab and the Sikh Empire has largely developed along three major lines of enquiry. The first group of studies primarily focuses on political and dynastic history, particularly the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, territorial expansion, diplomatic relations, and the administrative structure of the Sikh Empire. Works by historians such as J.S. Grewal, Hari Ram Gupta, Khushwant Singh, and Sita Ram Kohli belong substantially to this tradition.⁶⁵ The second category of scholarship examines broader questions of military organization and warfare in medieval and early modern India. Scholars such as Satish Chandra and V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar discuss forts mainly within the framework of imperial defence, state formation, and military strategy, but their studies remain pan-Indian in scope and devote limited attention to Punjab specifically.⁶⁶ A third category of studies consists of architectural and archaeological surveys focusing on the structural and stylistic features of forts and military buildings. Works by Percy Brown, Catherine B. Asher, Archaeological Survey of India reports, and Punjab District Gazetteers provide important descriptive information regarding construction patterns, architectural styles, and conservation history.⁶⁷ However, these studies generally remain descriptive and do not adequately connect military architecture with regional politics, economic regulation, frontier defence, and imperial consolidation.

The present study differs from earlier scholarship by examining forts and fortifications in Punjab not merely as architectural monuments or isolated military structures but as interconnected institutions functioning within a wider network of military strategy, administration, communication, trade regulation, and state formation during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The study therefore attempts to integrate political history, military history, geography, and architectural analysis in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Sikh-period fortifications in Punjab.

Research Gap

Although a considerable body of scholarship exists on Indian military history, Mughal architecture, and the political history of the Sikh Empire, the forts and fortifications of Punjab during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh have not received adequate independent scholarly attention. Existing studies have generally approached forts either as isolated architectural

⁶⁵ J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. V (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982); Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs: 1469–1839* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1968).

⁶⁶ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2007); V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1944).

⁶⁷ Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Islamic Period* (Mumbai: D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1981); Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Archaeological Survey of India Reports; Punjab District Gazetteers.

monuments or as incidental components within broader political narratives. Consequently, the wider strategic, administrative, economic, and regional significance of Sikh-period fortifications remains insufficiently explored.

Most historical works on the Sikh Empire primarily focus on political developments, military campaigns, diplomatic relations, and the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, while the fortification system itself has rarely been examined as an integrated institutional network. Similarly, architectural studies largely emphasize stylistic description and structural features without sufficiently analyzing the relationship between military architecture, regional geography, frontier defence, communication routes, and imperial consolidation.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the impact of European military influence on the evolution of Sikh fortifications during the early nineteenth century. The role of artillery warfare, frontier military planning, and the adaptation of indigenous fort architecture to changing military technologies remains comparatively understudied in the context of Punjab. Likewise, the regional functions of forts in Majha, Doaba, Malwa, and frontier zones have not been examined comprehensively within a unified analytical framework.

The present study seeks to address these gaps by examining forts and fortifications in Punjab between 1799 and 1839 as interconnected centres of military defence, administration, political authority, trade regulation, and regional integration. By combining historical, architectural, geographical, and military perspectives along with field-based observations, the study attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of the fortification system of the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Objectives of the Study

- To classify and create a typology of forts in Punjab, focusing on architectural styles and historical categories.
- To analyze materials collected during field surveys, with special emphasis on metal artifacts and binding materials.
- To conduct a comparative study of architectural features and surviving structural elements across selected forts.
- To examine the interconnections among forts in Punjab and neighboring regions, focusing on their military, strategic, and socio-economic roles.
- To trace the chronological development and architectural evolution of these forts over time.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for its contributions to multiple disciplines, including historical studies, architecture, and regional politics. By uncovering the strategic roles and historical relevance of Punjab's forts, the study enriches the understanding of the region's military and political history. The architectural analysis will provide insights into the unique design elements and construction techniques, offering valuable knowledge to the field of historical architecture. Additionally, the study's exploration of the forts' influence on regional politics and cultural identity will enhance the understanding of how these structures shaped and continue to impact Punjab's socio-political landscape.

Scope

The study focused on the forts located within the Punjab region, encompassing both the Indian and Pakistani sides of Punjab. The temporal scope spanned from the medieval period, when many of these forts were constructed, to the colonial era, examining how their roles and significance evolved over time.

Limitations:

Several limitations were encountered during the research, including restricted access to some forts due to political boundaries and security concerns, particularly in cross-border regions. Additionally, the availability of primary sources and historical records was limited, affecting the depth of historical analysis. The study also faced challenges in obtaining detailed architectural data for some forts due to deterioration or lack of documentation. These constraints were acknowledged, and alternative methods were employed to address them where possible.

Methodology

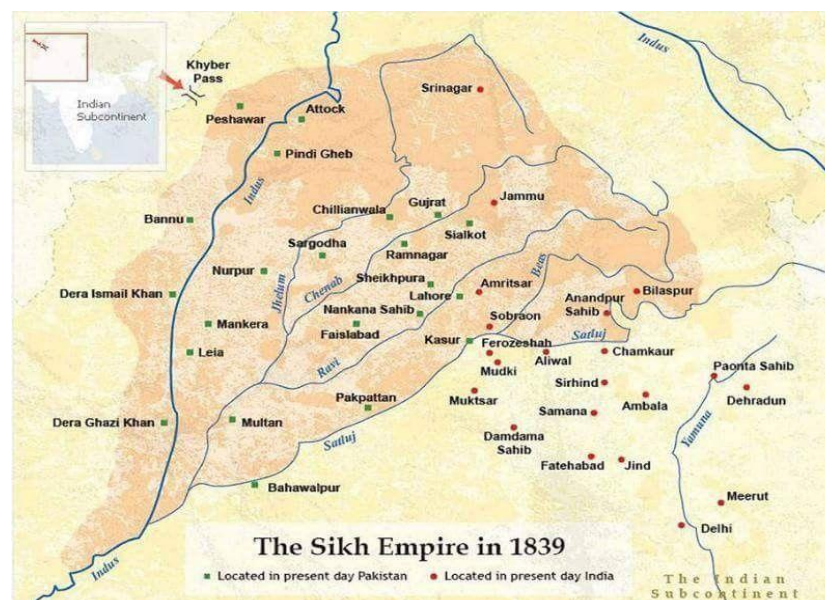
The research employed a combination of archival research, field studies, and analysis of historical texts to achieve its objectives. Archival research involved examining historical records, maps, and documents related to the forts, sourced from libraries, museums, and government archives. Field studies were conducted to gather first-hand data on the architectural features and current conditions of the forts, including site visits, photography, and measurements. The analysis of historical texts provided context and interpretation, allowing for a deeper understanding of the forts' strategic, political, and cultural significance. This multidisciplinary approach ensured a comprehensive examination of the forts in Punjab.

Chapter 1

Historical and Geographical Profile of Punjab

Overview of the Punjab Region in the 18th and 19th Century:

Punjab, situated in the 'northwest region' of the Indian subcontinent, possesses a diverse and distinctive geography. Located centrally within the Indian subcontinent, Punjab serves as a remarkable fusion of geography, history, and culture. Its appellation, translating to "Land of Five Rivers," denotes the intricate network of watercourses formed by five rivers – 'Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum'. These rivers not only supply water for agriculture and sustenance but also sculpt the region's topography, crafting extensive fertile plains renowned for their agricultural abundance. The richness of the soil and the accessibility of water have fostered Punjab's renown as "The Granary of India." The annual monsoon season, typically spanning from June to September, brings essential rainfall vital for supporting agricultural endeavours. Towards the north, the lofty and majestic Himalayan Mountain range serves as a natural barrier between India and its northern neighbour's. This mountainous terrain offers breathtaking vistas characterized by snow-capped peaks, deep valleys, and picturesque hill stations. Additionally, the Himalayas play a pivotal role in supplying water to Punjab, as the region relies on the snowmelt from these mountains to replenish its rivers and reservoirs.



DALJIT K A U R (DS. (2022). *Maharani Jind Kaur-Iron Lady of the Sikh Empire*. IJRAR.

https://www.academia.edu/88126700/Maharani_Jind_Kaur_Iron_Lady_of_the_Sikh_Empire

Geographically, Punjab is divided into two sections – "Pakistani Punjab (to the west) and Indian Punjab (to the east)". Pakistani Punjab shares its border with Afghanistan, while Indian Punjab is surrounded by neighbouring Indian states – 'Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal

Pradesh, and Haryana'. During the Mahabharata era, Punjab was referred to as Panchanda⁶⁸. The influence of the Indus Valley Civilization extended over a significant portion of the Punjab region, owing to cities like Harappa (now situated in Punjab, Pakistan). The Vedic civilization also thrived across much of North India, including Punjab, along the banks of the Saraswati River. This civilization profoundly shaped the "subsequent cultures" of the "Indian subcontinent". Punjab has been a part of several illustrious ancient empires, including 'Gandhara, Mahajanpada, Nanda, Maurya, Shunga, Kushan, Gupta dynasty, Palas, Gujjar-Pratihara, and Hindu Shahis'. The easternmost extent of *Alexander the Great's* conquests reached along the Indus River. Agriculture prospered, and urban centers such as 'Jalandhar and Ludhiana' experienced economic prosperity.

Due to its geographical location of Punjab endured continuous assaults and invasions from both the "west and the east", facing attacks from "Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Turks, and Afghans". Consequently, Punjab endured centuries of warfare and conflict. Despite this tumultuous history, its heritage embodies a distinctive culture that amalgamates 'Hindu, Buddhist, Persian/Parsi, Central Asian, Islamic, Afghan, Sikh, and British influences'. The establishment of the city of 'Takshila in Pakistan' is credited to Taksh, the son of Bharat (brother of Lord Ram). Takshila was renowned for Takshila University, recognized as the oldest university globally, where illustrious scholars like the renowned Vedic philosopher and statesman Chanakya Muni imparted knowledge. Under the Mauryan Empire, Takshila flourished as a prominent hub of learning and intellectual discourse, now designated as a United Nations World Heritage Site. The era of interaction between Punjab and various Persian empires holds significant importance, with some regions either integrating into the empire or retaining autonomy while paying tribute to the Persian rulers. Subsequently, during the Mughal era, when Persian became the administrative language, 'Persian architecture, poetry, art, and music profoundly' influenced the region's cultural landscape. Persian remained Punjab's official language until the advent of British rule in the mid-19th century, following which it was replaced by 'Urdu' as the official language.

The state of Punjab is further divided into three major regions - Malwa, Doaba and Majha - each with its own distinct characteristics.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ PERSIDENCY, B. (1896). [Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency](#). In *Google Books* (p. 11). Printed at the Government Central Press.

⁶⁹ Grover, P. S., & Singh, D. (2011). Discover Punjab: Attractions of Punjab. In *Google Books*. Parminder Singh Grover.

1.1 Malwa Region

The Malwa region between the ‘Sutlej and Ghaggar rivers’ in Punjab is called Malwa.⁷⁰ Malwa, in the southeast, is primarily an agricultural region and known for cotton and wheat production. Agriculture in Malwa has played an important role in sustaining Punjab's economy and giving it the status of "Grainer of India". Historical heritage of Malwa Ancient cities like Patiala and Bathinda have played important roles. Malwa is known for ancient wonders like Patiala Fort and Qila Mubarak Bathinda. The region is an agricultural powerhouse, contributing significantly to Punjab's economy. The lush fields of Malwa grow a variety of crops including wheat, rice, cotton, and fruits. Folk music and dance forms of Malwa, such as Malvai Giddha and Malvai Boli, enthrall the audience with their energetic and lively performances.

Sr. No	Malwa Districts in Punjab, India
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1	Mohali
2	Patiala
3	Ropar
4	Sangrur
5	Sri Muktsar Sahib
6	Moga
7	Mansa
8	Malerkotla
9	Ludhiana
10	Firozpur
11	Fazilka
12	Fatehgarh sahib
13	Faridkot
14	Bathinda

1.2 Doaba Region

The area between ‘Sutlej and Beas’ river in Punjab is called Doaba.⁷¹ It comes in the central part of Punjab. It is often called the "heart" of Punjab and is known for its fertile soil and agricultural diversity. Moreover, the strategic location of the region made it a center of trade and commerce and further enhanced its importance within the state. Majha in the Northwest is steeped in history and culture. It acts as a bridge between the Majha and Malwa regions, blending their distinct traditions. Doaba is famous for its fertile land, making it a rich agricultural region. It is famous for its vibrant and cosmopolitan cities like Jalandhar and Phagwara. The cultural diversity of the Doab is reflected in the festivals celebrated including Lohri, Holi and Baisakhi. The region is home to a significant population

Sr. No.	Doaba district
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1	Hoshiarpur
2	Kapurthala
3	Jalandhar
4	Sahid Bhagat Singh Nagar

⁷⁰ Deol, H. (2003). *Religion and Nationalism in India*. Routledge.

⁷¹ Singh, G., & Internet Archive. (2006). Sikhs in Britain: the making of a community. In *Internet Archive* (p. 37). London; New York: Zed Books.

<https://archive.org/details/sikhsinbritainma0000sing/page/36/mode/2up?q=doaba>. Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and Kapurthala, all located in the Doaba region.

of Punjabi Pravasi Indians (non-resident Indians), who contribute to its economic and social fabric.⁷²

1.3 Majha Region

In Punjab, the area between Ravi and Beas is called Majha.⁷³ This area is on the northern side of Punjab. Majha holds great importance as the birthplace of Sikhism. Including historical places like Amritsar, the spiritual and ‘cultural center of Sikhism’. The region has seen the rise of Sikhism and has played an important role in ‘shaping the religious’ and ‘cultural landscape’ of Punjab. Majha's rich heritage adds to the cultural tapestry of the state with its vibrant festivals and traditions. The Majha region in the northwestern part of Punjab is known for its brave people. Historically it served as an important border

Sr. No.	Majha Districts in Punjab, India	Majha Districts in Pakistan
1	Pathankot	Lahore
2	Amritsar	Gujrat
3	Tarn Taran	Faisalabad
4	Gurdaspur	Sahiwal
5		Narowal
6		Okara
7		Kasur
8		Gujranwala
9		Sheikhupura
10		Nankana sahib
11		Sialkot
12		Mandi Bahauddin
13		Hafizabad
14		Sargodha
15		Jhelum

during various invasions due to its proximity to the Pakistan border. Majha is home to the holy city of Amritsar. Along with the Harmandir Sahib located in Amritsar is a spiritual and cultural symbol. The region is known for its martial traditions. Highlighted by heroic tales of Sikh warriors. Bhangra, the energetic Punjabi folk dance, has its roots in Majha.

1.4 Historical

Punjab, the land of five rivers as it is generally known, has a long and rich historical background. It spans over pre-history, proto-history and the historical periods. The pre-historical phase is marked by the presence of the *Homo erectus* in the famous Pothohar Plateau.⁷⁴ Research on Soan culture within Punjab's historical context reveals an ancient period marked by the use of basic stone tools along the valleys of the region's rivers. This culture represents one of the earliest human settlements, demonstrating a close connection with the

⁷² Ibid. 37.

⁷³ over, P. S., & Singh, D. (2011). Discover Punjab: Attractions of Punjab. In *Google Books*. Parminder Singh Grover.

⁷⁴ Chauhan, P. R. (2008). Soanian lithic occurrences and raw material exploitation in the Siwalik Frontal Zone, northern India: a geoarchaeological perspective. *Journal of Human Evolution*, 54(5), 591–614.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhevol.2007.09.017>

environment through hunting and gathering for sustenance. Its existence predates the emergence of more sophisticated civilizations in the area, providing valuable understanding of early human societal evolution in the Indian subcontinent.⁷⁵ Soanian tools were made from rocks found in rivers and streams in the Siwalik hills. They used mainly quartzite pebbles, cobbles, and sometimes larger rocks. These rocks were shaped into different tools like choppers, discoids, scrapers, and cores. You can find these tools in different amounts and types at different Soanian sites.⁷⁶ The Pothohar region is a testimony of the Neolithic activities as well stretching the historical band of the region to 5000 BCE.

The Harappan Civilization, also known as the 'Indus Valley Civilization', flourished around '3300 to 1300 BCE' in the region of 'Modern-day Pakistan' and northwest India. It was one of the world's earliest urban civilizations, characterized by advanced urban planning, sophisticated architecture, and a complex system of governance. However, it wasn't until the unearthing of nearby Mohenjodaro on the banks of the 'Indus River' in the 'Larkana District' of Sindh in 1922 by RD Banerjee that the true significance of Harappa as a key city of the ancient Indus Civilization became apparent. Sir John Marshall, the then Director General of the 'Archaeological Survey of India', coined the term 'Indus Civilization' to characterize the culture found at 'Harappa and Mohenjodaro', a fitting designation considering the geographical association with the Indus and the presence of urban settlements indicative of a developed civilization. However, following India's independence, the Archaeological Survey of India favored referring to it as 'Harappan' or 'Mature Harappan'. The recent attribution of the culture as Saraswati-Sindhu and the endeavor to link it with Vedic traditions lack substantial authenticity. Though there are studies which authenticate its existence and bring it out of the fold of myth⁷⁷. The Government of Haryana recently launched a project in this regard as well.⁷⁸ The Indus Basin encompasses the region along the Saraswati River, yet there is no valid rationale geographically to associate the small seasonal river Saraswati with Sindhu (Sindh). Similarly, the numerous settlements discovered around the dry riverbeds of the Hakra, Ghaggar (of which the Saraswati is a tributary), and Chautang do not substantiate this conjecture. These

⁷⁵ Lycett, S. J. (2007). Is the Soanian techno-complex a Mode 1 or Mode 3 phenomenon? A morphometric assessment. *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 34(9), 1434–1440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2006.11.001>

⁷⁶ Thomas Thomson Paterson, & Drummond, H. (1962). Soan, the Palaeolithic of Pakistan. Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Pakistan.

⁷⁷ Chatterjee, A., Ray, J., Shukla, A. D., & Pande, K. (2019). On the existence of a perennial river in the Harappan heartland. *Scientific Reports Nature*, 9(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-53489-4>

⁷⁸ Indian, E. (2021, February 15). Haryana to launch revival of Saraswati river, to construct dam, barrage & reservoir at Adi Badri. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/saraswati-river-revival-haryana-7190173/>

settlements likely emerged due to the absence of flood control measures since the rivers were still relatively small at the time, with cultivation gradually diminishing as the rivers dried up, leaving behind archaeological sites. Hence, there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that the Ghaggar-Hakra valley was the most densely populated region or the principal area of the Indus Civilization.⁷⁹

The 'Bronze Age' was succeeded by the Iron Age. During this age, the economy became more agrarian with least room for the pastoralism and finally led to the state formation in India. The period is better known by the religious attribution of the age as that of Vedic Age, the period of the divinely revealed scripture of Hinduism in Sanskrit language, the Vedas. Due to introduction of Iron, there was immense progress in the agriculture [especially due to use of plough share to till deeper and the hard soils and the iron axe to clear the forest], there was increase in the making of more lethal weapons [in context of that period], the weapons of Iron which were used in the inter-tribal conflicts [*gavishti* as they are mentioned in the Vedas]. So, the period being turbulent with the use of more effective weaponry, might have led to more sophisticated defense measure including better fortifications. The later Vedic phase led to the major political developments as well as social developments. This phase is generally known as the phase of Janapadas that led to the rise of empires like Magadha in India.⁸⁰ Punjab, being the heartland of the *Sapt-Sindhu*, experienced the developments mentioned in the supra paragraph in context to weaponry and the defense system thereof.

The rise of 'kingdoms and dynasties' in Punjab is described in the ancient 'Hindu epic' Mahabharata. The earliest known local king of the region was known as Porus in 326 BC. who fought, the famous "*battle of Hydaspes*"⁸¹ against Alexander. His kingdom stretched between the 'Hydaspes (Jhelum) and the Essicinus (Chenab) rivers'⁸². Strabo held the region to include about 300 cities. He (along with Abisares) had a 'hostile relationship' with the 'kingdom of Taxila'⁸³ which was ruled by his extended family. When Alexander's⁸⁴ forces crossed the

⁷⁹ Habib, I. (2015). The Indus Civilization by Irfan Habib. In *Internet Archive* (p. 13). Aligarh Historians Society.

<https://archive.org/details/TheIndusCivilizationByIrfanHabib/page/n25/mode/2up?view=theater>

⁸⁰ K S Narang. (1969). History Of The Punjab KSN. In *Internet Archive* (pp. 1, 2). U.C. KAPUR & SONS Kashmere Gate Delhi. <https://archive.org/details/history-of-the-punjab-ksn/page/n5/mode/2up>

⁸¹ "Battle of Hydaspes" was known as "Battle of Jhelum". It was fought between Alexander and Pours in 326 BCE.

⁸² Bosworth, A. B. (2008). *Conquest and empire: the reign of Alexander the Great* (pp. 125–130). Cambridge Univ. Pr.

⁸³ Kallidaikuridri Aiyah Aiyar Nilakanta Sastri. (1967). *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas* (p. 56). Motilal Banarsidass.

⁸⁴ Connolly, P. (2012). *Greece and Rome at war* (p. 66). Frontline Books.

‘Indus’ during their eastward migration, they were probably welcomed at Udabhandapura⁸⁵ by Omphis⁸⁶, the then ruler of Taxila. When ‘Abisares’ accepted submission, ‘Porus’ refused to submit. Because of this, Alexander tried to compete with Porus. Thus began the ‘Battle of the Hydaspes’ in 326 BC at which the exact site remains unknown. The battle is considered to have resulted in a decisive ‘Greek victory’⁸⁷. However, ‘A.B. Bosworth’ warns against an uncritical reading of Greek sources that were clearly exaggerated. ‘Alexander’ later founded two cities – ‘Nicaea’ on the site of the victory and ‘Bucephalus’ on the battlefield, in memory of his horse, which died soon after the battle. Later, tetradrachms would be made showing ‘Alexander’ on horseback, armed with a ‘sarissa’, and attacking a pair of Indians on an elephant. Porus refused to ‘surrender and rode’ on an elephant until he was wounded and his strength defeated.

In the Ancient Punjab, the rulers who ruled this region include the Maurya’s, Kushan’s, Guptas and Pushyabhutis etc. The Mauryas` played a crucial role in shaping Punjab's history. Between 322 BCE and 185 BCE, under Emperor Chandragupta Maurya's leadership, the Mauryan Empire extended its dominion over Punjab, leaving a profound mark on the region's political, economic, and social fabric.⁸⁸ During this era, Punjab served as a key location connecting Central Asia and India. The Mauryan Empire's expansion into Punjab not only solidified their control but also facilitated access to key trade routes. Centralized governance enabled effective management of resources, tax collection, law enforcement, and the promotion of trade and agriculture in Punjab. Chandragupta Maurya's reign witnessed the implementation of various policies aimed at fostering economic prosperity in Punjab, including the development of trade routes, irrigation systems, and agriculture, leading to overall regional growth. This prosperity, coupled with centralized governance, underscored Punjab's strategic significance for the Mauryan Empire and the wider region.⁸⁹ There are many possibilities that the along with the influence on polity, there was a strong influence on the architecture as well especially the fortifications, being the frontier region with utmost economic and strategic importance. The claims are strengthened by the excavation of the Buddhist sites like Taxila. As we are aware that it was during the Mauryan period that Buddhism reached to the Himalayas

⁸⁵ Bosworth, A. B. (2008). *Conquest and empire: the reign of Alexander the Great* (pp. 125–130). Cambridge Univ. Pr.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 125-130.

⁸⁷ Kallidaikuridri Aiyah Aiyar Nilakanta Sastri. (1967). *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas* (p. 56). Motilal Banarsidass.

⁸⁸ Devya Arora. (1962). [Studies In Indian History And Civilization](#). Buddha Prakash. In *Internet Archive* (pp. 70–85). Buddha Prakash.

⁸⁹ Sastri, K. A. N. (1957). [A Comprehensive History of India Vol. II: The Mauryas and Satavahanas](#). INDIAN CULTURE (pp. 2-3), Orient Longmans, Calcutta.

and across it via the zealous monks selected by the Asoka. Towards Gandhara, Majjanthaka was sent after the conclusion of the 3rd Buddhist Council.⁹⁰ From this perspective, we may infer an impact on the religious scenario of the Punjab that may have led to the creation of religious architecture, stupas, monasteries etc in Punjab. Following the formidable Mauryan Empire, the rise of the Kushan Empire marked another influential chapter in Punjab's history. Thriving from the 1st to 3rd century CE, the Kushan Empire brought about substantial transformations in the political, cultural, and economic realms of the region. Originating in Central Asia, the Kushan Empire expanded its dominion into Punjab and adjacent territories⁹¹. Renowned for their military might and administrative acumen, Kushan rulers established control over Punjab, effectively administering the region and fostering stability and tranquility.

A noteworthy facet of Kushan rule was their emphasis on fostering trade and commerce in Punjab. Recognizing Punjab's strategic position as a key trade nexus linking Central Asia, China, and the Indian subcontinent, Kushan rulers actively promoted trade along the Silk Road⁹², facilitating the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures. This catalyzed a flourishing trade network and economic prosperity in Punjab, with increased commercial activities benefiting the region. The Kushan Empire's influence on religion in Punjab was equally significant. Encouraging religious tolerance, Kushan rulers were patrons of various faiths including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism. Their reign witnessed a surge in Buddhist promotion in Punjab, evidenced by the growth of Buddhist sites like the Bamiyan Caves⁹³, attracting visitors globally, thereby establishing Punjab as a vital center within the Kushan Empire. Under Kushan rule, Punjab experienced a cultural renaissance characterized by a fusion of diverse artistic traditions. Embracing a syncretic approach, Kushans melded their Central Asian heritage with the multifarious cultural elements of the Indian subcontinent, giving rise to the iconic Gandhara art style. This distinctive blend of Hellenistic, Indian, and Central Asian influences produced magnificent sculptures and artworks, showcasing Punjab's rich artistic and cultural tapestry. Moreover, the Kushan Empire played a pivotal role in shaping Punjab's religious landscape. While acknowledging the plurality of religious beliefs, Kushan

⁹⁰ Bibhuti Baruah (2000). *Buddhist Sects and Sectarianism*. Sarup & Sons. p. 453

⁹¹ G. Bongard-Levin. (1979). [India in the Kushana and Gupta Periods](#). In *Internet Archive* (pp. 116–118). Progress Publishers

⁹² Silk route was the busiest route in ancient times. It got its name as the Silk Route because from the 4th century BC to the 2nd century CE, the special item traded through this route used to be silk.

⁹³ Higuchi, T., & Barnes, G. (1995). [Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan](#). *World Archaeology*, 27(2), 282–302.

rulers championed religious tolerance and sponsored the construction of Buddhist stupas, monasteries, and Hindu temples, which served as hubs of religious and intellectual activities.

Although the Kushan Empire's sway in Punjab waned due to invasions from other regional powers, its legacy endured, shaping Punjab's identity and heritage. The cultural exchanges and artistic achievements fostered by the Kushans, particularly the development of Gandhara art, continue to inspire artists globally, underscoring the empire's enduring impact on Punjab's cultural heritage. The Kushan Empire's reign in Punjab stands as a testament to its significance in the broader narrative of the Indian subcontinent's history. After the decline of the Kushan Empire⁹⁴, the Gupta Empire emerged as a dominant force in Punjab, exerting a profound influence on the region. Flourishing from the 4th to the 6th century CE, the Gupta Empire ushered in a golden age marked by significant advancements in art, culture, trade, and governance. Renowned for their administrative prowess and support for the arts, Gupta rulers expanded their authority over Punjab and neighboring territories. Their reign brought about a period of political stability and economic prosperity in the region. Efficient governance and agricultural reforms implemented by the Gupta Empire resulted in heightened agricultural output in Punjab, bolstering its economic growth. A notable achievement of the Gupta Empire in Punjab was the promotion of trade and commerce. Encouraging trade along established routes like the Silk Road, which traversed Punjab, facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures, fostering economic prosperity and cultural diversity. Urban centers such as Taxila and Sanghol flourished as bustling trade hubs, showcasing the Gupta Empire's commitment to fostering commercial activities in Punjab.

The Gupta era in Punjab witnessed significant artistic and cultural advancements. The empire's patronage of the arts led to a 'flourishing of literature, sculpture, and architecture'. Characterized by intricate stone carvings and exquisite metalwork, Gupta art reached its zenith during this period. Iconic bronze sculptures of deities and elaborate cave temples like those at Bamiyan exemplify the artistic achievements of the Gupta era. Furthermore, the Gupta Empire's influence on religion in Punjab was profound. While Hinduism remained the dominant religion, Gupta rulers displayed tolerance towards other faiths. They supported various religious institutions and facilitated the spread of Buddhism, particularly the Mahayana school, in Punjab. This religious pluralism contributed to the rich religious and philosophical traditions that thrived during the Gupta period in Punjab. Despite facing regional conflicts and invasions, the Gupta Empire's reign in Punjab gradually waned. However, its contributions to

⁹⁴ Arihant Experts. (2019). *Know Your State Himachal Pradesh*. Arihant Publications India limited.

the region's history and cultural heritage are undeniable. The Gupta period represented a time of prosperity, intellectual advancement, and artistic expression in Punjab. The Gupta Empire's emphasis on governance, trade, support for the arts, and religious tolerance contributed significantly to the region's prosperity and cultural vibrancy. The artistic and intellectual achievements of the Gupta era continue to resonate, highlighting the enduring legacy of the Gupta Empire in the historical narrative of Punjab.

The 'Pushyabhuti Empire', also known as the 'Vardhana dynasty', ruled 'northern India' during the '6th and 7th centuries'. The kingdom reached its peak under its last ruler Harsha Vardhana⁹⁵ (590 – 647 CE). Harshvardhana's kingdom incorporated much of North and North-West India into his kingdom. Following the decline of the 'Gupta Empire', the 'Pushyabhuti dynasty' emerged as a dominant force in Punjab, significantly influencing the region's 'political and cultural landscape'. Ruling from the 6th to the 8th centuries CE, the Pushyabhutis introduced substantial changes in governance, religion, and art in Punjab. Primarily recognized as regional monarchs, the Pushyabhuti rulers expanded their control over Punjab, fostering stability and tranquility after a period of uncertainty. Their adept administration spurred significant economic progress through infrastructure enhancements such as roads, bridges, and other vital economic facilitators. Under the reign of the Pushyabhuti dynasty, Punjab experienced a notable religious transformation. With a predominant adherence to Shaivism, the rulers' patronage of this sect led to the construction of several impressive temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. Noteworthy temples like Jwalamukhi and Chintpurni, particularly in the 'Kangra district' of modern-day 'Himachal Pradesh', underscored the dynasty's dedication and investment in religious affairs in Punjab.

Moreover, the Pushyabhuti era in Punjab witnessed a flourishing of artistic expression. The region witnessed a proliferation of exquisite stone carvings, sculptures, murals, and other artistic works. Artisans of the period explored various themes, including deities, animals, daily life, literature, and mythology, establishing an artistic legacy unique to the dynasty. This era witnessed the creation of magnificent sculptures like the renowned *Ekamukhalinga*, a monolithic statue of Lord Shiva with a single face, and the *Bhageshwari* relief, a sculpture reflecting the dynasty's interest in creatively merging religion and politics. The Pushyabhuti dynasty's rule in Punjab also represents an intriguing period of cross-cultural exchange, particularly with neighboring regions. Situated along the famed Silk Road trade route, Punjab

⁹⁵ Ganguly, D. C. (1981). *A Comprehensive History of India: pt. 1. A.D. 300-985*. (p. 291). People's Publishing House.

welcomed diverse cultural and intellectual influences, leading to the emergence of several distinctive schools of art and architecture in the region. The Pushyabhutis left an enduring impact on Punjab's history and culture in the post-Gupta Empire period. Their adept governance and patronage of art, architecture, and religion, manifested in the construction of remarkable architectural and cultural landmarks, continue to be celebrated in the region. The Pushyabhuti era epitomized innovation and flourishing cultural exchange, contributing to the richness and diversity of Punjab's cultural heritage.

1.5 Medieval period

The Taki Kingdom⁹⁶ (Taank Kingdom or Taki Dynasty), a lesser-known realm in Punjab, rose during the medieval period in the region. Governed by the Taki Rajput clan, renowned for their bravery and military skills, its inception traces back to the 14th century when the Rajputs established dominion in the area. Geographically, the Taki Kingdom stretched across a significant expanse of present-day Punjab, encompassing fertile lands and the region's mighty rivers. Its strategic position played a pivotal role in shaping its history and prosperity.⁹⁷ The Taki kingdom in Punjab, a region with a rich history, has been the subject of various studies.⁹⁸ provides a comprehensive account of the kingdom's political and social dynamics during the 19th century.⁹⁹ explores the impact of the shift from kingdom to democracy on spiritual institutions in South Punjab, including the Taki kingdom. Nesbitt¹⁰⁰ (1990) and Hashmi¹⁰¹ (2014) both discuss the influence of religion and ethnic identity on the region's history, shedding light on the complex interplay of these factors in the Taki kingdom's development. The rulers of the Taki Kingdom were noted for their adept administration and diplomatic ties with neighboring realms. They adeptly balanced autonomy with strategic alliances, fostering growth and extending influence throughout Punjab. A standout feature of the Taki Kingdom was its rich cultural life. The ruling Rajput clan generously supported the

⁹⁶ The Panjab Past and Present. (1977). (p. 9). Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University.

⁹⁷ Xuanzang. (1996). *Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, The (pp. 97–100). W.M. Keck Foundation Series.

⁹⁸ Ballhatchet, K. A. (1971). Barkat Rai Chopra: Kingdom of the Punjab, 1839–45. (Vishveshvaranand Institute Publication 438. Vishveshvaranand Indological Series, 43.) xx, 497 pp., 13 plates, map. Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Institute, 1969. Rs. 40. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 34(3), 674–675. doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00129313

⁹⁹ Saeed, D.M., & Naeem, M.A. (2021). Sufism in South Punjab, Pakistan: From kingdom to democracy. *Journal of Peace, Development & Communication*. doi.org/10.36968/jpdc-v05-i02-12

¹⁰⁰ Nesbitt, E. (1990). Religion and identity: The Valmiki community in coventry. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 16(2), 261–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1990.9976180>

¹⁰¹ Hashmi, R.S., & Majeed, G. (2014). Saraiki Ethnic Identity: Genesis of Conflict with State. *Journal of Political Studies*, 21, 79.

arts, literature, and architecture, resulting in the construction of majestic palaces, temples, and forts across their domain. Becoming a hub of learning, it attracted scholars, poets, and artists from afar. The Taki Kingdom boasted a robust economy primarily reliant on agriculture and trade. Punjab's fertile lands ensured bountiful harvests, offering a steady revenue stream. Furthermore, trade routes traversing Punjab bolstered economic prosperity, linking the kingdom to distant markets.

Despite periods of stability and growth, the Taki Kingdom encountered numerous challenges. Caught in power struggles and conflicts typical of medieval Punjab, invasions, territorial disputes, and dynastic rivalries tested the resilience of its rulers. As political dynamics evolved, the rise of the Mughal Empire in the 16th century led to the Taki Kingdom's eventual subjugation while retaining some autonomy. This heralded a new era in its history. Although absorbed into the Mughal Empire, the Taki Kingdom's legacy endures in Punjab's cultural heritage. Its architectural wonders, tales of valor, and rich heritage of the Taki Rajputs continue to fascinate historians and enthusiasts alike. Representing a captivating chapter in Punjab's past, the Taki Kingdom, with its skilled rulers and vibrant culture, stands as a testament to the region's diverse history and lasting legacy. Following the decline of the Taki Kingdom, another notable dynasty that emerged in Punjab was the Hindu Shahi dynasty. Also referred to as the Kabul Shahi dynasty, it was founded by rulers of the Shahi clan hailing from the Kabul Valley. The advent of the Hindu Shahis signified a significant transformation in Punjab's political scenario. Their reign commenced in the 9th century and endured for numerous centuries. They established their capital in the city of Waihind, situated in modern-day Pakistan. Under the Hindu Shahi dynasty's rule, Punjab witnessed a period of relative stability and cultural progression. The dynasty's rulers were recognized for their patronage of the arts, architecture, and religion, fostering the growth of a vibrant literary and artistic milieu within their realm. One notable figure of the Hindu Shahi dynasty was King Jayapala¹⁰², renowned for expanding the kingdom's territory and influence. He emerged as a prominent ruler celebrated for his military campaigns and defiance against foreign incursions. However, the dynasty encountered significant challenges, particularly from the expanding Ghaznavid Empire. Mahmud Gaznavi¹⁰³, the ruler of Ghazni, launched several invasions into Punjab,

¹⁰² "Jaipal was the ruler of the Hindu royal dynasty from 964 to 1001 AD. He ruled the territory extending from Laghman in the west to Kashmir in the east and from Sirhind to Multan". The epithets of the "Bari Kot inscriptions" record his full title as "Parama Bhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Sri Jayapaldeva".

¹⁰³ "Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Sabuktigin" is commonly known as "Mahmud Ghaznavi". 'He was the Sultan of Ghaznavi Empire. who ruled from 998 to 1030. By the time of his death his kingdom had grown into a vast military empire, stretching from northwestern Iran to the Punjab in the Indian subcontinent, Khwarazm in Transoxiana, and Makran.'

ultimately overcoming the Hindu royal dynasty's resistance. Despite their courageous endeavors, the Hindu Shahis gradually succumbed, and Punjab fell under Ghaznavid rule.

The downfall of the Hindu Shahi dynasty not only marked the conclusion of their governance but also instigated substantial shifts in Punjab's religious landscape. The advent of the Ghaznavids introduced Islam to the region, resulting in the gradual conversion of a substantial portion of the populace. Nevertheless, the Hindu Shahi dynasty's impact on Punjab's history and culture remains significant. Their support for Hinduism and encouragement of the arts left an enduring imprint on Punjab's cultural legacy. Architectural remnants from their era, such as the renowned Shahi Mosque in Lahore, stand as testimony to their magnificence and architectural ingenuity. Furthermore, the Hindu Shahi dynasty's resistance against external incursions showcased the resilience and determination of Punjab's inhabitants. Their defiance against outside forces exemplifies Punjab's rich history of resistance and fortitude. The Hindu Shahi dynasty played a pivotal role in shaping Punjab's history. Their governance ushered in stability, cultural advancement, and architectural splendor to the region. Despite facing formidable adversaries, the Hindu Shahi rulers left an indelible mark on Punjab's cultural and historical landscape. The enduring legacy of the Hindu Shahi dynasty serves as a testament to Punjab's diverse and vibrant past.

The emergence of Islam and the establishment of the Emirate of Multan marked a significant turning point in Punjab's history following the decline of the Hindu Shahi dynasty, leading to profound shifts in the region's religious, cultural, and political dynamics. With Islam's arrival in Punjab, the Emirate of Multan¹⁰⁴ rose as a pivotal center for Islamic governance and influence. Situated in present-day Pakistan, Multan held a strategic position along major trade routes, becoming a hub of economic activity and cultural exchange. Under various Muslim dynasties such as the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, and Delhi Sultanate, Multan saw the implementation of Islamic governance systems, the introduction of Islamic legal and administrative practices, and the dissemination of Islamic teachings. The Emirate of Multan played a vital role in spreading Islam in Punjab. Scholars and Sufi mystics, known as Sufis, journeyed to Multan and other parts of Punjab, propagating Islam and founding Sufi orders. These Sufi saints played a key role in converting the local populace to Islam, resonating with their spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, the Emirate of Multan became renowned for its architectural achievements, particularly in building magnificent mosques and shrines. Notably,

¹⁰⁴ Minahan, J., & Internet Archive. (2012). [Ethnic groups of South Asia and the Pacific](#) : an encyclopaedia (pp. 257–259).

the Multan Fort, with its distinctive architectural style, stood as a testament to the Emirate's splendor. Politically, the Emirate of Multan experienced periods of independence and submission to larger regional powers. While maintaining some autonomy, it sometimes served as a buffer state against invasions, including those from the Mongols. However, it eventually fell under the control of the Delhi Sultanate, integrating Multan into medieval India's broader political landscape. The advent of Islam and the rise of the Emirate of Multan fostered a cultural fusion in Punjab. Persian, Central Asian, and Islamic traditions blended with local customs, shaping a unique Punjabi-Islamic identity. Moreover, Multan's agricultural prosperity and its position along trade routes facilitated economic growth and cultural exchange. The city gained renown for its handicrafts, textiles, and commercial activities, attracting merchants from distant lands. The spread of Islam, the introduction of Islamic governance, and the ensuing cultural synthesis reshaped Punjab's religious, cultural, and political landscape. The Emirate of Multan emerged as a significant center in Punjab, leaving a lasting imprint on the region's heritage.

The Delhi Sultanate, spanning from 1206 to 1526, held a crucial position in Punjab's history, laying the groundwork for the region's political, social, and cultural advancements, thus shaping Punjab's identity in the years to come. Throughout this era, Punjab underwent significant shifts in its political landscape. The Delhi Sultanate established a centralized governance system with Lahore as its administrative hub, extending its authority over the region and ushering in stability and prosperity.¹⁰⁵ A notable contribution of the Delhi Sultanate in Punjab was the construction of impressive tombs, mosques, and fortresses. These structures not only served as religious and administrative centers but also showcased the artistic and cultural prowess of the Sultanate. The tombs and mosques were adorned with intricate designs and calligraphy, reflecting the Islamic architectural style of the time.¹⁰⁶ The construction of these monuments provided a sense of grandeur and serenity, adding to the architectural heritage of the region. The architectural achievements of the Delhi Sultanate in Punjab were not only symbols of power and authority but also played a role in shaping the cultural landscape of the region. The mosques founded under the Sultanate were significant centers of religious and social activities, reflecting the influence of Islamic teachings and practices.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the fortresses built during this period served as strategic military outposts, highlighting the Sultanate's focus on defense and security.

¹⁰⁵ Lapidus, I. M. (2014). *A history of Islamic societies* (pp. 391–394). Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁶ Khan, S. N. and Bilal, M. (2020). [The architecture plan of qutb complex \(delhi\) and its decoration analysis](#). Perennial Journal of History, 1(1), 49-68

¹⁰⁷ Budi, B. S. (2005). [A study on the history and development of the javanese mosque](#). Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering, 4(1), 1-8.

While the architectural legacy of the Delhi Sultanate in Punjab is well-documented, it is essential to recognize the environmental impact of certain practices in the region. Agricultural activities, such as crop residue burning in Punjab¹⁰⁸, have been identified as sources of air pollution that affect urban areas like Delhi.¹⁰⁹ The burning of crop residues in Punjab has been linked to increased levels of particulate matter and air pollutants in Delhi¹¹⁰, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental factors between these regions. These structures not only enriched the architectural landscape of the region but also played a role in shaping religious and social practices.

Monuments like the Qutub Minar, the Jama Masjid in Delhi, and the Tomb of Sher Shah Suri in Sasaram stand as enduring symbols of the Sultanate's architectural prowess. The Sultanate's presence facilitated the spread of Islam in Punjab, with scholars of religion arriving in the region, playing crucial roles in its spiritual and intellectual transformation. Sufi orders like the Chishti and Qadiri emerged, further solidifying Punjab's Islamic identity. However, the Sultanate faced its own set of challenges in Punjab. Rebellions such as the Khokhar, Barani, and Satnami uprisings posed threats to the Sultanate's stability. Additionally, the Sultanate confronted periodic invasions, notably by the Mongols, endangering its hold over Punjab. The zenith of the Sultanate's rule in Punjab occurred during the reigns of Alauddin Khilji¹¹¹ and Muhammad bin Tughlaq, expanding their dominion into parts of South India. The Sultanate's governance in Punjab significantly influenced the region's heritage. Its centralized governance and administrative systems fostered economic growth, trade, and commerce. The era witnessed the emergence of religious and intellectual figures, contributing to Punjab's cultural amalgamation and syncretism. The Sultanate's administrative practices and cultural legacy laid the groundwork for subsequent political and cultural developments in the region. The period also witnessed the rise of religious and intellectual figures whose legacies continue to shape Punjabi culture and society to this day.

¹⁰⁸ Kulkarni, S. H., Ghude, S. D., Jena, C., Karumuri, R. K., Sinha, B., Sinha, V., ... & Khare, M. (2020). [How much does large-scale crop residue burning affect the air quality in delhi?](#). Environmental Science & Technology, 54(8), 4790-4799.

¹⁰⁹ Cusworth, D. H., Mickley, L. J., Sulprizio, M. P., Liu, T., Marlier, M. E., DeFries, R., ... & Gupta, P. (2018). [Quantifying the influence of agricultural fires in northwest india on urban air pollution in delhi, india](#). Environmental Research Letters, 13(4), 044018.

¹¹⁰ Sarkar, S., Singh, R. P., & Chauhan, A. (2018). [Crop residue burning in northern india: increasing threat to greater india](#). Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres, 123(13), 6920-6934.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The Langah Sultanate, a Muslim dynasty that governed the Punjab region of South Asia, reigned approximately from 1454 to 1525 CE¹¹². They saw significant environmental and climatic dynamics during their reign. Studies have shown that the Punjab region experienced changes in precipitation patterns, with an increasing trend noted in the annual and autumn seasons.¹¹³ Additionally, the region faced challenges related to groundwater quality, with high levels of uranium detected in drinking water samples, surpassing safe limits set by regulatory bodies.¹¹⁴ These environmental factors could have influenced various aspects of life in the Langah Sultanate, including agriculture and public health.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, the impact of climate change on agriculture in the Punjab region has been a subject of research, highlighting the implications for food security¹¹⁶. Studies have indicated that climate variability¹¹⁷, including high temperatures, can affect crop yields, particularly of Kharif rice, in different parts of Punjab¹¹⁸. The findings underscore the vulnerability of agricultural practices in the region to changing climatic conditions. Moreover, the social and economic landscape of Punjab has also been studied, revealing insights into poverty distribution and social exclusion. Research has identified high poverty enclaves in specific regions of Punjab, emphasizing the need for targeted development interventions¹¹⁹. Additionally, social exclusion, which deprives individuals or groups of participation in essential social processes, has been a concern in rural areas of Punjab¹²⁰. The ruling elite of the Langah era hailed from diverse backgrounds, encompassing Turkish, Central Asian, Indian,

¹¹² Ahmad Hasan Dani, & Masson, V. M. (1992). *History of civilizations of Central Asia* (p. 305). Unesco.

¹¹³ Nawaz, Z., Li, X., Chen, Y., Guo, Y., Wang, X., & Nawaz, N. (2019). Temporal and spatial characteristics of precipitation and temperature in punjab, pakistan. *Water*, 11(9), 1916. <https://doi.org/10.3390/w11091916>

¹¹⁴ Bajwa, B., Kumar, S., Singh, S., Sahoo, S. K., & Tripathi, R. M. (2017). Uranium and other heavy toxic elements distribution in the drinking water samples of sw-punjab, india. *Journal of Radiation Research and Applied Sciences*, 10(1), 13-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrras.2015.01.002>

¹¹⁵ Saini, K., Duggal, V., & Bajwa, B. (2017). Assessment of radiation dose due to intake of uranium through groundwater and its carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic risks in southwest and northeast punjab, india. *Indoor and Built Environment*, 27(7), 983-991. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1420326x17699978>

¹¹⁶ Abbas, S., Kousar, S., Shirazi, S. A., Yaseen, M., & Latif, Y. (2021). Illuminating empirical evidence of climate change: impacts on rice production in the punjab regions, pakistan. *Agricultural Research*, 11(1), 32-47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40003-021-00548-w>

¹¹⁷ Abbas, S. and Dastgeer, G. (2021). Analysing the impacts of climate variability on the yield of kharif rice over punjab, pakistan. *Natural Resources Forum*, 45(4), 329-349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-8947.12230>

¹¹⁸ Abbas, S., Kousar, S., & Khan, M. S. (2021). Climate change as a precursor to the food security; empirical evidence over punjab regions, pakistan. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-852972/v1>

¹¹⁹ Cheema, A., Khalid, L., & Patnam, M. (2008). The geography of poverty: evidence from the punjab. *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, 13(Special Edition), 163-188. <https://doi.org/10.35536/lje.2008.v13.isp.a10>

¹²⁰ Hameed, A. and Qaiser, Z. (2019). Estimating social exclusion in rural pakistan: a contribution to social development policies. *Business & Economic Review*, 11(1), 103-122. <https://doi.org/10.22547/ber/11.1.5>

and Persian ancestries. This Sultanate's emergence signaled a notable shift in the region's political landscape, previously under the control of Indic Rajputs until the advent of Muslims.

“Sultan Qutbuddin, head of the Langah clan, established the Langah Sultanate in Multan in 1445. The reign of Sultan Hussein I, who ruled from 1469 to 1498, is considered the best of the Langah Sultans.”¹²¹

The Langah Sultanate left a profound impact on the Punjab region, evident in the transformation of its urban and rural sectors, as well as its trade and commerce. Throughout the Langah period, urban centers experienced significant alterations with the construction of mosques, madrassas, and commercial markets, serving as symbols of the Sultanate's Islamic identity and fostering trade activities. Furthermore, the rural landscape of Punjab underwent changes under the Sultanate's rule, with substantial contributions to agriculture and the trade of agricultural produce. Land management policies implemented by the Sultanate enhanced the productivity of Punjab's farmers and facilitated the development of basic infrastructure, bolstering the region's economy and income. These advancements facilitated the establishment of trade connections with neighboring regions, positioning Punjab as a commercial hub and stimulating its economic growth. Additionally, this network of trade facilitated interactions with centers of learning and cultural exchange, furthering the social and cultural development of the region. Moreover, the Langah Sultanate played a significant role in promoting the Sufi tradition of Islam in the Punjab region, contributing to the spread of the faith among the populace. The unique language, art, music, and cuisine of present-day Punjab owe a considerable debt to the influence of Sufi mystics and scholars from the Langah period.

From the 15th century to the 18th century, Punjab experienced significant shifts in its political, social, and cultural landscapes. This era marked the ascendance and decline of different ruling families, invasions, the emergence of Sikhism, and the dominance of the Mughal Empire. In the early 15th century, the Lodhi dynasty emerged in Punjab. Originating from Pashtun roots, the Lodhis established their authority in Delhi and expanded their influence into Punjab. The Lodhi dynasty came to power after defeating the previous ruler, Ibrahim Lodhi, with the support of Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire¹²². Babur's victory over Ibrahim Lodhi was facilitated by an invitation from the Rajput rulers who sought assistance in

¹²¹ Baloch, N., & Rafiqi, A. (1998). [*THE REGIONS OF SIND, BALUCHISTAN, MULTAN AND KASHMIR: THE HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SETTING. UNESCO.*](#)

¹²² Tabish, K. M. and Sajid, S. (2018). Muslims in India and the process of development. Contemporary Social Sciences, 27(4), 93-110. <https://doi.org/10.29070/27/58312>

overcoming the Lodhi dynasty's rule¹²³. This event not only led to the establishment of the Mughal Empire but also signified a shift in power dynamics in the region. However, their grip on the region remained fragmented and contested, with local rulers asserting their autonomy. By the late 15th century, Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, was born in Punjab. His teachings challenged prevailing religious and societal norms, advocating for principles like equality, humility, and monotheism. Sikhism gradually gained adherents, and Sikh communities, known as Sangats, began to thrive across Punjab. During this time, Punjab was also witnessing the rise of Sikhism, a religion founded by Guru Nanak Dev Ji in response to the prevalent caste system and societal oppression¹²⁴. The emergence of Sikhism in Punjab added a new cultural and religious dimension to the region, further shaping its socio-political landscape. During the 16th century, Punjab came under the rule of the formidable Mughal Empire, led by Emperor Akbar. Known for his policy of religious inclusivity, Akbar sought to integrate Punjab into his vast realm. The Mughals fostered arts, architecture, and commerce in the region, fostering economic prosperity. Nonetheless, tensions emerged between the Mughals and the Sikh community due to religious disparities and disputes over governance and territory. In the early 17th century, Sikhs faced persecution under Mughal rulers Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, was martyred during this period, intensifying Sikh resistance and solidifying the formation of the Khalsa, a unified Sikh community. After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the sixth Guru, Har Gobind, proclaimed Sikh sovereignty by constructing the *Akal Takht*¹²⁵ and erecting a fort to safeguard Amritsar. Jahangir subsequently imprisoned Guru Har Gobind Ji in Gwalior jail, but he was eventually released after several years when no imminent threat was perceived. Shahjaha also launched numerous assaults on Amritsar, compelling the Sikhs to retreat to the Shivalik Hills. The ninth Guru, Teg Bahadur Ji, sacrificed everything for the defense of religion and religious freedom, earning the title "Hind's Chadar". Aurangzeb martyred Guru Teg Bahadur Ji for refusing to embrace Islam, beheading him and displaying his body at Chandni Chowk in Delhi. In response to the oppression faced by Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, established the "Khalsa Panth" in 1699 AD to safeguard freedom of conscience and religion.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ebrahim, S., Bance, S., & Bowman, K. W. (2011). Sikh perspectives towards death and end-of-life care. *Journal of Palliative Care*, 27(2), 170-174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/082585971102700214>

¹²⁵ Akal Takht 'Throne of the Timeless One' is basically "Akal Bunga". It is one of the five thrones of the Sikhs. It is located in the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) complex in Amritsar, Punjab, India. The Akal Takht was built by Guru Hargobind Ji, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, as a place of justice and discussion of the issues of time.

Following this, the struggle between Sikhs and the Mughals persisted, ultimately leading to the weakening of Mughal authority and the rise of the Sikh state. The Sikhs gradually consolidated themselves into a unified Sikh state, with the chaos in Punjab after the invasions of Nader Shah in 1649 and Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1748 greatly aiding the ascension of Sikh power. In 1664 AD, Sikhs convened in Amritsar and minted the first pure silver coins inscribed with “*Deg-Teg-Fatah*,” symbolizing the first formal assertion of Sikh sovereignty in Punjab. They organized into twelve *Misls*¹²⁶ and controlled various regions of Punjab, with each Misl’s leaders dividing territories among themselves. Even Ahmad Shah Abdali failed to dismantle the Misl, and within two years of his departure, his appointed governors in Sirhind and Lahore were ousted. Several small princely states like Nabha, Patiala, and Kapurthala emerged. By the end of the eighteenth century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh unified all the Misls, establishing a formidable state. Between 1798 and 1805, Ranjit Singh seized Lahore and Amritsar with the authority of the Bhangi Misl and designated Lahore as his capital. In 1808, Ranjit Singh crossed the Sutlej River, capturing Faridkot, Malerkotla, and Ambala.

The initiation of the empire commenced with Ranjit Singh’s conquest of Lahore from the Afghan ruler, Zaman Shah Durrani. Subsequently, following the Afghan-Sikh wars, the Afghans began to be ousted from Punjab, leading to a fracture in the unity among the Sikh Misls. Ranjit Singh was declared the Maharaja of Punjab on 12th April 1801 (Vaisakhi Day), marking the establishment of a politically cohesive state. Sahib Singh Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak Sahib, oversaw the coronation ceremony. Upon assuming the throne, Ranjit Singh designated Lahore as his capital. He expanded his domain by capturing Multan, Peshawar, Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the hilly regions around Anandpur, notably Kangra. In 1802, he incorporated the sacred city of Amritsar into his realm and embellished the Sikh’s revered shrine, the Harmandir Sahib, with marble and gold, hence earning its epithet as the Golden Temple.¹²⁷ He modernized his military by enlisting European officers, resulting in Punjab possessing the most formidable armed forces of the era, which the British ultimately managed to subdue. He reinstated law and order in his domain, albeit infrequent executions were carried out. He abolished the Jizya tax imposed on Hindus and Sikhs and upheld religious tolerance,

¹²⁶ MISL is a term that originated in the eighteenth-century history of the Sikhs to describe a unit or brigade of Sikh warriors and the territory it acquired during a campaign of conquest after the weakening of Mughal rule in the country. A 'Misldar' was the leader or commander of a 'Misl' or 'army group'. The Sikh Misls were a confederation of twelve independent military units or Misls, which emerged in the Punjab region in the 18th century. These Misls played an important role in Sikh history, working towards the eventual formation of the Sikh Empire.

¹²⁷ Madanjit Kaur, & Internet Archive. (1983). The golden temple: past and present. In *Internet Archive* (pp. 21–23). Guru Nanak Dev University Press.

ensuring that his state was not characterized as a religious one but rather as an inclusive state for all Punjabis, promoting the welfare of all citizens. Muslims and Hindus held significant positions within his administration, enjoying equal rights in society.

1.6 Rise of Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), the founder of the Sikh Empire, was a visionary leader known for his unparalleled military strategies, modernization reforms and judicious use of fortifications¹²⁸. During his reign, a series of important military campaigns and conflicts began to strengthen the Sikh Empire in the Punjab region. The use of forts played an important role in his military success. Below is a detailed analysis of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's military strategies and use of forts during his reign. Maharaja Ranjit Singh modernized the Sikh army. His army was known as the “*Khalsa Army*”¹²⁹ which evolved into one of the most disciplined and modern military forces in Asia. He recruited European officials, such as Jean-Francois Allard, Ventura, Avitabile, and others¹³⁰. They helped introduce modern military tactics, drill formations and artillery techniques. His army was a blend of traditional Sikh warrior spirit and modern European military practices that integrated infantry, cavalry and artillery into unified fighting units. Ranjit Singh introduced regular training regimes for his soldiers. To ensure that they were well versed in modern warfare techniques especially the use of weapons and artillery which were essential for siege warfare involving forts.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, forts played a crucial role in both military strategy and governance. Defensively, they safeguarded central Punjab from external invasions, while offensively, they functioned as secure military bases for territorial expansion. Strategic strongholds such as Attock Fort controlled vital river crossings by taking advantage of the region’s geography, whereas frontier forts like Jamrud Fort acted as major deterrents against Afghan incursions through the northwestern mountain passes. Under the supervision of European mercenary officers, many of these forts underwent extensive modernization, transforming from traditional high-walled medieval structures into low-profile, artillery-resistant fortifications equipped with heavy cannon emplacements. Beyond their military significance, the forts also played an important role in administrative and economic governance, serving as enduring symbols of Sikh sovereignty. They secured trade routes and facilitated

¹²⁸ Kaur, G. (2024). Maharaja Ranjit Singh: The Real Maharaja. *International Journal of History*. <https://doi.org/10.22271/27069109.2024.v6.i1c.275>

¹²⁹ The Khalsa Army, also known as the Sikh Army, was the military force of the Khalsa State. It started in 1799, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Lahore.

¹³⁰ Singh, R.(. (2023). Discovering stories from Punjab on the streets of Saint-Tropez, Cote D’Azur, France. *Sikh Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.62307/srj.v8i1.26>

the safe collection of transit duties, thereby contributing to the stability and prosperity of the empire's economy.

Forts played an important role in both defensive and offensive strategies during Ranjit Singh's reign. He understood the importance of securing key locations and building fortifications to protect his empire and gain control over newly conquered territories. Forts served as primary defensive strongholds during conflicts, providing safe havens for soldiers and serving as command centers. They were strategically placed along important trade routes, river crossings and borders to act as a deterrent against invaders. As the Lahore Fort was not only the administrative center of the Sikh Empire but also an important military stronghold. It was heavily fortified by Ranjit Singh to resist the attacks of the British and Afghan forces. Also located in Amritsar, Gobindgarh Fort was one of the most powerful forts of the Sikh Empire. Originally created by Gujjar Singh Bhangi. It was expanded and modernized by Ranjit Singh to house heavy artillery including the famous Zamzma cannon¹³¹. It served as a defense against a possible British advance from the south. Ranjit Singh used Phillaur fort as a major defensive point on the Grand Trunk Road. With European-style military architecture and modern artillery, the fort became a stronghold and an armed center against British movements. Ranjit Singh's use of forts was not limited to defense they were also critical in his offensive strategies. By capturing and controlling enemy forts he expanded his empire and consolidated his power in Punjab and beyond. The best example of Ranjit Singh's military prowess was the siege of Multan¹³². The city's fort was known for its impregnability, yet Ranjit Singh's forces, with superior artillery, managed to breach the walls and capture the fort, a significant victory in the expansion of the Sikh Empire. After defeating the Durrani Empire at Attock, Ranjit Singh secured the fort of Attock which was an important crossing on the river Indus. which provided strategic control over movements from the west and was the gateway to the Peshawar Valley. Ranjit Singh's forces used the forts of Jammu as a staging ground to launch their successful campaign into Kashmir, an area crucial to controlling the northern frontier of the Sikh Empire.¹³³

¹³¹ Seth, M.J. (1937). The Zamzama: An Eighteenth-Century Gun. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 69, 477 – 479. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00086020>

¹³² Ali, A. (2018). Role of European Military Officers in the Army of Ranjit Singh: A Case Study of Its Training and Expeditions. *Annals of Social Sciences & Management studies*. <https://doi.org/10.19080/asm.2018.01.555565>

¹³³ Huazhong Tu(Huazhong Tu), Yili Zhang(Yili Zhang), Jianhong Wang(Jianhong Wang). (2022). The Rise of Sikh Empire and Its Influence on the Indian Subcontinent. *Journal of Asia Social Science*, 9(1), 21-31. 10.51600/jass.2022.9.1.21. <https://doi.org/10.51600/jass.2022.9.1.21>

Maharaja Ranjit Singh placed great emphasis on artillery in his military strategy, realizing its importance in siege warfare and fort defense¹³⁴. He established foundries to make cannons and gunpowder. His army included: **Heavy Artillery**: Heavy artillery was important for breaching enemy forts during sieges as seen in battles like the siege of Multan. **Field Artillery**: Light artillery and mobile artillery units allowed Ranjit Singh's forces to provide firepower support during offensive operations¹³⁵. Thus, artillery was equally important in fortification. Forts like Gobindgarh were equipped with extensive artillery to repel attacks. Placing large guns on high fort walls gave his troops a defensive advantage during engagements with opposing powers such as the Afghans and the British. Although Ranjit Singh's military strategies were primarily centered around his powerful army and fortifications, he also used diplomacy to avoid direct confrontation whenever possible. He established treaties and alliances with neighboring powers to secure his borders and strengthen his defences, such as the Treaty of Amritsar (1809)¹³⁶ which allowed Ranjit Singh to maintain control over his territory without fear of immediate British intervention¹³⁷. This treaty enabled him to consolidate power in the west including the capture of the forts of Multan and Kashmir while avoiding a full-scale war with the British. By keeping diplomatic channels open with the Afghans, Ranjit Singh sought to minimize threats from the west by consolidating key positions along the Indus River and the Khyber Pass.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjab was divided into many small princely states and the chieftains of many princely states were not happy with each other. There was no sense of unity among the common people of the princely states. The Sikh Dal was already weakened. Seeing the growing power of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, other chieftains became jealous of him. But there was also the fear of losing their territory. Due to this, some of the Sardars annexed their territories by making a treaty with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, while others, having no other choice, annexed their territories to the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Afghans under Zaman Shah were again threatening to occupy the Punjab. England also started taking interest in this part of the country to expand its territorial boundaries. Apart from this, there were some neighboring hill kingdoms and many small princely states under the possession of some Pathans under Hindu kings. At that time there was anarchy in Punjab. The great Mughal Empire was disintegrated, and many smaller kingdoms arose in its place.

¹³⁴ Singh, A. (2010). The last sunset : the rise & fall of the Lahore durbar.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶¹³⁶ Fenech, L.E. (2015). RANJIT SINGH, THE SHAWL, AND THE KAU KAB-I IQBĀL-I PUNJĀB. *Sikh Formations*, 11, 107 – 83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2015.1023107>

¹³⁷ Mir, J.A. (2020). Nature of the Dogra State.

These princely states were under the control of Sikhs, Pathans, Dogra's and Afghan chieftains¹³⁸. The major concern of the Sikh chieftains was that they were losing their unity.

¹³⁸ Grewal, J.S. (1990). The Sikhs of the Punjab. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.29-4036>

Chapter 2

Evolution and Architecture of Forts in Punjab

With the onset of human activity beyond food gathering, with further mastery over the sources, defence and protection from the enemies [beasts and the rival humans] became necessary. It is reflected in the process of early fortifications as discussed earlier. Punjab, renowned for its historical significance, has witnessed the emergence of fortified structures and the construction of formidable forts that endure today as remnants of a glorious era. These forts, ranging from strategic military outposts to architectural wonders, epitomize the region's abundant heritage and the evolution of warfare tactics across ages. The study of fortresses and defensive structures in Punjab captivates historians and archaeologists alike. Throughout its history, Punjab, recognized for its strategic value, has experienced the ascendancy and decline of numerous influential empires, each contributing impressive forts and defensive edifices to its legacy. From the ancient remnants of the Indus Valley Civilization to the intricate designs of Mughal forts, Punjab's terrain has borne witness to the progression of military architecture over millennia. This piece endeavours to chronicle the rich narrative of Punjab's forts, charting their advancement from rudimentary mud-brick walls to robust stone bastions, alongside the measures employed to safeguard these structures against invading forces, delving into intricate defence mechanisms. Through an exploration of construction methods, strategic positioning, and historical context, we can delve deeper into the tumultuous history of Punjab and the enduring heritage of its forts. Let us embark on a captivating journey through the evolution of fortification and fort development in Punjab.

2.1 Early Fortifications and Mughal Influence:

Whenever foreign invaders came to attack India, their route was through Punjab. Due to this, Punjab always had to face the invaders. Due to this, Punjab is also called the "**Gateway of India**"¹³⁹. Logically, if an invader had won over Punjab, it would have been much easier for him to conquer India. Over the centuries, Punjab has been home to many rulers, each leaving their mark through the construction and improvement of forts. Due to this, the development of forts and fortifications continued in Punjab. The origin of fort development in Punjab can be traced back to ancient epochs when dynasties such as the Mauryas, Guptas, Kushans, and Rajputs reigned over the land. These early forts were primarily constructed for defensive

¹³⁹ Kirpal Singh Narang. (1968). *History of the Punjab, 1500-1858* (p. 12). U C Kapoor & Sons, Delhi-6.

purposes, strategically positioned on elevated terrains to safeguard the kingdom from external aggressions. With the onset of Islamic dominion in the 12th century, there was a notable surge in fort constructions across Punjab. Architecturally, these forts amalgamated Indo-Islamic styles, featuring elements like arched gateways, minarets, and intricate stone carvings. Serving as bastions of military prowess, administrative hubs, and symbols of authority for ruling sultans and emperors. During the Mughal epoch, Punjab witnessed the emergence of majestic forts epitomizing grandeur and opulence. Mughal emperors, particularly Akbar and Shah Jahan, played pivotal roles in fortifying Punjab. The Mughal emperors Akbar and Shah Jahan played really important roles in strengthening Punjab during their reigns. Akbar ruled from 1556 to 1605. During his reign, he implemented various administrative and military strategies to consolidate the region. One of his major contributions was the establishment of a strong centralized administration that helped maintain law and order in Punjab. Akbar also started construction of several forts and defensive structures in Punjab to protect the region from external threats. Shah Jahan ruled from 1628 to 1658. He continued the efforts of his predecessors to strengthen Punjab. He is particularly famous for building the famous Lahore Fort, which served as a symbol of Mughal power and authority in the region. The Lahore Fort¹⁴⁰ was strategically located and designed to withstand military attacks, further enhancing Punjab's defensive capabilities. Apart from forts, both Akbar and Shah Jahan invested in improving infrastructure and communication networks in Punjab. This included the construction of roads, bridges and other facilities that facilitated the movement of troops and goods across the region. By strengthening the infrastructure, the Mughal emperors not only enhanced the defence of Punjab but also encouraged economic growth and development in the region. Apart from this, the policies of Akbar and Shah Jahan towards the local population also contributed to the strengthening of Punjab. He implemented measures to integrate the various communities in the Punjab into the Mughal administration, which instilled a sense of loyalty and cooperation among the people. This social cohesion was essential to maintain stability and security in the region.

Overall, the efforts of the Mughal emperors, especially 'Akbar and Shah Jahan', to strengthen the Punjab were multifaceted and comprehensive. Through a combination of military, administrative, infrastructural and social initiatives they significantly strengthened the

¹⁴⁰ Grewal, J. S. (1998). [The Sikhs of the Punjab](#) (Vol. II.3, pp. 100–105). Cambridge University Press.

During the Sikh Empire (1799–1849), Lahore Fort, also known as *Shahi Qila*, held immense political and strategic importance. After the decline of Mughal authority in Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Lahore in 1799 and made it the capital of his empire. The Lahore Fort became the central seat of Sikh power and underwent several modifications under Ranjit Singh's reign.

region's defenses and laid the foundation for its continued prosperity under Mughal rule. The Lahore Fort¹⁴¹ stands as a prime exemplar, designated as a 'UNESCO World Heritage Site', showcasing the splendor of Mughal architecture with its elaborate marble craftsmanship, expansive gardens, and magnificent palaces. Maharaja Ranjit Singh is often associated with the Lahore Fort due to his significant contribution to its restoration and beautification. Lahore Fort is also known as Shahi Fort. It holds great historical and cultural significance, making it a focal point for various rulers throughout history. During the reign of 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh from 1799 to 1839', he carried out extensive repairs and improvements to the 'Lahore Fort'. He was known for his keen interest in architecture and art, and under his patronage, the fort underwent a period of revival. The Maharaja constructed various structures within the fort complex, including the iconic 'Hazuri Bagh Barandari'¹⁴², a pavilion with twelve gates, which is a testament to his architectural legacy.

2.2 Sikh Architectural Innovations in Fortifications:

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the 'Sikh Empire', strategically focused on consolidating existing forts and building new ones to strengthen his power and protect his territory¹⁴³. This approach was important during historical events such as the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857, where Sikh forces played an important role in suppressing the rebellion¹⁴⁴. The importance of these forts goes beyond military defense as they represent Sikh rule and influence in the regions where they were established and represent Sikh authority and heritage¹⁴⁵.

The Sikh Empire further enriched Punjab's fortification legacy. 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh', the founder of the Sikh Empire, revived the existing forts and built new ones to

¹⁴¹ UNESCO World Heritage, C. (2015). [Fort and Shalamar Gardens in Lahore](#). UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

¹⁴² The 'Hazuri Bagh' or Bagh is a large square between the Lahore Fort to the east and the Badshahi Mosque to the west. Measuring about 150 meters on a side, the garden is arranged in a traditional four-part Charbagh design with a marble pavilion, which is called Barandri (literally, twelve doors) and stands comfortably in its centre. Although the site appears cohesive today it marks the end of centuries of royal sponsorship often with competing aims. The garden dates back to the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707), the sixth and last of the great Mughal emperors. Aurangzeb was not a particularly prolific builder as his father Shah Jahan, but he did sponsor a handful of important buildings, such as the Badshahi Mosque, built in 1673. The building was placed off-axis with the greater part of the Lahore Fort to the east towards Mecca.

¹⁴³ Singh, K. (2017). [Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of the Punjab](#). In *Google Books*. Random House Publishers India Pvt. Limited.

¹⁴⁴ Soboslai, J. (2018). Sikh self-sacrifice and religious representation during world war i. *Religions*, 9(2), 55. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9020055>

¹⁴⁵ Nazar, S. (2021). Conservation issues of sikh gurudwara guru singh sabha at mansehra and its tourism potential. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 5(II), 36-60. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-ii\)2.4](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-ii)2.4)

strengthen his power and protect his kingdom. In present-day Punjab (East side), Maharaja Ranjit Singh built forts like Gobindgarh, Patti, Dinanagar, Alawarpur, Lodhi, Dasuya, Phillaur, Bajwara and Lodhi Forts. (Plate. 2) These forts served as strong defense structures and centers of governance.

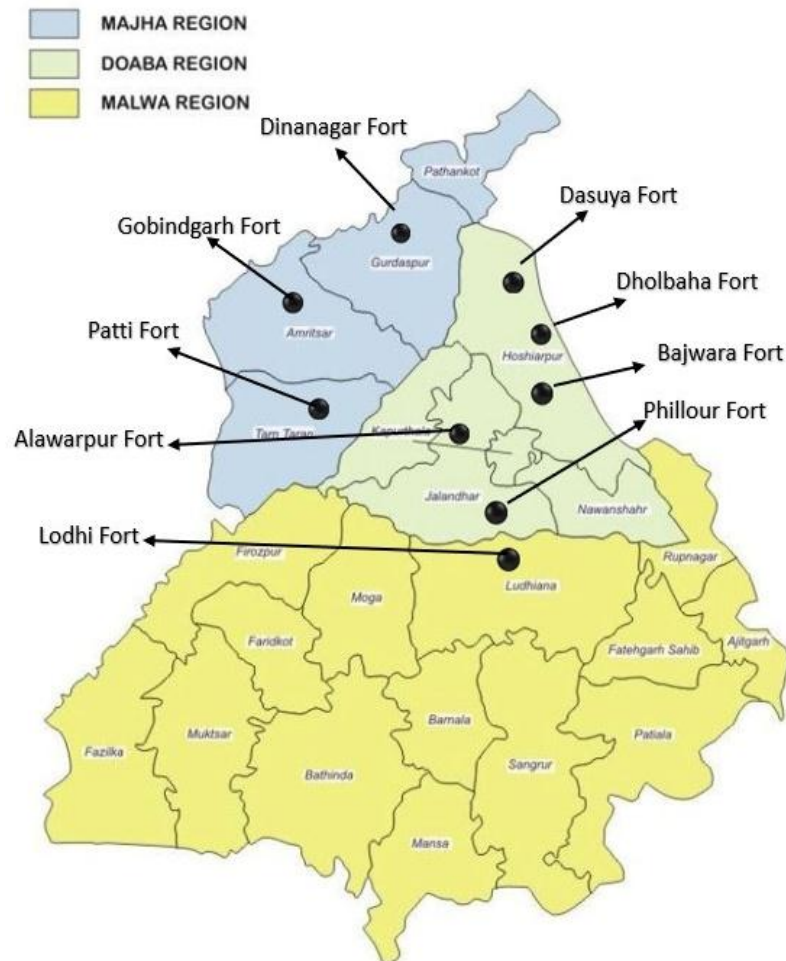


Plate.2. Regional Distribution of Major Forts in Punjab showing the strategic location of forts across the Majha, Doaba, and Malwa regions. The map illustrates the geographical concentration of important forts such as Gobindgarh, Phillaur, Dinanagar, Bajwara, Dasuya, and Lodhi Fort, highlighting their relationship with regional divisions, communication routes, and strategic military zones in Punjab during the Sikh period.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Punjab district maps, field survey data,

During the British colonial era in Punjab, forts flourished, albeit for different purposes. Ferozepur Fort and Phillaur Fort were forts built by the British whose function was mainly to serve purposes related to law enforcement and military control. These forts were strategically built to command major routes and act as bastions against potential rebellions. In present-day Punjab, the focus on forts has shifted to their conservation, restoration and tourist appeal. Initiatives were taken to revive the architectural glory of these forts. To ensure that these are

living proofs of the glorious history of Punjab. Many of the forts have been remodeled into museums, heritage residences and cultural centres, allowing visitors to witness the region's rich heritage and its architectural magnificence for themselves.

2.3 Case Studies of Prominent Forts in Punjab

By the end of the '18th century' the five most powerful' Misls' were 'Shukrachakia, Kanhaiya, Nakai, Ahluwalia and Bhangi Sikhs'. Ranjit Singh first had a trusting alliance with the 'Kanhais and Nakais'. Among the smaller Misls, some, such as the 'Phulkia Misls', switched allegiance in the late '18th century' and supported the offensive of the Afghan army against their 'Khalsa brethren'. With the accession of 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh' to the throne of Lahore in 1799, the boundaries of the Sikh kingdom began to expand. He extended his empire up to the river Sutlej. Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured many Mughal forts. Many forts built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh collapsed during the battles. Ranjit Singh's rule ushered in 'reforms, modernization, investment in infrastructure and general prosperity'. His 'Khalsa army' and 'government included Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and Europeans'. Forts in Punjab were built with many structures. After the partition of 1947, the forts that have survived in present-day Punjab are still standing in the same splendour. The description of these forts is as follows:

2.3.1 Gobindgarh Fort

The historically significant Gobindgarh Fort stands out as one of Amritsar's most remarkable structures. Presently, positioned outside the walled city along the northwest side of the Grand Trunk Road, adjacent to the military station, the fort spans an impressive area of 1,71,000 square meters (42.26 acres). Its ramparts reach a height of 8 meters, while a surrounding *moat*¹⁴⁶, approximately 5.5 meters deep, encircles it on all sides. The inner walls rise dramatically in a concentric pattern,

Gobindgarh Fort	
Latitude and longitude	31.6270583°N, 74.8603111°E
Location	Amritsar, Punjab
Built	1760 CE
Built by	Gujjar Singh Bhangi, Maharaja Ranjit Singh
Material	Nanakshahi Bricks and Lime Plaster
Present Condition	Restored
Architecture type	Anglo Sikh Architecture

¹⁴⁶ Moats were an important part of forts and fortifications. To prevent the infantry attacking the fort from coming forward, a ditch was dug on all sides outside the outer wall, in which crocodiles etc. were kept so that if anyone crossed this ditch even by swimming in the water, they would be killed. Be prey to the creatures that are in that water. The existence of ditches was a natural consequence of early methods of fortification by underground works, which formed a valuable part of the defense system.

adorned with four grand bastions at the fort's corners.¹⁴⁷ Originally belonging to Gujjar Singh Bhangi¹⁴⁸, a local chieftain, the fort underwent significant consolidation and expansion during the early 19th century under Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule, who renamed it Gobindgarh. This development was likely spurred by the need to safeguard Sri Harimandir Sahib and the city of Amritsar from frequent invasions throughout the 18th century. Symbolizing Punjab's martial spirit and military ethos in its construction, layout, and underlying philosophy, Gobindgarh Fort's origins are deeply intertwined with the Sikh faith's evolution. From the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, taking up arms to the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, establishing the Khalsa army, this tradition persisted through Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign, transforming from spiritual warriors defending their faith in the 18th century to a well-organized military force capable of large-scale operations by the 19th century.

Gobindgarh fort in Amritsar served as the main repository for the princely states. The Toshakhana, or royal apparel, housed many valuables in this fort. While most of the Toshakhana collection was housed in the forts of Lahore and Sheikhupura¹⁴⁹, it also contained rare and valuable war trophies, including the priceless Kohinoor diamond guarded by 'Misr Beli Ram'¹⁵⁰. The Toshakhana was the central place for all financial transactions, from which payments were made to clerks and artisans, and funds were distributed to the thousands of individuals who served the Maharaja's household, such as shepherds, artisans, and horse traders. The documents of the Toshakhana included records of confiscated properties, although the Toshakhana papers were largely intact for the periods 1816–1835 and 1841–1846. These records contain important data.

¹⁴⁷ *Development of Gobindgarh Fort Amritsar on Public Private Partnership Mode Draft Feasibility Report Infrastructure* (p. 25). (2015). Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited.
<https://www.readkong.com/user/gladys-lloyd-4388494>

¹⁴⁸ Gujjar Singh Bhangi was one of the three who ruled Lahore for thirty years before its capture by Ranjit Singh. As Gurbaksh Singh was old, he made Gujjar Singh the head of his party. Later the band united with the army of Hari Singh, head of the Bhangi Misl of Sardar. Gujjar Singh began a career of conquest and plunder. In 1760 a local Sardar Gujjar Singh Bhangi built a mud fort in Amritsar which later came to be known as "Bhangi's Fort".

¹⁴⁹ Grewal, J. S. (1998). *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Vol. II.3, pp. 103–105). Cambridge University Press. Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Sheikhupura early in his conquests, recognizing its strategic location near Lahore. He renovated the Sheikhupura Fort, which had been built by Mughal Emperor Jahangir in the early 17th century. Under Sikh rule, the fort served not only as a military outpost but also as a residence and administrative center. It was one of several forts Maharaja Ranjit Singh fortified to consolidate his power across Punjab

¹⁵⁰ Misr Beli Ram was the second of five sons of Misr Dewan Chand, the chief of the royal household at Lahore and a general in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He joined the Maharaja's treasury in 1809 and rose to its highest post within seven years. In addition, he received many jagirs including Rangard Nangal worth Rs 30,000 per annum. Beli Ram maintained strict discipline exemplified by his angering Prime Minister Raja Dhyan Singh by refusing to display a rare piece of jewelry in the royal treasury without the Maharaja's permission. Sin gha, B. (1990b). Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times. In *Google Books* (p. 180). Sehgal Publishers Service.

In contrast, Toshakhana-specific records are incomplete and difficult to translate, involving of only one bundle. Three keys were needed to access the treasure: one with Misr Beli Ram, the second with Fakir Nur-ud-Din, and the third with Sardar Hukum Singh Thanedar of Lahore. All three keys were necessary to open the treasure gate. The Toshakhana was administered by Misr Basti Ram, Misr Beli Ram, and later Misr Megha Kingdom.¹⁵¹ Misr Beli Ram oversaw khilat, jewels, gold, silver, pearls, diamonds and other rare items. Important state documents including treaties and foreign relations papers of the Lahore government were also stored in the Toshakhana. A small Toshakhana contained items of general use that the Maharaja often gifted to visitors, serving as a small treasury for cash and daily necessities. The activity of this service treasury increased due to the constant exchange of gifts, rituals and visits with neighbouring rulers such as the British, kings of Kabul and emirs of Sindh¹⁵².

The Toshakhana department kept in the treasury Zar-e-Naqd (cash) and Zar-e-Jin (goods and precious metals), including precious stones, pashmina and foreign goods from Kashmir¹⁵³. The department also managed the repair of old objects and the creation of new ones, employing many goldsmiths, engravers and other skilled artisans permanently¹⁵⁴. Following its capture by the British after the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849, the fort underwent numerous modifications over the subsequent century of British occupation, as evidenced by a map of Amritsar from 1870 in the Royal Geographical Society's collection in London. Post-independence in 1947, the fort was garrisoned by the Indian army, with around 25 units stationed there for nearly five decades.

2.3.2 Phillour Fort

Phillour Fort is a symbol of the mighty heritage of Punjab. It is situated in the town of Phillour in the Doab area on the other side of the river

Phillour Fort

¹⁵¹ Sikh Digital Library, & Sita Ram Kohli. (1927). Catalogue Of Khalsa Darbar Records Vol.2 - Compiled by Sita Ram Kohli. In *Internet Archive* (p. 306). Sikh Digital Library.
<https://archive.org/details/CatalogueOfKhalsaDarbarRecordsVol.2CompiledBySitaRamKohli/page/n313/mode/2up?view=theater&q=gobindgarh>

¹⁵² Ibid. 304.

¹⁵³ Siñ gha, B. (1990). Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times. (p. 180). Sehgal Publishers Service.

¹⁵⁴ Sikh Digital Library, & Sita Ram Kohli. (1927). Catalogue Of Khalsa Darbar Records Vol.2 - Compiled by Sita Ram Kohli. In *Internet Archive* (pp. 306–307). Sikh Digital Library.
<https://archive.org/details/CatalogueOfKhalsaDarbarRecordsVol.2CompiledBySitaRamKohli/page/n313/mode/2up?view=theater&q=gobindgarh>

Sutlej which flows towards the city of Ludhiana. It is situated on the bank of river Sutlej. It is also famous as Maharaja Ranjit Singh Fort. This fort with European architecture was proposed by Dewan Mohakam Chand¹⁵⁵ through his two generals Allard and Ventura¹⁵⁶ to fulfil the purpose of a military fort to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Latitude and longitude	31.0117°N 75.7898°E
Location	Phillour, Punjab
Built	1809 CE
Built by	Maharaja Ranjit Singh
Material	Nanakshahi Bricks and Lime Plaster
Architecture type	European Architecture

The fort of Phillaur was built on the site of the Mughal Sarai¹⁵⁷ as parts of the original structure of the Sarai still exist. The two gates of the fort were named after his two great Mughal cities, Delhi and Lahore. One was the Delhi Gate on the east and the other was the Lahore Gate on the west. The gateway is a magnificent three-story structure with a width of 13.35 m and the archway is 3.7 m wide. On the front wall of each gateway are balconies or balconies, and the facade walls are lined up in parallel with several blind spots.¹⁵⁸ There was usually a mosque inside the structure of the Mughal Sarai but it was not one of these special Sarai, the reason being that the mosques in India are towards the west and if a mosque was built in this Sara, it would have to be tilted. Breaking symmetry. Instead, a tomb of a Muslim saint named Peer Baba Abdullah Shah¹⁵⁹ was erected in the northeast corner of the fort. The hooves were dug

¹⁵⁵ Diwan Mokham Chand was an eminent commander of the Sikh Empire. In 1813, he captured Attock from the Durrani Afghans and subjugated the Rajputs in the Himachal Hills as well as the territories of Jasrota, Chamba and Basroli in Jammu. He also led one of the early Sikh expeditions to conquer Kashmir, which failed due to adverse weather conditions that impeded entry into the valley. Mokham Chand was born into a Hindu Kshatriya family.

¹⁵⁶ Allard and Ventura were the French and Italian General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army.

¹⁵⁷ Before the advent of modern means of transportation, people used oxen, bullock carts, camels and horses for transportation. Because towns and cities were located at considerable distances. People moved in groups called caravans because, apart from the distance, looting was a constant threat. Usually, people could travel about 8 kos or 32 km in a day and after a tiring journey it was necessary to reach safe places for overnight stay so that they could bring their animals to a safe place. And also, to ensure food and water. Hence during the Mughal period caravan inns were built at intervals of a day's journey. These inns were built along the Delhi-Lahore highway and Phillaur is located between Lahore and Delhi. These inns were mostly square or rectangular with enclosing walls with a turret at each corner which was usually octagonal giving them the appearance of forts. They had the Char iwan plan which developed during the Sultanate period in the 11th and 12th centuries. Centrally, the structure was open to the sky and residences were constructed on the sides. The gates were large enough to admit pack animals such as camels and horses, which were either tied up in the central area of the inn or sometimes had separate stables built for them. Parihar Subhash, "Philaure Fort: Historical and Architectural Perspective", apnaorg.com.

¹⁵⁸ Hooja, R., & Jain, S. (2016). [Conserving Fortified Heritage](#): The Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Fortifications and World Heritage, New Delhi, 2015. In *Google Books: Vol. Chapter six- Brick Fort of Punjab by Grumet Singha Rai*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

¹⁵⁹ Legend has it that when Maharaja Ranjit Singh was constructing the fort, the wall would collapse, affecting the work. One day the Maharaja was advised by religious leaders that the wall could be successfully built only if the only son of a male widow belonging to the Brahmin caste sacrificed his life. A Brahmin boy from Phillaur

around them and the outer walls were slightly bent to defeat the artillery shelling. Currently, the Academy has offices at Phillaur Fort, an impressive palace as the director's residence, a fingerprint bureau, and a weapons bureau. On the west side of the wall is a single entrance enclosing the entire structure with a large arch-shaped door with spandrels on either side and a residential roof with hexagonal towers on either side. After independence in 1947, the national emblem was added to the wall.

2.3.4 Lodi Fort

According to information gathered from various Sources¹⁶⁰, “Lodhi Fort” was built by “Sikandar Lodhi” in the ‘15th century’.

Spread over an area of ‘5.6 acres’, the fort was built on the banks of ‘river Sutlej’, which used to flow near it but now it has changed its course. The fate of the fort along the Sutlej route seems to have changed as the vacant land along the river was occupied by the people to build their houses. With the pressure of the growing population, the retrenchment of occupations also increased. Sultan Lodhi

Lodhi Fort		
Latitude and longitude	and	30.924319248638856, 75.85207332236618
Location	Qila mohalla, Ludhiana, Punjab	
Built	15 th century	
Built by	Sikandar Lodi's General Nehan khan and Yusaf khan	
Material	Bricks and lime plaster	
Architecture Type	Islamic Architecture	

later appointed two of his generals, “Nihan Khan and Yusuf Khan”, to capture the fort. His capture of the fort was significant as it faced the main entrance to his empire. This route was later developed as GT Road, or Grand Trunk Road, and added to the strategic value of the fort. The fort helped the Lodi's and later helped establish a strong position among other Muslims. Realizing its importance, the most powerful Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, built a very strong fort on the other side of the river Sutlej. In the 19th century, taking advantage of the weak Muslim rule in Delhi, Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured the fort without a fight. However, with the fall of his kingdom, the fort gradually came under British control. Maharaja Ranjit Singh attached his residential tower across the Sutlej River at Phillaur to Lodhi fort. At the moment, however, only the tunnel entrance is visible and the road is closed with rubbish and

was brought before Ranjit Singh who fulfilled the conditions. His mother lamented and Pir Abdullah Shah who lived nearby got her attention and instead offered himself for sacrifice before the Raja to which Ranjit Singh agreed and the boy was released. Pir Abdullah Shah was then buried alive on the north eastern wall of the fort and the construction of the fort continued uninterrupted.

¹⁶⁰ Experts, A. (2019b). [Know Your State Punjab](#). In *Google Books* (p. 184). Arihant Publications India limited.

debris. The fort was well maintained during British rule and for decades after independence. Now there is no sign or board in the fort which can tell the historical significance of this place. For many years, Lodhi Fort was known as the 'Government Institute of Textile and Dyeing Technology'. Historian Mohammad Usman Rahmani tells that this fort is associated with the freedom movement. He said that when Mangal panday raised his voice against the British by adopting a rebellious tone in Meerut, at that time the soldiers in the Ludhiana cantonment also revolted against the British rule, and under the leadership of Maulana Shah Abdul Qadir Ludhianvi had captured this cantonment. However, after a few days, the British again captured it Sikandar Lodhi's cantonment, later the British cantonment, even after the country became independent, this fort remained a cantonment for a long time. The Sikh regiment stood here for a long time. But as soon as the Sikh Regiment left this fort, no one took care of it and this legacy was ruined. Now only the remains of the fort are left. The administration has not put any signboard anywhere in the fort.

2.3.5 Bajwara Fort

The historic city of Bajwara, located in the Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, holds an interesting but often overlooked place in Indian history. Bajwara is said to have been founded by Baiju Bawra, also known as Baijnath Mishra, an immigrant from Ghazni. Baiju Bawra was a renowned musician and singer of his time, renowned for his extraordinary talent. He is

Bajwara Fort	
Latitude and longitude	31.515160955086625, 75.94943376894774
Location	Bajwara, Hoshiarpur, Punjab
Built	15 th century
Built by	Raja Sansar Chand
Material	Bricks and lime plaster
Present Condition	only the remains of the fort are left

believed to have given the city its original name, and his cultural influence remains embedded in the early history of the region. However, later historical accounts suggest that the city was named after Sardar Bhup Singh Faisalpuria, who rose to fame and eventually became a local ruler. His leadership contributed significantly to the development of Bajwara before the political upheavals of the early 19th century. In 1801, Sardar Bhup Singh Faisalpuria was expelled from Bajwara by the ambitious Rajput ruler of Kangra, Sansar Chand Katoch. Recognizing the strategic importance of the location, Sansar Chand built a fort at Bajwara to consolidate his power in the region. The fort later became a major point of contention between various rulers fighting for control. In 1825, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the powerful leader of the Sikh Empire, captured the fort from Sansar Chand's forces. During Ranjit Singh's reign, the fort served as an important military outpost and symbolized the expansion of Sikh sovereignty into the eastern regions of Punjab. During British colonial rule, Bajwara Fort underwent

another transformation. It was rebuilt as a military prison, a fate similar to that of many Indian forts that were adapted to meet the needs of the colonial administration. Unfortunately, over time, the fort fell into disrepair and was later demolished, losing much of its original grandeur. Today, only two towers of the fort stand - one on the southern side and the other on the eastern side. These towers are connected by a remnant of the original wall, which offers a glimpse of the fort's former architectural splendor. According to local traditions, Bajwara is also believed to be the birthplace of the famous Afghan ruler Sher Shah Suri, who was born in 1486. Sher Shah later founded the Suri Empire in northern India and is celebrated for his administrative reforms, including the introduction of the Grand Trunk Road. Although the historical evidence supporting Sher Shah's birth in Bajwara is debated, the claim remains an integral part of the city's heritage narrative.

Originally, the Bajwara Fort is believed to have had seven towers, although only two towers survive today. Architectural analysis of the ruins suggests that the fort may have followed a square plan, a common feature in medieval Indian military architecture. The bastions were octagonal and had arrow slits for defence. The connecting walls, built of strong bricks, featured low, rounded arches – a feature of regional forts during that period. Sadly, what was once an impressive fortress now stands in a state of ruins, a silent testimony to the city's layered and turbulent history. In addition, oral histories state that two secret tunnels once extended from the southern bastion of the fort: one leading towards Jajjon and the other towards Allahabad. These escape routes provided strategic advantages during sieges or surprise attacks, highlighting the military ingenuity of the fort's original builders.

2.3.6 Dasuya Fort

Dasuha, a quaint town in the Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, is rich in historical and cultural significance. Its heritage stretches back to ancient times, offering a fascinating glimpse into various eras of Indian history. Historically known as "Virat Nagri", Dasuha was the capital of the kingdom of Virata during the Mahabharata period. This association with one of India's greatest epics

Dasuya Fort		
Latitude	and	31.817392190331947,
longitude		75.65254342108841
Location	Dasuya, Hoshiarpur, Punjab	
Built		

highlights Dasuha's ancient roots and its importance in the cultural and mythological tapestry of India. The town's name conjures up images of great heroes and epic tales, placing it firmly in the annals of

Capture by	Maharaja Ranjit Singh
Material	Bricks and lime plaster
Present Condition	After demolish the Fort a Government Girls High School has been established

ancient Indian history. As time progressed Dasuha's strategic location made it a focal point during the medieval period. It saw the rise and fall of various dynasties, including the Rajputs and the Mughals. These rulers left an indelible mark on the architecture and administration of the town. Remnants of this era, in the form of old forts and administrative buildings, reflect the town's importance as a center of power and governance.

To the north of the town is a fort which was demolished in 1848 and remained one of the strongholds of the Ramgarhians¹⁶¹. Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured it in 1818 AD and held it for 14 years and later gave it to Tara Singh Gaiba¹⁶². A Government Girls High School has been established there. Nothing now remains of the fort except a tower with arrow holes and a window, now in a bad state.

2.3.7 Patti Fort

This strip fort built in the middle of the city leaves a historical mark of its own. It is a very ancient place and was mentioned by the Chinese traveller Huen Tsang who visited Punjab in 630 CE under the name China Belt¹⁶³. Its climate is particularly suitable for Punjabis and the natives of the belt are famous for their good physique. It is a favorite recruiting ground and a large number of natives are serving in the army. The population is mainly Mughal. The town is walled and the

Patti Fort	
Latitude and longitude	31.282046669330292, 74.85645991080301
Location	Patti, Tarntaran, Punjab
Built	1755 CE
Built by	Rai duni chand
Architecture type	Mughal Architecture
Material	Bricks and lime plaster

¹⁶¹ Umair Mirza. (1908). The Imperial Gazetteer of India - Volume 21. In *Internet Archive* (p. 406). OXFORD AT THE CLERENDON PRESS. <https://archive.org/details/the-imperial-gazetteer-of-india-volume-21/page/406/mode/2up>

¹⁶² Punjab (India). (1981). Punjab District Gazetteers: Supplement. In *Google Books* (pp. 37–39). Controller of Print. and Stationery. https://books.google.co.in/books?redir_esc=y&id=ZJgKAQAIAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=tara+sigh

¹⁶³ Gazetteer of the Ferozpur District: 1883. (1883). In *Google Books* (p. 192). OXFORD UNIVERSITY. https://books.google.co.in/books?redir_esc=y&id=VJwIAAAQAAJ&q=Patti+fort#v=snippet&q=Patti%20fort&f=false

houses are mostly made of solid bricks. It has a good bazaar and paved streets. Public buildings include police stations, rest houses, and schools. The police station and rest-houses are situated in a well-built fort of solid masonry about 200 yards from the town to the north-east. Under the Sikh rule, the fort was used as a horse breeding establishment by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The belt supplies large quantities of grain to the towns of Amritsar and Lahore.¹⁶⁴ The Mughals built the fort here in 1755-56 and became a place from which they would persecute rebels and suppress revolts and rebellions¹⁶⁵. Later during the Misl Wars, Patti was conquered by the Singhpuria Misl and later captured by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When Mirza Talib Ali Beg rebelled against him for the atrocities committed by the Sikhs on the Muslims, especially after he annexed Patti to his empire under Dewan Mohakam Chand in 1811 AD, he banned their call to prayer¹⁶⁶.

Present Condition	Restored
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2.3.8 Alawalpur Fort

The fort of Alawalpur was built by two Pathan Nawabs Alawal Kha and Adam Kha. Two towns Adampur and Alawalpur were named after them. S. Himmat Singh Jallewalia, who was a general in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, captured Alawalpur fort in 1812 AD. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was happy and gave Sardar Himmat Singh Jallewalia¹⁶⁷ the lands of Alawalpur and Dhogari towns as Jagir. Sardar Himmat Singh Jallewalia's father Chaudhary Gulab Rai (Bains Jat) was already a soldier of the Khalsa Army. His native village was Mahalpur (Hoshiarpur). After which he settled in Jalla village (Chamkaur Sahib) due to which Himmat

Alawarpur Fort		
Latitude and longitude	31.432264185677653, 75.6564415393551	
Location	Alawarpur, Jalandhar, Punjab	
Built	1759 CE	
Built by	Alawal kha and Adam kha	
Material	Bricks and lime plaster	
Present Condition	Half Restored and half demolished	
Architecture Type	Indo-Islamic Architecture	

¹⁶⁴ Gazetteer of the Ferozpur District: 1883. (1883). In *Google Books* (p. 192). OXFORD UNIVERSITY.
https://books.google.co.in/books?redir_esc=y&id=VJwIAAAQAAJ&q=Patti+fort#v=snippet&q=Patti%20fort&f=false

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 192.

¹⁶⁶ Sharma, B. R., & Hans, J. S. (1992). Punjab District Gazetteers: Jalandhar. (p. 23). Revenue Department, Punjab.

¹⁶⁷ Gazetteer of the Jullundur District, 1904. (2000). (p. 109). Sang-e-Meel Publications.

Singh got the name "Jallewalia". Six generations of Himmat Singh Jallewalia are living here.

According to the information received from the heirs of Alawalpur Fort, Sardar Har Prakash Singh and his brother Sardar Inayat Singh, the 6th generation heirs of Himmat Singh Jallewalia are now living here. Sardar Har Prakash Singh and his wife said that there are two towns Alawalpur and Adampur. These towns were named after two Pathan Nawabs Alawal Khan and Adam Khan. Himmat Singh Jallewalia won from them in 1812 AD. Himmat Singh Jallewalia was a general in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He also said that Chaudhary Gulab Rai, the father of Himmat Singh Jallewalia, was a Bance Jat of Mahalpur (Hoshiarpur), after whom Sardar Himmat Singh settled in Jalla village (Chamkaur Sahib), due to which he got the name Jallewalia. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the land of Alawalpur and Dhogadi to Sardar Himmat Singh Jallewalia as Jagir. Himmat Singh Jallewalia died in 1829 AD. His son Sardar Albel Singh died before him in 1825 AD in a battle on the banks of Jhelum.¹⁶⁸ The names of the generations of Sardar Himmat Singh are as follows : Albel Singh, son of Himmat Singh, Achar Singh, son of Albel Singh, Sant Parkash Singh, son of Achar Singh, Atam Parkash Singh, son of Sant Parkash Singh, Har Prakash Singh, son of Atam Parkash Singh.¹⁶⁹

About the structure of the fort, he said that this fort was used for residential purposes. As the generations changed, there were a few changes. After the partition of this fort in 1947, the first IG Sardar Sant Parkash Singh has built rooms on the side of the main gate of the fort, on which there is now a residence. They said that on the main gate of the fort there was dancing which was used for entertainment. There was a hall in the middle which was lower than the seating area on the sides. A separate building for women's accommodation was constructed on the east side inside the main gate, which is two storied. To the left of the main gate was a horse stable to the west, which adjoined the main gate building. The structure of the residential buildings of this fort is two storied. Sardar Harprakash Singh is the second-generation heir of Himmat Singh Jallewalia. A conversation with his wife and his son revealed that the walls of the fort extended almost to the middle of the town. But now only those in which they reside have been demolished and the rest have become ruins. A separate two-storied structure was built for women in the fort. Its two doors indicate that it will be divided into two parts. The remaining structures of the fort were renovated from time to time. First, they were made of wood, now they are made of both iron and wood.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Griffin, L. H. (1940). [Chiefs and families of note in the Punjab](#). In *Internet Archive* (p. 155). Government Printing, Lahore.

2.3.9 Dinanagar Fort

Dinanagar was the former summer capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. According to the local people, the boundary wall built here during the British rule was demolished. Whose remains have also disappeared. But the structure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's summer palace is still standing there. The roof of this structure is missing. Local people say about this structure that Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to hold an old summer court here. Because Maharaja Ranjit

Dinanagar Fort		
Latitude and longitude	and	32.13172495530681, 75.47433485461914
Location	Dinanagar, Punjab	
Built	1730 CE	
Built by	Adina Beg, Maharaja Ranjit Singh	
Material	Nanakshahi Bricks and lime plaster	
Present Condition	The building is in a dilapidated condition	
Architecture Type	Anglo sikh Architecture	

Singh made Dinanagar the summer capital. This structure is on the eastern side of the colonies built behind the bus stand of Dinanagar. Where many bushes have grown due to lack of cleanliness. Earlier, litchi gardens used to be here, but now nothing else is visible except bushes. Local people call this structure the summer court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Which used to be in the months of June and July. The structure is square and has two floors. The shape of this surviving structure seems to be of Sikh architecture. It has 3 open doors each with pillars of arch design. There is a hall type room in the center of this building. A gallery will be built on all four sides. Three corner rooms with vaulted arched doors separate the gallery. In its fourth corner there is a circular staircase. Under which there is a small living room. Which may be used to keep some important information. Looking at the upper floor, there is a wall of a room above, below the middle hall. Apart from this, the stairs are also covered with walls. The roofs of all these buildings are missing. But the projecting roof from the outside still exists with an inner gable about 2 ft. with corbel design at the corners and semi-circular moldings with colored fills on the inside. A modern photo of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is hung outside this structure.

2.3.10 Malot Fort

Malot Fort is an undiscovered fort in Hoshiarpur, built right on top of the hill. Bahlol Lodhi built this fort in 1485 AD, which was destroyed by Babur in 1526 AD. When Daulat Kha Lodhi had a fight with Babur, Daulat Kha was trapped here.

Malot Fort		
Latitude and longitude	and	31.678236172379204, 75.94703359355908
Location	Malot, Hoshiarpur, Punjab	
Built	1485 CE	

Where it was closed.¹⁷⁰ Babur crossed the Beas in front of Kahnuwal and encamped in front of the Shivalik hills where the fort of Malot was located. Daulat Kha Lodhi was imprisoned by Babur in that fort. After that, Babur marched towards

Built by	Bahlol Lodhi
Material	Stone Bricks and lime plaster
Present Condition	Demolished
Architecture Type	Islamic Architecture

Delhi.¹⁷¹ Malot town is a small town 10km north of Haryana located in Hoshiarpur and this fort is built on a hilltop 2 km away from the town. It is quite difficult to reach this fort.¹⁷² Its path passes through a narrow hill. This route is full and surrounded by wild bushes. When this fort is built, there is no information yet about the route from the fort to the bottom of the hill. According to local people, a few years ago there were arched open gates which have disappeared now. According to the locals and found remains of this fort, bricks made of stone and lime would have been used in the construction of this fort. This fort had the largest library in Asia where there was a large amount of Arabic and Persian literature. which was destroyed by Babur. This fort is also said to be associated with the ruler of the Sikh kingdom, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. According to local people, Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to give donations in ancient temples in Dholbaha and Malot area.

Historical accounts indicate that Daulat Khan Lodhi, a prominent Afghan chieftain who had initially invited Babur to India to challenge the Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi of Delhi, later fell out with Babur. During their confrontation, Daulat Khan Lodhi was trapped and imprisoned in the Malout fort. After crossing the Beas River near Kahnuwal, Babur encamped at the foot of the Shivalik hills, where the Malout fort is strategically located. After capturing Daulat Khan, Babur continued his march towards Delhi, which resulted in his decisive victory at the First Battle of Panipat (1526), which laid the foundation of Mughal rule in India. Malout is today a modest town located within the Hoshiarpur district, about 10 km north of the Haryana border. The fort itself is located 2 km from the city, perched atop a steep hill. Access to the fort is quite challenging; visitors have to navigate a narrow, steep road surrounded by dense forest thickets and dense vegetation. The difficult terrain suggests that the location of the fort was carefully chosen for defensive purposes, giving its inhabitants a commanding view of the surrounding area. Unfortunately, much about the actual construction and layout of Malout Fort is shrouded

¹⁷⁰ Punjab Government. (1905b). [Punjab District Gazetteers Hoshiarpur District](#) Vol.xiia; Pt.a. In *Internet Archive* (pp. 16). Punjab Government.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 17.

¹⁷² Cheema, Dr. G. (2015). Places of Historical Importance in the Punjab: A Case Study of Hoshiarpur District. *The Mirror, an ANNUAL BILINGUAL JOURNAL OF DEPARTMENT of HISTORY CINNAMARACOLLAGE, JORHAT, ASSAM*, 99–107.

in mystery. According to local oral traditions, there were once arched gates leading from the fort to the bottom of the hill, but these have now disappeared, perhaps due to natural decay and neglect. Based on the remains found at the site, it appears that the fort was built using a combination of stone bricks and lime mortar, a common construction technique of medieval fortifications. A particularly interesting aspect of Malout Fort is the claim that it once housed one of the largest libraries in Asia. According to local sources, the fort's library contained a vast collection of Arabic and Persian manuscripts. Tragically, much of this valuable literature was destroyed when Babur's forces captured and demolished the fort. The destruction of such knowledge represents an irreparable cultural loss to South Asian history. In addition, Malout Fort is said to have connections with the famous ruler of the Sikh Empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Oral histories indicate that Maharaja Ranjit Singh often visited the ancient temples in the Dholbaha and Malout regions and is believed to have donated towards their upkeep. His association with the region indicates the historical and religious significance of Malout beyond its military significance.

3 European Military Influence on Sikh Fortification

The reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh marked an important phase in the modernization of the Sikh military system and fortification strategy in Punjab. The growing significance of artillery warfare during the early nineteenth century, combined with the military challenge posed by both Afghan incursions and the expanding British East India Company, compelled the Sikh state to reorganize its military structure according to more disciplined and technologically advanced models. In this context, the incorporation of European military officers into the Sikh army became a major turning point in the evolution of Sikh military organization and defensive architecture. After the Treaty of Amritsar (1809), Maharaja Ranjit Singh increasingly realized the military superiority of European-trained armies and therefore initiated a deliberate process of military modernization.¹⁷³ European officers such as Jean-François Allard, Jean-Baptiste Ventura, Paolo Avitabile, and Claude Auguste Court were appointed to reorganize different branches of the Sikh military establishment. These officers introduced European infantry drill systems, artillery deployment techniques, siege warfare methods, and frontier defence planning into the Sikh army. Contemporary studies on Sikh military reforms note that European methods significantly improved the discipline, organization, and operational efficiency of the Sikh forces.¹⁷⁴ Jean-Marie Lafont observes that Ventura and Allard were particularly influential in

¹⁷³ Jean-Marie Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Lord of the Five Rivers* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67–69.

¹⁷⁴ Prasad. B, *Sikh Military Tradition and Strategies under Maharaja Ranjit Singh – A Review*, International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews 3, no. 3 (2016): 160

reorganizing the infantry according to French military models, while Claude Auguste Court contributed extensively to the modernization of Sikh artillery.¹⁷⁵ Khushwant Singh similarly argues that Maharaja Ranjit Singh transformed the Sikh army from a loose confederate military force into a more centralized and disciplined establishment capable of confronting contemporary regional powers.¹⁷⁶ The modernization of artillery especially had a direct impact on the design and strategic use of forts throughout Punjab.

Traditional forts in northern India were generally designed to resist cavalry attacks and conventional siege warfare through elevated defensive walls, enclosed courtyards, narrow gateways, and watchtowers. However, the increasing use of artillery fundamentally altered military architecture during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Satish Chandra notes that the spread of gunpowder warfare led to the strengthening of bastions, thicker defensive walls, cannon placements, and artillery-resistant fortification systems in medieval and early modern India.¹⁷⁷ Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, important forts such as Gobindgarh, Phillaur, Attock, and Multan were either strengthened or strategically reorganized in accordance with these changing military requirements. Gobindgarh Fort at Amritsar became an important military and treasury centre where arms, ammunition, and artillery equipment were stored. Phillaur Fort acquired particular strategic significance because of its location near the Sutlej River and the Grand Trunk Road. The fort functioned as an important frontier stronghold against possible British expansion from the Cis-Sutlej region and facilitated military communication between different parts of the Sikh Empire.

The Europeanization of the Sikh military system also enhanced the effectiveness of siege warfare. The conquest of Multan in 1818 demonstrated the increasing importance of organized artillery and coordinated infantry operations under European military influence. Studies on Sikh military strategy note that the siege of Multan involved systematic artillery bombardment, disciplined infantry deployment, and carefully organized military planning that reflected the modernization of the Sikh army during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, the Sikh state did not simply imitate European military architecture. Maharaja Ranjit Singh adapted European military techniques according to the geographical and political conditions of Punjab. Sikh forts therefore evolved into hybrid military structures that combined indigenous Indo-Islamic architectural traditions with modern artillery-oriented defensive features. This selective adaptation enabled the Sikh Empire to strengthen frontier defence while preserving

¹⁷⁵ Opcit, Jean-Marie, 74-82.

¹⁷⁶ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs: 1469–1839* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 210–214.

¹⁷⁷ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2007), 112–118.

¹⁷⁸ Opcit. Prasad. 162

regional military traditions and administrative practices. The modernization of Sikh fortifications thus reflected the broader political and military vision of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The incorporation of European military techniques into the Sikh defence system represented not merely architectural transformation but a larger process of military adaptation, imperial consolidation, and state formation in early nineteenth-century Punjab.

Chapter 3

Chronology and Architecture

Architecture is generally defined as “The art or practice of designing and building structures and especially habitable ones”¹⁷⁹. Architecture is one of the major achievements of the man, like him, who went through a process from rudimentary rock shelters to gigantic castles, forts, tombs and inns towards medieval and modern periods in history. The opinion of various scholar about this is as ‘*Architecture is essentially a public art; whether we like it or not, we are forced to witness it*’¹⁸⁰. Situated between functionality and artistry, its presence as a practical space and a form of artistic expression defines its true essence. The long-time ‘New York Times architecture critic’, “Ada Louis Huxtable”, defines architecture as a ‘*balance of structural science and aesthetic expression for the satisfaction of needs that go beyond the utilitarian*’¹⁸¹. “Architecture matters because it enriches our life and enhances it with meaning. The physical places where we act, touch us, shape our behaviour and actions and are of the utmost importance for our well-being”¹⁸². When a work of architecture fulfils “its functional and aesthetic objectives, it can elicit a profound set of emotions within us.”

Initially, the needs of man were limited, food being the main requirement like his other counterpart animals. For shelter, he was dependent upon nature utterly and thus lived in natural shelters. With the progression of his tools and the better resource use, he came to the stage of the home making. Likewise, architecture has been developing since ancient times. The various architectural designs that we see today are the legacy of the past from which modern architecture has emerged. Architecture boasts a rich and extensive history that spans thousands of years and spans the globe. The earliest examples of architecture come from ancient civilizations such as the ‘Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans’, who built magnificent structures including ‘pyramids, temples, and arenas’. Architecture is different for each society because each society has a local relationship with the natural world. Mundane tools and their weathered and weathered structures reveal much about history, customs and artistic sensibilities, as well as aspects of everyday life. The architecture of Punjab, like many regions, has evolved over the centuries under the influence of various rulers, cultures and historical events. The earliest

¹⁷⁹ DEFINITION of Architecture. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/architecture>

¹⁸⁰ Scruton, R. (2013). *The aesthetics of architecture* (p. 127). Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press.

¹⁸¹ Huxtable, L. A. (1992). Inventing American reality. (p. 28) *The New York Review of Books* 39.

¹⁸² Perez-Gomez, A. (2016). *Attunement: Architectural meaning after the crisis of modern science*. Cambridge, (p. 2) MA: The MIT Press.

known architectural remains in Punjab are attributed to the “Indus Valley Civilization”, also known as “Harappan Civilization”, flourishing on the Indus basin and that of its tributaries around 2600 BCE-1900 BCE.¹⁸³ Archaeological excavations have been carried out along the former Ghaggar-Hakkara and the Indus to understand changes in the “Indus Valley Civilization”¹⁸⁴. This civilization is believed to have succeeded the present agricultural settlements around the ‘Indus Valley’ such as the ‘Neolithic site of Mehrgarh’¹⁸⁵. Climate change played an important role in the decline of the Harappan civilization. Studies show that hydroclimatic stress, including floods and droughts, increased the vulnerability of agricultural production that supported “Harappan urbanism”. This led to settlement size reduction, crop diversification, and population migration to humid monsoon areas in upper Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh¹⁸⁶. Moreover, recent paleoclimate reconstructions suggest that a weakened monsoon system may have affected urban centers such as Harappa by the end of the ‘third millennium BC’¹⁸⁷.

The Harappan civilization is known for its sophisticated irrigation and storage systems developed in present-day Pakistan and northern India¹⁸⁸. The civilization-controlled settlements spread over a vast territory and area twice the size of ancient Mesopotamia¹⁸⁹ divided into five regions: “Northwest India, the Upper Indus Valley, Cholistan, the Lower Indus Valley, and Gujarat”¹⁹⁰. It was around 2500 BC where cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-daro flourished, demonstrating city planning and building techniques. With the decline of the IVC, the region fell a victim of dark phase with a speedy demotion from Urbanization to Pastoralism which is attested by the coming of the ‘Aryans’ and thus the ‘Vedic age begins’. With the passage of time, the structures dedicated to religion like temples, chaityas, stupas,

¹⁸³ Lemmen, C. and Khan, A. (2013). [A simulation of the neolithic transition in the indus valley. *Climates, Landscapes, and Civilizations*](#), 107-114.

¹⁸⁴ Rashid, H., England, E. V., Thompson, L. G., & Polyak, L. (2011). Late glacial to holocene indian summer monsoon variability based upon sediment records taken from the bay of bengal. *Terrestrial, Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences*, 22(2), 215-228. [https://doi.org/10.3319/tao.2010.09.17.02\(tibxs\)](https://doi.org/10.3319/tao.2010.09.17.02(tibxs))

¹⁸⁵ Raghavan, M., Schroeder, H., & Malaspinas, A. (2019). An ancient genome from the indus valley civilization. *Cell*, 179(3), 586-588. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2019.09.027>

¹⁸⁶ Giosan, L., Clift, P. D., Macklin, M. G., Fuller, D. Q., Constantinescu, S. N., Durcan, J. A., ... & Syvitski, J. P. M. (2012). Fluvial landscapes of the harappan civilization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(26). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1112743109>

¹⁸⁷ Schug, G. R., Blevins, K. E., Cox, B., Gray, K. M., & Mushrif-Tripathy, V. (2013). Infection, disease, and biosocial processes at the end of the indus civilization. *PLoS ONE*, 8(12), e84814. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0084814>

¹⁸⁸ Angelakis, A. N., Zaccaria, D., Krasilnikoff, J. A., Salgot, M., Bazza, M., Roccaro, P., ... & Fereres, E. (2020). Irrigation of world agricultural lands: evolution through the millennia. *Water*, 12(5), 1285. <https://doi.org/10.3390/w12051285>

¹⁸⁹ Recchia, G. and Louwerse, M. M. (2015). Archaeology through computational linguistics: inscription statistics predict excavation sites of indus valley artifacts. *Cognitive Science*, 40(8), 2065-2080. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.12311>

¹⁹⁰ Green, A. S. (2020). Killing the priest-king: addressing egalitarianism in the indus civilization. *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 29(2), 153-202. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10814-020-09147-9>

viharas, mosques and that of defence purposes like forts, increased in number as well as structure depending upon the surplus supporting such building ventures.

Architecture in Punjab before the advent of Islam was influenced by other cultures, like that of Indo-Greeks, Scythians, Parthians and Kishana's.¹⁹¹ Why we often skip the influence of these cultures is due to the fragile remains of their architecture in the region. As Islam arrived quite late in the 13th century CE, the first Islamic state being the Delhi Sultanate with limited resources initially to built grand structures. Initially, the building material of the existing or ruined temples was recycled like in case of the 'Quwat ul Islam Mosque', in the 'Qutub complex' Mehruli. The interesting feature of these early structures was the incorporation of the Indian style in making Islamic themes like arches and the domes. As can be apparently seen from the screen of the Quwat ul Islam Mosque, the arches have been made using the corbelling technique and thus these arches are not true in nature. In context of the secular realm, Islamic architecture is characterized by elements such as privacy, modesty and hospitality, which played an important role in shaping residential buildings, Palaces and *Sarai's* [generally used for the Inn for traders and other commuters but the term is often used in Turkish for Palace itself]¹⁹². The integration of Islamic design principles¹⁹³, such as symbols with minarets, arches and the dome¹⁹⁴, also contributed to the architectural landscape.¹⁹⁵ Prior to Islam, the region remained one of the important centres of Buddhism as well as Brahmanism. Importance of this region in the Buddhism may be understood from the fact that, some scholars even believe that the 4th Buddhist Council was held in Jalandhar, though there are other views regarding the place of the 4th Buddhist Council at Kashmir, especially in Harwan.¹⁹⁶ Thus, architectural development in Punjab shows a combination of influences from Hindu-Buddhist cultures and Islamic values, including those seen in Javanese Islamic architecture in Indonesia [mostly due to trade relations]¹⁹⁷. As Islam is against the depiction of zoo anthropomorphism [paintings of

¹⁹¹ Othman, Z., Aird, R., & Buys, L. (2015). Privacy, modesty, hospitality, and the design of muslim homes: a literature review. *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, 4(1), 12-23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2014.12.001>

¹⁹² Noaime, E., Osman, A. M., Said, M. A., Abdullah, G., Touahmia, M., Nasser, Y., ... & Hassan, M. K. (2020). A short review of influencing factors of islamic architecture in aleppo, syria. *Engineering, Technology & Applied Science Research*, 10(3), 5689-5693. <https://doi.org/10.48084/etasr.3447>

¹⁹³ Kamal, M. A. (2021). Minarets as a vital element of indo-islamic architecture: evolution and morphology. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 6(3), 203-209. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v6i3.7711>

¹⁹⁴ Babangida, H. and Katsina, H. S. (2018). Integrating islamic design principles for achieving family privacy in residential architecture. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 5(1), 9. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v5i1.4407>

¹⁹⁵ Ghasemzadeh, B., Fathebaghalli, A., & Tarvirdinassab, A. (2013). Symbols and signs in islamic architecture. *Revista Europeia De Estudos Artisticos*, 4(3), 62-78. <https://doi.org/10.37334/eras.v4i3.86>

¹⁹⁶ Handa, O. C.; Hāṇ ḍ ā, Omacanda (1994). *Buddhist Art & Antiquities of Himachal Pradesh, Up to 8th Century A.D.* Indus Publishing. pp-142, 38.

¹⁹⁷ Idham, N. C. (2021). Javanese islamic architecture: adoption and adaptation of javanese and hindu-buddhist cultures in indonesia. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, 45(1), 9-18. <https://doi.org/10.3846/jau.2021.13709>

animals, statues, sculptures etc], thus for the ornamentation, it introduced floral designs [like leaves, flowers especially the lotus] and the geometric designs. Though the lotus motif was prevalent in India since the Mauryan period and especially related to Buddha [may be considered the earliest evidence]. The inclusion of floral designs and the intricate geometric designs enriched the Indian architectural aesthetics thereof.¹⁹⁸ The architectural glory of Punjab thus attests the supra cited influences leading to rise of a composite architecture. Architectural heritage was associated with cultural significance, as historical sites reflect ancient civilizations and religious diversity.¹⁹⁹ The walled city of Multan in Punjab stands out for its architectural richness although facing challenges related to environmental conditions.²⁰⁰

It is not like that India was not aware of the architectural grandeur prior to the coming of the Muslims from Central Asia. There were numerous temples and monasteries in this area. Hindu shrines of all types and sizes were located on nearly every hill and spring. The cities were affluent and well-planned, resulting in impressive architecture. Hindu kings-built forts and palaces for themselves. Numerous remains from the early period of Indian civilization have been discovered. These remains, including Hindu temples, Buddhist temples, and Jain cave temples, indicate that the architecture of that era was made of stone, modeled after wooden prototypes. These structures featured beams and lintels supported by columns with brackets, and had roofs constructed in tapering horizontal courses forming a stepped pyramidal shape. Often, these buildings were set on solid octagonal bases.

Islam spread to India during the 8th century CE [712 CE],²⁰¹ introduced by Arab traders to the Malabar region of Kerala. Early Indo-Islamic architectural styles emerged in parts of Sindh and Gujarat during and after this period. The architectural richness of Islam is particularly evident in North India than in any other region of the country. The richness of Islamic architecture is more prominent in North India than in any other part of the country. Historical records show that public welfare initiatives began during Akbar's reign. The Islamic architectural style in this region was influenced by the imperial Mughal style while retaining

¹⁹⁸ Zagirova, G. (2022). The lotus in central asia: a sassanian motif in the islamic stucco decoration. *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art*, 12, 608-621. <https://doi.org/10.18688/aa2212-06-48>

¹⁹⁹ Fatima, Z., Ahmed, U., & Khursheed, A. (2023). Revitalizing the cultural heritage: assessing the historical significance and conservation potential of hindu sites in punjab, pakistan. *Annals of Social Sciences and Perspective*, 4(2), 321-330. <https://doi.org/10.52700/assap.v4i2.307>

²⁰⁰ Bo, A. D., Bignami, D. F., Bruno, F., Cardinale, M. V., & Perego, S. (2019). An experience of urban transformation in multan-pakistani punjab. *Research for Development*, 181-190. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33256-3_18

²⁰¹ India was not considered a country or nation, it was a geographical entity comprising of the present day India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh etc.

its unique identity and grandeur. In this context, Sirhind, located on the Grand Trunk Road about 30 miles north-west of Ambala city, emerged as an important center of Mughal architecture in the Punjab. Apart from Sirhind, Mughal monuments were seen in many other centers including Ludhiana, Patiala, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Nakodar, Faridkot, Sangrur, Nabha, Samana.²⁰²

The advent of Islam in Punjab significantly influenced its architecture and left a lasting impression on the built environment of the region. The earliest Islamic architectural influences in the Punjab can be traced to the Ghaznavids and Ghurids who established Muslim rule in the Punjab and Delhi respectively in the 11th and 12th centuries. However, it was during the time of the Delhi Sultanate that Islamic architecture flourished in Punjab along with its surrounding areas during the 13th to 16th centuries. The rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, particularly the Tughlaq and Lodhi dynasties, established many cities, forts, mosques and tombs incorporating various Islamic architectural elements. One of which is the "Lodhi Fort" built during the Lodhi dynasty, which is in the present city of Ludhiana. The architecture of forts in Punjab from the early to Sikh period reflects a blend of influences from various historical eras. Islamic architecture had a notable impact on 'Sikh architecture' in the Punjab region from the 16th to 19th centuries. The architectural splendour of certain historical edifices is a vivid drapery woven from diverse cultural influences. The exquisite 'onion domes, dazzling frescoes, intricate inlay work, and graceful multi-foil arches are emblematic of Mughal artistry, particularly' from the era of Shah Jahan. This period, known for its lavish and refined aesthetic, has left an indelible mark on the architectural heritage of the region. In harmonious contrast, the chattris, oriel windows, and bracket-supported eaves at the string-course, along with the ornate friezes, draw their inspiration from the rich traditions of Rajput architecture. These elements, with their robust and decorative forms, reflect the valor and artistic sensibilities of the Rajputana kingdoms. Together, these diverse influences create a harmonious blend, a testament to the cultural synthesis that characterizes the subcontinent's architectural legacy.²⁰³ Additionally, Hindu architecture also played a role in the origins of 'Gurudwara architecture', as seen in the distribution of architectural units.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Kaur, S. (2017). Ramification of Islamic Architecture in Punjab. *IRJMST*, 8(1).

²⁰³ Elgemaiey, G. (2021). The influences of Islamic architecture on Sikh architecture in punjab region from the 16th-19th ce. *Shedet*, 8(8), 111-138. <https://doi.org/10.21608/shedet.2021.207836>

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

The study of architectural features in historic monuments like ‘Haduwri Bagh Barhdari’ in Lahore sheds light on Mughal and Sikh architectural elements present in these structures.²⁰⁵ The forts in Punjab, particularly the oblong forts, share similar shapes and designs, suggesting a common period of construction, although dating these forts accurately has been a subject of debate.²⁰⁶ Radiocarbon dating has been instrumental in refining the chronology of fort construction in various regions, aiding in understanding temporal changes and architectural styles.²⁰⁷ The Sikh period in Punjab was marked by significant historical events, such as Baghel Singh’s conquest of Delhi, which is commemorated in various forms including modern paintings and displays in Sikh museums.²⁰⁸ The Sikh-Hindu dynamics in Punjab have a complex history dating back to the 19th century, with debates on the relationship between Sikhism and Hinduism.²⁰⁹

The economic landscape of Punjab, including the brick sector, has been a crucial aspect of its urban economy.²¹⁰ Cities such as Lahore, Multan and Sialkot in Punjab have become important centers of Islamic architecture that reflect a fusion of cultural influences. In context of bricks, the glory of the IVC may be recalled where baked bricks were extensively used from the construction of the houses to making of the drains and tanks like Great Bath, one of the marvels in brick masonry. The Mughal Empire significantly influenced the architectural landscape of these cities, introducing elements such as intricate designs, geometric patterns, and symmetrical layouts.²¹¹ First the rulers of the ‘Delhi Sultanate’, later the ‘Mughal rulers’, expanded their empire into the Punjab during the 15th and 16th centuries. He created many magnificent buildings combining Persian, Central Asian and Indian architectural styles. Like Lahore Fort, Badshahi Masjid, Jahangir's Tomb and Wazir Khan Masjid, there are many examples of Islamic architecture in Punjab which had a significant impact on the ‘culture and

²⁰⁵ Ashraf, M., Mahmood, S., Khalid, M., Shahbaz, S., Haq, M., & Bashir, A. (2021). Identifying mughal and sikh architectural features in a historic monument: a case study of haduwri bagh barhdari lahore. *Journal of Research in Architecture and Planning*, 30(1), 29-37. https://doi.org/10.53700/jrap3012021_4

²⁰⁶ O'Driscoll, J. and Noble, G. (2020). Survey and excavation at an iron age enclosure complex on turin hill and environs. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 149, 83-114. <https://doi.org/10.9750/psas.149.1284>

²⁰⁷ Vega, M. B., Craig, N., Culleton, B. J., Kennett, D. J., & Lindo, G. A. (2013). Ams radiocarbon dates from prehispanic fortifications in the huaura valley, central coast of peru. *Radiocarbon*, 55(01), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033822200047767>

²⁰⁸ Singh, K. (2020). Commemorating baghel singh’s ‘conquest’ of delhi: the fateh diwas. *Studies in History*, 36(2), 280-301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0257643020956625>

²⁰⁹ Fazal, T. (2021). Community, nation and region: shrimoni akali dal (sad) and the politics of community formation. *Sociological Bulletin*, 70(4), 557-573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380229211056403>

²¹⁰ Pervaiz, S., Akram, M. A. N., Khan, F. Z., Javid, K., & Zahid, Y. (2021). Brick sector and air quality: an integrated assessment towards 2020 challenge of environment development. *Environment and Natural Resources Journal*, 19(2), 153-164. <https://doi.org/10.32526/enrj/19/2020203>

²¹¹ Latiff, Z. A. and Yaman, M. M. (2017). A review into the islamic tradition in the mughal garden: (re)shaping our stand on islamic art and design. *Planning Malaysia*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.21837/pm.v15i1.232>

artistic history of Punjab'. Apart from these, there are many other types of architectural connections with the influence of which the buildings built in their time are showing their existence till today.

The influence of Afghan architecture on Punjab can be traced through the lens of sustainable construction practices. Ebrahimi²¹² highlight the significance of earthen architecture in Afghanistan, which forms the basis of Afghan architectural traditions. This emphasis on sustainable construction methods could have influenced architectural practices in Punjab, especially in the context of historical buildings and forts. Additionally, the structural setting and evolution of the Afghan Orogenic Segment, as discussed by Siehl,²¹³ provides insights into the geological influences that might have shaped architectural styles in the region. Understanding the geological context of Afghanistan can offer valuable perspectives on how architectural practices evolved and spread to neighbouring regions like Punjab. By examining the sustainable construction techniques and geological foundations of Afghan architecture, one can better appreciate the impact of Afghan architectural traditions on the architectural landscape of Punjab., particularly during the reign of the Afghan conqueror Ahmad Shah Durrani (also known as Ahmad Shah Abdali) in the 18th century, left a permanent mark on the architectural landscape of the region. Durrani's invasion into Punjab brought about a fusion of Afghan architectural elements with pre-existing indigenous styles resulting in a unique blend that characterizes many structures of the era. A major manifestation of Afghan influence in the architecture of Punjab is evident in the design of forts and forts. The Afghans were renowned for their military prowess and this was reflected in the fortifications they built throughout the region. These forts often feature strong walls made of thick brick or stone masonry fortified with strategically placed bastions and watchtowers along the perimeter. The layout of these forts usually follows a square or irregular polygonal plan designed to maximize defensive capabilities while providing enough space for garrisons and storage facilities inside.

In addition, the influence of Afghan architecture extended to the design of palace complexes and mosques. Palaces built during this period display a synthesis of Afghan and local architectural themes characterized by arched entrances, domed chambers and the use of wooden screens known as *jail's*. Although suited to Punjab's climate and cultural nuances, these features reflect the architectural styles prevalent in Afghanistan. Palaces as well as

²¹² Ebrahimi, M. H., Devillers, P., & Garcia-Diaz, E. (2021). Sustainable construction for affordable housing program in kabul. *Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs*, 6(1), 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.25034/ijcua.2022.v6n1-3>

²¹³ Siehl, A. (2015). Structural setting and evolution of the afghan orogenic segment – a review. *Geological Society, London, Special Publications*, 427(1), 57-88. <https://doi.org/10.1144/sp427.8>

mosques built under Afghan patronage exhibited a unique architectural vocabulary, blending elements of Afghan, Mughal and indigenous styles. Mosques often feature tall minarets, bulbous domes, and spacious prayer halls adorned with intricate stucco or tile work that reflect the region's religious fervour and cultural diversity. The urban layout of the cities and towns of Punjab bears the imprint of the principles of Afghan architectural planning. The establishment of bazaars, caravanserais and residential quarters followed a gridiron pattern with broad avenues intersecting each other at right angles, a testament to the pragmatic urban planning practices adopted by Afghan rulers to facilitate transport and trade. Overall, the Afghan influence on the architecture of Punjab enriched the region-built heritage, contributing to a diverse tapestry of architectural styles that resonates with the legacy of cross-cultural exchange and historical interaction between civilizations.

The influence of Mughal architecture in Punjab is deep and lasting due to the region's historical importance as a major center of Mughal power and cultural exchange. Mughal architectural elements are visible in various structures across Punjab, showcasing a blend of Persian and local traditional architectural styles that evolved into a distinct Mughal architectural identity.²¹⁴ The Mughal gardens, renowned for their grandeur and symmetry, have had a lasting influence on the architectural landscape of Punjab. Examples like the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore reflect the fusion of local culture with Islamic architectural principles.²¹⁵ Additionally, the Mughal influence extended to the design and ornamentation of buildings in Punjab, as evidenced by the incorporation of intricate tile mosaic work on monuments such as those in Agra and Doraha.²¹⁶ The Mughal architectural legacy in Punjab is also apparent in structures like the Haduwri Bagh Barhdari in Lahore, which displays typical Mughal architectural elements despite being built during the Sikh period.²¹⁷ Furthermore, the grandeur and detailed ornamentation characteristic of Mughal architectural style have inspired various architectural forms in Punjab, including Sikh buildings that show influences of Islamic architecture.²¹⁸ The Mughal architectural tradition, with its emphasis on symmetry, water features, and lush

²¹⁴ Jamil, F. and Gulzar, S. (2017). Historical development of dado ornamentation in mughal architecture. WIT Transactions on the Built Environment. <https://doi.org/10.2495/str170091>

²¹⁵ Khaskheli, R., Zhang, W., Shar, B. K., & Marvi, H. (2022). Representation in mughal architecture: a contextual analysis of shalimar gardens, lahore fort gardens and wah gardens. *Journal of Research in Architecture & Planning*, 32(2), 13-27. https://doi.org/10.53700/jrap3222022_2

²¹⁶ Gill, M. S. (2010). Material characterization of ceramic tile mosaic from two 17th-century islamic monuments in northern india. *Archaeometry*, 53(1), 22-36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4754.2010.00537.x>

²¹⁷ Ashraf, M., Mahmood, S., Khalid, M., Shahbaz, S., Haq, M., & Bashir, A. (2021). Identifying mughal and sikh architectural features in a historic monument: a case study of haduwri bagh barhdari lahore. *Journal of Research in Architecture and Planning*, 30(1), 29-37. https://doi.org/10.53700/jrap3012021_4

²¹⁸ Elgemaiey, G. (2021). The influences of islamic architecture on sikh architecture in punjab region from the 16th-19th ce. *Shedet*, 8(8), 111-138. <https://doi.org/10.21608/shedet.2021.207836>

gardens, has significantly influenced the architectural identity of Punjab, resulting in a unique amalgamation of Mughal, Persian, and local architectural elements.²¹⁹

The magnificence, symmetry, and complicated enhancement characteristics of Mughal architectural principles have left a permanent mark on the built environment of Punjab. Its mosques, forts, and palaces shape urban landscapes. One of the most iconic appearances of Mughal influence in Punjab is evident in the design and construction of forts. Mughal architectural elements can be observed in various forts across Punjab, showcasing a fusion of Persian and local traditional styles that evolved into a distinct Mughal architectural identity. The forts, constructed under Mughal power during the Delhi Sultanate and subsequent Mughal Empire periods, exhibit typical Mughal features such as intricate tile mosaic work, ornate designs, and strategic layouts²²⁰. Despite being built during the Sikh period, forts like 'Haduwri Bagh Barhdari in Lahore' display typical 'Mughal architectural elements', indicating a cross-fertilization of architectural styles.²²¹ Furthermore, the construction of forts in Punjab drew significantly on the Mughal architecture, as may be seen in case of the rulers like the Begums of Bhopal to assert themselves as inheritors of the Mughal legacy through their architectural endeavours.²²² This amalgamation of 'Mughal architectural influences' in the design and construction of forts in Punjab reflects a rich cultural and historical heritage that continues to shape the architectural landscape of the region. Built by the Mughals in Punjab, Lahore Fort displays the characteristics of magnificent Mughal architecture. Including massive sandstone walls, intricate tile work, calligraphy, and gateways adorned with strategically placed turrets and watchmen. These forts served not only as military strongholds but also as administrative centers, reflecting the Mughal emphasis on both security and prestige. Apart from this, the Mughals greatly influenced the development of mosques in Punjab. Mughal-style mosques in the region, such as the Badshahi Mosque²²³ in Lahore and the Wazir Khan Mosque²²⁴ in Lahore, have characteristic elements such as bubble domes, tall minarets, and large prayer halls

²¹⁹ Saquib, M. and Ali, A. (2023). Persian architecture: a source of inspiration for mughal imperial mosques in north india. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 7(4), 744-749. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v7i4.21013>

²²⁰ Umadi, R., Dookia, S., & Rydell, J. (2019). The monumental mistake of evicting bats from archaeological sites—a reflection from new delhi. *Heritage*, 2(1), 553-567. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage2010036>

²²¹ Ashraf, M., Mahmood, S., Khalid, M., Shahbaz, S., Haq, M., & Bashir, A. (2021). Identifying mughal and sikh architectural features in a historic monument: a case study of haduwri bagh barhdari lahore. *Journal of Research in Architecture and Planning*, 30(1), 29-37. https://doi.org/10.53700/jrap3012021_4

²²² Sharma, J. P. (2014). Sacralizing the city: the begums of bhopal and their mosques. *Creative Space*, 1(2), 145-165. <https://doi.org/10.15415/cs.2014.12007>

²²³ Meri, J. W. (2006). Medieval Islamic Civilization: A-K, index. In *Google Books* (p. 91). Taylor & Francis. https://books.google.co.in/books?id=MypbfKdMePIC&pg=PA91&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

²²⁴ Centre, U. W. H. (1993). *Wazir Khan's Mosque, Lahore*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1278/>

adorned with intricate marble inlays, geometric patterns, and floral motifs. These mosques exemplify the synthesis of 'Persian, Central Asian and Indian architectural' styles that define Mughal architecture while also incorporating local materials and craftsmanship. The complexes built by Mughal rulers and their nobles further exemplify the legacy of Mughal architecture in Punjab. The Sheesh Mahal (Palace of Mirrors) inside the Lahore Fort and the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore are prime examples of Mughal palace architecture in the region. These structures feature magnificent marble pavilions, reflecting pools, terrace gardens and decorative fountains that reflect the Mughal imagination for symmetry, geometric purity and the integration of nature into architectural design. Apart from the monumental structures, the Mughal influence extended to the urban planning and layout of the cities and towns of Punjab. The establishment of bazaars, caravanserais and residential quarters followed the principles of Mughal planning with markets centered on wide boulevards and enclosed gardens providing a harmonious combination of functionality and aesthetic appeal. The heritage of Mughal architecture in Punjab is a testament to the 'cultural richness and architectural sophistication' of the Mughal Empire that inspires wonder and admiration even centuries after its peak.

The exquisite symmetry and complexity characteristic of Persian architectural principles left an indelible mark on Punjab's built environment, shaping its mosques, tombs, palaces and urban landscape. One of the most significant manifestations of Persian influence in the Punjab is evident in the design and construction of mosques. Persian-style mosques in the region, such as the Sunehari Mosque²²⁵ in Lahore and the Shah Jahan Mosque²²⁶ in Thatta, display various Persian architectural elements, including bulbous domes, slender minarets, and intricate tilework adorning the facade and interior. goes the 'influence of Persian architecture' is also evident in the design and decoration of tombs and mausoleums in Punjab. Mughal-era tombs such as Jahangir's Tomb in Lahore and Nur Jahan's Tomb in Shahdara display Persian architectural elements such as intricate marble inlaid decorative carvings and geometric motifs, reflecting Mughal respect for Persian artistic traditions. The final phase of Mughal architecture, which did not oversee its creation by the dynasty itself and others adopted the style, is described

²²⁵ The Sunehari Mosque in Lahore is a significant historical and architectural landmark. The mosque's architecture reflects a blend of Islamic and local cultural influences, showcasing unique and exotic characteristics Fajariyah, L. (2021). Quranic values on the jamik mosque architecture in sumenep. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 6(3), 187-195. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v6i3.9921>

²²⁶ The Shah Jahan Mosque in Thatta is a significant historical and architectural landmark. Built in 1647, it stands as a testament to the Mughal architectural style of the era. The mosque is known for its intricate design and grandeur, reflecting the artistic and cultural richness of the Mughal period. The construction of the mosque was overseen during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan, known for his attention to detail and architectural patronage. Khazeni, A. (2014). *Sky Blue Stone: The Turquoise Trade in World History*. (p. 55). Univ of California Press.

by Percy Brown²²⁷ as "objective grandeur". During this period in the architectural landscape, creativity waned, and stagnation prevailed. Percy Brown explained this situation in the following words. which is as follows-

“The art appears to have reached that point at which all the essential problems of construction had been solved, and when the major elements of the style had been brought to perfection, so that no further progress was possible! in a word it had not only reached the limit of its performance but had gone beyond it. In these circumstances the workmen found that the only hope of advance lay in the direction of the elaboration and repetition to a larger scale of that which had been already brought to the highest degree of fulfilment.”²²⁸

Sikh architecture is deeply rooted in the principles of Sikhism which reflects the ‘religious, cultural and social values of the Sikh community’, the tendency of absorbing other elements. It emerged as a distinct style during the Sikh Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, characterized by its fusion of Islamic, Hindu and indigenous Punjabi architectural elements. Central to Sikh architecture is the ‘Gurdwara’, a place of ‘worship for Sikhs’. The most spectacular example is the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple)²²⁹ in Amritsar. It was built by the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev. It has a unique blend of ‘Mughal and traditional Indian’ architecture. The Harmandir Sahib is surrounded by a large tank and is connected to the mainland by a causeway symbolizing the soul's journey towards spiritual enlightenment. During the reign of ‘Maharaja Ranjit Singh’, there was a significant development in the architecture of buildings in Punjab. The architectural style during this period, often referred to as Sikh architecture, was a combination of Mughal, Hindu and European influences. The most prominent feature of the buildings of this era was the use of red brick and lime mortar in construction. Buildings were often adorned with intricate frescoes, intricate woodwork, and decorative arches. The use of domes and minarets was also common in Sikh architecture, reflecting the influence of elements of Mughal architecture. The most famous example of Sikh architecture from the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar, also known as Harmandir Sahib. This famous Sikh Gurdwara exhibits a combination of Mughal and Sikh architectural styles with its golden dome and white marble lower level. Another important architectural achievement of this period is the Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar, which

²²⁷ Percy Brown. (1942). Indian Architecture. In *Internet Archive* (p. 106).
<https://archive.org/details/IndianArchitecture/page/n193/mode/2up?view=theater>

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Fenech, L. E., & McLeod, W. H. (2014). Historical Dictionary of Sikhism. In *Google Books* (p. 146).
Rowman & Littlefield.
https://books.google.co.in/books?id=xajcAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA146&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

was renovated and expanded during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The fort is a combination of Mughal and European military architecture with thick walls, bastions and gates. The palaces and havelis built during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh also reflect the architectural style of that time. These structures often include large courtyards, elaborate windows (mounted balconies) and decorative elements such as fresco and stucco work. Other important features of Sikh architecture are as follows:

The religious places of Sikhs are called “Gurdwara Sahib”. Gurudwara means Guru (Guide or teacher) da “Dwara” (Gateway)²³⁰. They usually have a square or rectangular layout with a central prayer hall Darbar Sahib²³¹ where the “Guru Granth Sahib” (Sikh holy book) is illuminated. Architecture emphasizes equality and community by providing equal access to people of all religions regardless of social discrimination or gender. Many Sikh buildings, including gurdwaras, feature a dome as a symbol of spiritual authority and protection. These domes are often decorated with decorative features such as lotus flowers, kalash (vessels), and Sikh symbols such as the khanda. Sikh architecture is heavily influenced by Mughal architecture, particularly in the use of domes, tables and decorative ornamentation. However, Sikh architects adapted these elements to suit their own religious and cultural sensibilities. Sikh architecture can be ornate but it also emphasizes simplicity and functionality. Rather than ostentatious, it is based on spiritual symbolism that reflects the Sikh values of humility and service.

Gemaiey El Ghada, says that Islamic architecture has had a significant impact on Sikh architecture-

"Sikh architecture is considered young compared to Mughal or Persian architecture. They directly influenced it because the Sikh religious building did not require its display and worship. To further explain the influence of Persian architecture on Sikh architecture As a result of being a fugitive at the Persian court, Humayun (1531-1556 AD) brought Persian influence to the Indian architectural tradition, which improved the Mughal architectural style. The Sikh style of architecture was therefore the result of political relations between the Mughals and the Safavids Sikh architecture was a fusion of both styles. Besides, the Punjab region always kept in touch with Persian culture and art. The Sikhs started building new cities that reflected their own ideas and beliefs There were various historical places such as Kartarpur, Goindwal, and Amritsar where some of the cities developed to house the seat of government The pattern followed, where the various nodes served as the beads and the streets or connecting threads that interweaved those beads. There are regional connections to connect the new

²³⁰ This Gurmukhi script sentence is written in English language.

²³¹ Darbar Sahib at this place means the place where the holy Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs is kept and read.

settlements with major destinations like Delhi and Lahore. The city first housed the Akal Takht, then Lohgarh Fort and Bibeksar, a secular complex”.²³²

Highlights the influence of ‘Islamic architecture’ on “Sikh architecture in the Punjab region” from the “16th to the 19th century”. Gurdwara-like structures exhibit a fusion of Mughal Indian, Safavid, and Sikh architectural elements.²³³ Sikh architecture has been observed by historians in monuments such as Haduri Bagh Barandari in Lahore. It may incorporate typical Mughal architectural features, blurring the distinction between the two styles. In contrast Mughal architecture as discussed by²³⁴ is often placed in the Persian world. Scholars such as James Ferguson and Percy Brown have classified it as Persian in origin due to its Islamic nature. This view has influenced the perception of Mughal architecture as more Persian than Indian. In addition, the creative ‘influence of Mughal gardens’ on urban spaces exemplified by the Capital Complex in Chandigarh is discussed,²³⁵ highlighting the Mughal legacy in shaping the architectural symbols of independent India. Although Sikh architecture can be considered relatively young, Sikh heritage sites such as the Gurdwara Guru Singh Sabha in Mansehra have continued to represent the Sikh state in the region through conservation efforts and tourism potential²³⁶. Emphasizing the importance of Overall the architectural landscape in the Punjab region reflects a rich tapestry of influences from Mughal, Persian and Sikh traditions each contributing to the unique architectural identity of the region.

‘Maharaja Ranjit Singh’, who became ruler in ‘1799 AD’, played a key role in the establishment and expansion of the Sikh Empire. He united various Sikh factions, expanded the empire to include parts of present-day Afghanistan and Kashmir, and established a strong rule over much of the Punjab²³⁷. Under his rule the baptized Keshadhari Jats played an

²³² Gemaiey, G. El. (2021). THE INFLUENCES OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE ON SIKH ARCHITECTURE IN PUNJAB REGION FROM THE 16th-19th CE. [Shedet](#).

²³³ Ashraf, M., Mahmood, S., Khalid, M., Shahbaz, S., Haq, M., & Bashir, A. (2021). Identifying mughal and sikh architectural features in a historic monument: a case study of haduwri bagh barhdari lahore. *Journal of Research in Architecture and Planning*, 30(1), 29-37. https://doi.org/10.53700/jrap3012021_4

²³⁴ Chida-Razvi, M. (2019). Resituating mughal architecture in the persianate world: new investigations and analyses. *South Asian Studies*, 35(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2019.1628690>

²³⁵ Jahnkassim, P. S. and Nawawi, M. (2016). Allusions to mughal urban forms in the monumentality of chandigarh’s capitol complex. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, 40(3), 177-190. <https://doi.org/10.3846/20297955.2016.1210050>

²³⁶ Nazar, S. (2021). Conservation issues of sikh gurudwara guru singh sabha at mansehra and its tourism potential. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 5(II), 36-60. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-ii\)2.4](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-ii)2.4)

²³⁷ Tu, H., Zhang, Y., & Wang, J. (2022). The rise of sikh empire and its influence on the indian subcontinent. *Asia Social Science Academy*, 9(1), 21-31. <https://doi.org/10.51600/jass.2022.9.1.21>

important role in the rise of Sikh power and developed into a landed aristocracy²³⁸. The Sikh state experienced economic and social growth during his rule, fostering a sense of Punjabi cultural identity²³⁹. Maharaja Ranjit's expansionist policies led to the occupation and construction of forts in his kingdom. Notably the Haveli Naunehal²⁴⁰ in Lahore was built as a private residence for his grandson under his patronage²⁴¹. In addition, his reign saw the incorporation of independent princely states into the Sikh Empire, further strengthening his territorial control²⁴². Apart from this, the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh had a significant influence on the Indian subcontinent. The empire's influence extended to areas such as Kashmir, where the transition of power from the Mughals to the Afghans and eventually to the Sikhs was a significant period in the region's history²⁴³. The military might of the Sikh Empire was recognized by the British, who recruited large numbers of Sikhs to defend the British-Indian border²⁴⁴. Maharaja Ranjit Singh occupied many forts, some of which were demolished and rebuilt and some were kept as they were. Among these, the forts in Indian Punjab are highlighted in section 3.1. In order to supplement textual and archival sources, the present study also incorporates visual and field-based evidence collected during extensive site visits to forts and fortified settlements across Punjab. Since many of these structures have undergone restoration, modification, or partial destruction over time, the authentication and critical examination of visual material becomes essential for historical and architectural analysis.

Sources and Authentication of Visual Material

In addition to textual and archival sources, the present study relies extensively upon visual and field-based evidence for reconstructing the architectural history and functional evolution of

²³⁸ Bal, G. (2006). Entrepreneurship among diasporic communities. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 15(2), 181-203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097135570601500205>

²³⁹ Ikeda, A. (2019). The european influence on sikh portraiture: representations of maharaja ranjit singh, sher-e-punjab (the lion of the punjab). *Chitrolekha Journal on Art and Design*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.21659/cjad.31.v3n101>

²⁴⁰ Shujrah, M. (2016, June 20). *In the Heart of Lahore: Nau Nihal Singh Haveli - Mahnaz Shujrah - Youlin Magazine*. www.youlinmagazine.com. <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/story/nau-nihal-singh-haveli-lahore/NjEy>

²⁴¹ Zulfiqar, Z. (2018). Tracing the origin of jharokha window used in indian subcontinent. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 5(2), 70-76. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v5i2.4763>

²⁴² Hussain, M. (2022). Abrogation of article 370: a state project of legibility and simplification. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 59(4), 1249-1262. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096221130705>

²⁴³ Chattopadhyay, K. (2009). k ashmir, popular struggles to 1947. *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198073.wbierp0838>

²⁴⁴ Singh, K. (2016). A wedding party, something old, something new: the history of the formation of the british-sikh regiments. *HumaNetten*, (36), 57-80. <https://doi.org/10.15626/hn.20163605>

forts in Punjab. Since several forts examined in this study have undergone phases of destruction, reconstruction, renovation, and adaptive reuse during the colonial and post-colonial periods, the authentication and critical evaluation of visual material becomes methodologically essential. The use of photographs in the present research therefore extends beyond mere illustration and forms an integral component of historical and architectural analysis. A substantial portion of the photographs included in this study has been produced by the researcher during extensive field visits to forts and fortified sites across Punjab. These field investigations formed an important component of the research methodology and enabled direct observation of architectural features, spatial organization, defensive planning, construction materials, and the present physical condition of the monuments under study. The use of original field photography has allowed the researcher to document several structural features that are either absent from published works or insufficiently represented in existing archival material.

The visual material used in the study has been supplemented by Archaeological Survey of India reports, Punjab District Gazetteers, conservation records, historical descriptions, and relevant archival references. Wherever possible, the present architectural condition of forts has been compared with earlier documentary and historical evidence in order to identify structural continuity, later modifications, restoration interventions, and changes in defensive layout. Such comparative examination enables a more historically grounded understanding of the architectural evolution of Sikh-period forts. The methodology adopted in the present study involves direct field observation of architectural features including gateways, bastions, defensive walls, battlements, watchtowers, courtyards, moat systems, and artillery positions. Particular attention has been paid to masonry techniques, building materials, spatial planning, and defensive arrangements in order to distinguish original structural components from later additions and reconstruction work. Since many forts have undergone restoration and conservation interventions in recent decades, especially under tourism and heritage preservation programmes, the present appearance of certain structures does not always correspond to their original nineteenth-century condition. Consequently, visual evidence has been critically examined alongside contemporary historical records and archaeological documentation.

Archaeological Survey of India reports provide important information regarding the conservation history, architectural layout, and structural condition of several forts examined in this study.²⁴⁵ Similarly, Punjab District Gazetteers contain valuable references concerning the

²⁴⁵ Archaeological Survey of India Reports, Punjab Circle.

historical background, strategic location, administrative role, and military significance of various forts during the Sikh and colonial periods.²⁴⁶ These materials have been used to authenticate and contextualize the visual and architectural observations recorded during fieldwork. In order to strengthen the reliability of the visual analysis, the study also correlates field observations with descriptions available in nineteenth-century historical accounts and colonial records. Such comparison assists in identifying alterations in gateways, defensive walls, internal complexes, and artillery positions resulting from warfare, colonial occupation, environmental damage, or later restoration activities. The combined use of field photography, archival records, and historical descriptions therefore contributes to a more critical and historically reliable reconstruction of Sikh-period military architecture. The incorporation of original field photography further contributes to understanding the relationship between military architecture and regional geography. The strategic positioning of forts near rivers, trade routes, frontier zones, and urban centres becomes more evident through direct field observation and visual documentation. Photographic evidence also assists in examining the adaptation of fort architecture to artillery warfare, particularly in relation to bastion construction, cannon placements, defensive perimeters, and strategic elevation. The present study therefore adopts an interdisciplinary methodological approach combining historical analysis, architectural observation, archaeological evidence, and visual documentation. By integrating original field photography with archival and textual sources, the research seeks to provide a more comprehensive and historically authenticated interpretation of forts and fortifications in Punjab during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

²⁴⁶ Punjab District Gazetteers.

3.1 Gobindgarh Fort

Gobindgarh Fort is located in Amritsar. The latitude of Gobindgarh Fort is 31.626913, and the longitude is 74.86018. The fort is situated about 0.5 km outside the 'walled city'. Located at “Vijay Chowk”, the fort is about 2 km from the bus stand, 1 km from the railway station and about 12 km from the International airport. (Plate.3)

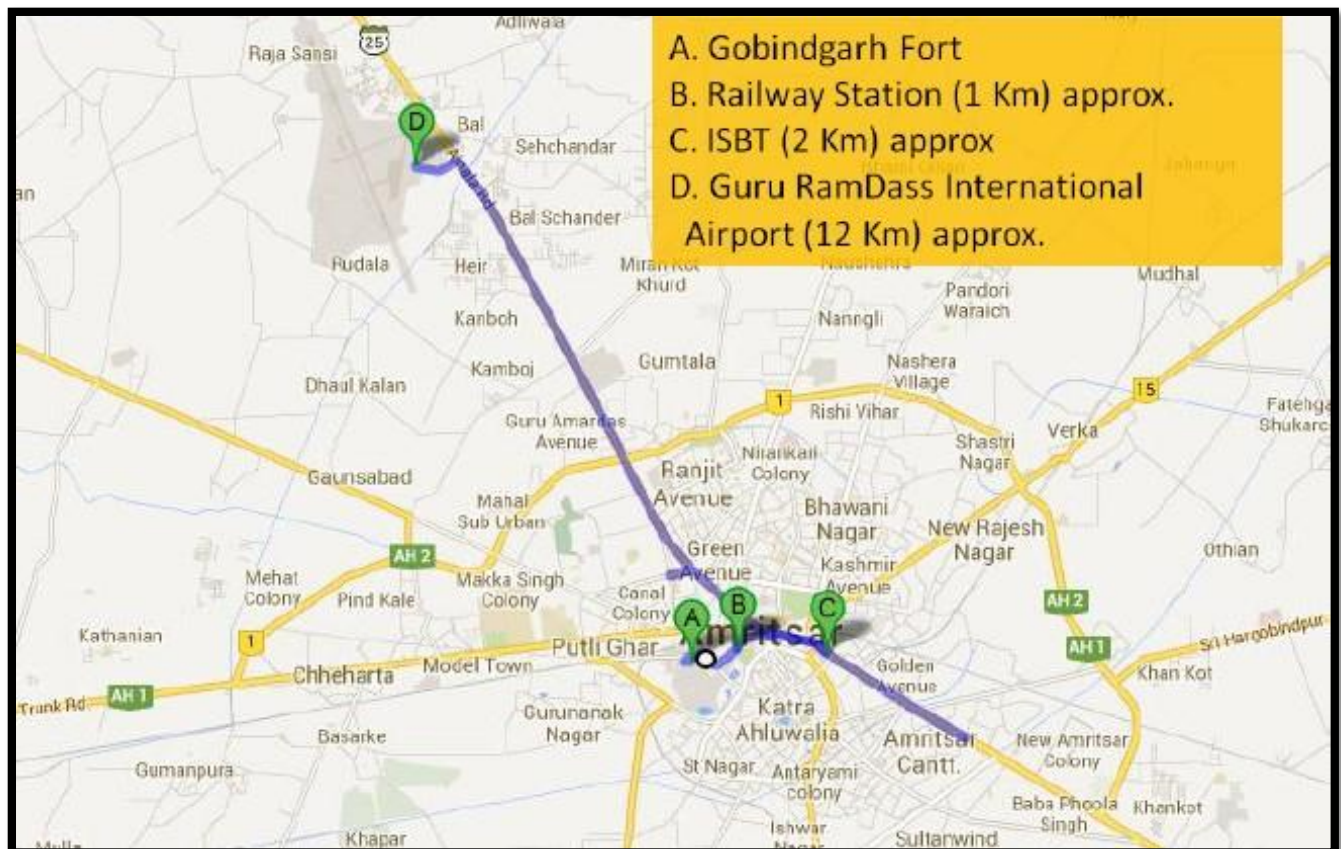


Plate. 3 Location and Accessibility of Gobindgarh Fort, Amritsar, showing its spatial relationship with major transportation nodes including the railway station, ISBT, and Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport. The map highlights the strategic urban location of the fort within the contemporary landscape of Amritsar.

Source: Prepared by the researcher using Google Maps data and field survey observations. Google Maps location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/EqdobKQXMHtGQTVw8>

3.1.1 Unique fortification system

No clear distinction can be made between the 'Bhangi Kal' period and the construction of the 'walls and gates' of the fort during Ranjit Singh's reign. However, the 'ravleen' (outer defense wall) was an important contribution of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time. The fort had a two-tiered system of fortifications, with a 'ravlin' surrounded by a 5-metre deep moat. These double-tiered fort walls were strategically designed to provide an effective defense system. The walls

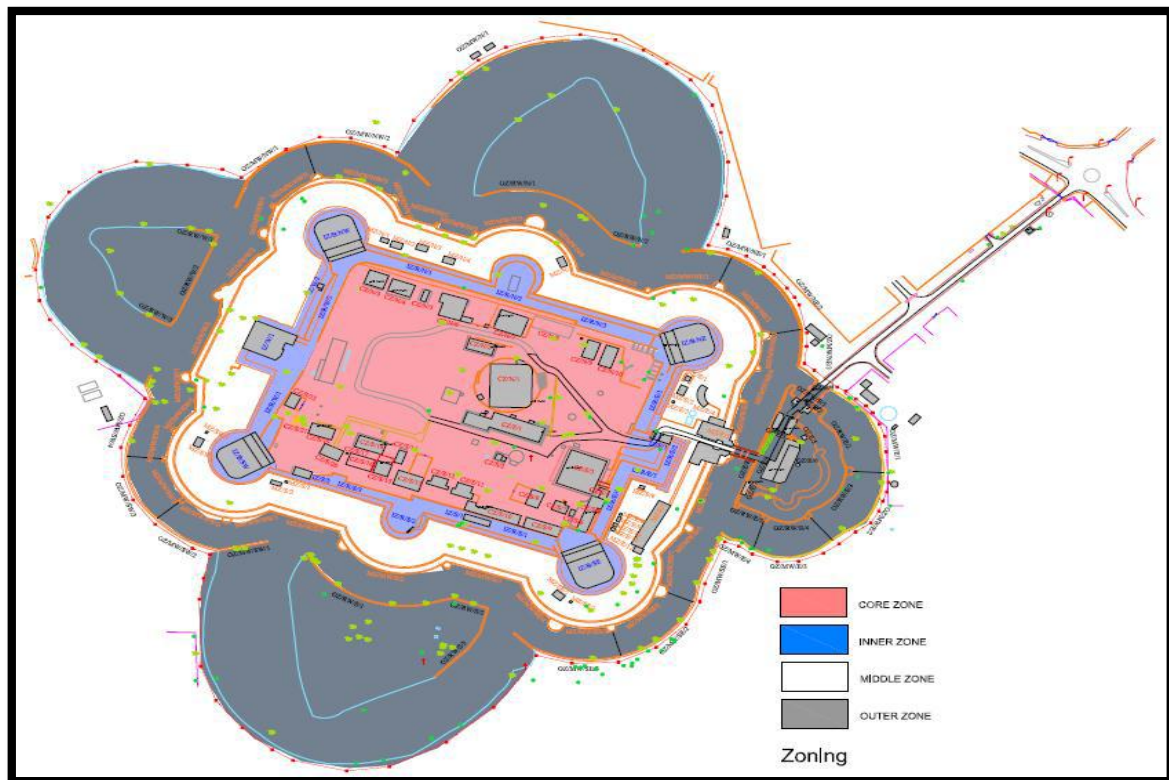


Plate. 4 Zonal Plan and Defensive Layout of Gobindgarh Fort, Amritsar, illustrating the spatial organization of the fort into core, inner, middle, and outer defensive zones. The plan highlights the strategic arrangement of bastions, gateways, defensive perimeters, and internal structures, reflecting the military planning and fortified architectural character of Sikh-period defence systems.

Source: Reproduced from conservation and architectural planning records of Gobindgarh Fort, Amritsar. Adapted by the researcher for academic use.

themselves were 10-12 meters thick, with a clay core reinforced by Nanakshahi bricks with lime mortar on either side. Thick mud walls served as absorbent barriers during artillery fire. The flat terrain and the presence of “advanced European artillery” presented significant threats and challenges to the defense of the fort. By 1823, “Maharaja Ranjit Singh” had erected a “Fuaz-e-Khas”²⁴⁷ with the help of ‘French military officers’. Along with the ‘French war

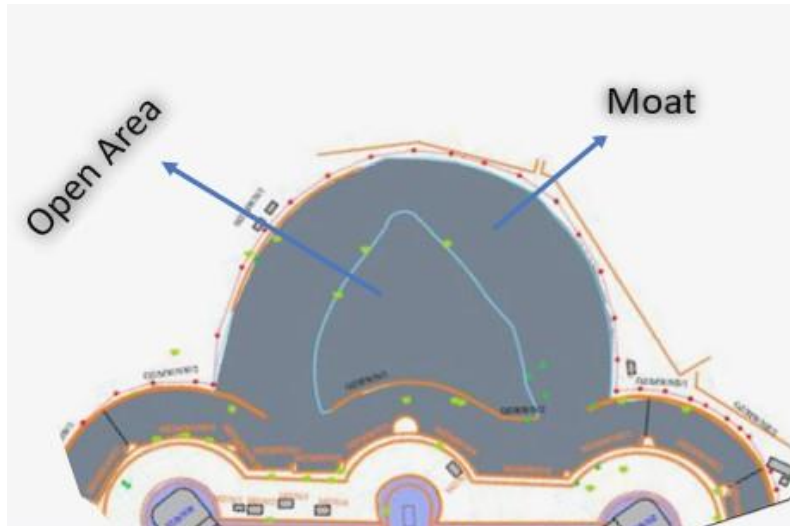
²⁴⁷ The Fauj-e-Khas was an elite brigade within the Fauj-e-Aam division of the Sikh Khalsa Army in Punjab. Consisting of highly skilled and experienced soldiers, it carried its own distinct flag and insignia. Modeled on French military discipline, Fauj-e-Khas was noted for its strict training and strict organizational structure. The

techniques’, these officers also brought with them the ‘French contemporary fortification systems’ to support them. The Maharaja adopted these systems at ‘Gobindgarh Fort’ to strengthen the earthen fort. (Plate. 4)

No.	Area	Square meter
Outer zone		
1	Outer zone total area	94541.82
2	Built up area	585.46
3	Revelin area	22122.43
4	Moat area	72419.39
Middle zone		
1	Total area	29660.67
2	Built up area	1174.66
3	Open area	28486.1
Inner zone		
1	Total built up area	15995.21
Core zone		
1	Total area	30855.87
2	Built up area	4868.32
3	Open area	25987.55

Ravlain – “As the high lands sloped outwards. Similarly, screens were made in front of the walls of the fort. These provided the defender with an ideal position to place his cannon at a high level and get a wide range of the enemy at low level while the enemy had his cannon exposed in a vulnerable position. Even if the enemy succeeded in climbing the ravelins (Plate. 4.1), the enemy guns from the ramparts and turrets of the fort would be easy targets. Revillon thus served as a double line of defense for the fort”.

brigade was equipped with high-quality weapons and equipment, making it the best organized and strongest segment of the regular army.



(Plate. 4.1) **Ravlain**, Source - Draft Feasibility Report

3.1.2 Outer Gateway of the Gobindgarh Fort

The *entrance or 'Gobindgarh Deodhi'* structure is two storied with a height of about 24ft. The entrance is approximately twenty feet high with a true arched design set in a single archway horseshoe-shaped multi-semi-circular arch fused at the top. It is decorated with spandrel vine and floral motifs. The front of the entrance has blind spots in rectangular patterns. Beyond the archway are guard rooms to the left and right. An iron bell is placed on the right outside the entrance gate structure.

This is a Bell that was manufactured in 1863 AD by Naylor Vickers & Co. This clock was made in Sheffield, a city in the United Kingdom, which was brought to Amritsar. (Plate. 5)



(Plate. 5)The bell Source- Clicked by Scholar

After passing from Deori, when we cross the moat bridge, we come to **Nalwa Gate (Plate. 6)**. This gate is built in the memory of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's great General '*Hari Singh Nalwa*'.

"Nalwa Gate" of Gobindgarh Fort. The fort is named after the famous "Commander-in-Chief" of the "Khalsa Army", Hari Singh Nalwa. A unique figure in Sikh history, Hari Singh Nalwa held the position of "Commander-in-Chief from 1791 to 1837 during the Sikh Empire".

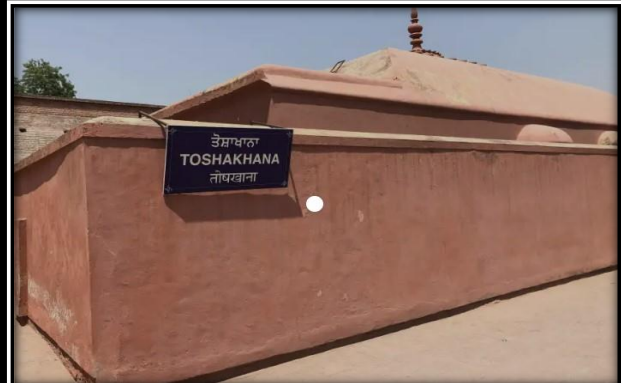


(Plate.6) Nalwa Gate, Source- Clicked by Scholar

Renowned for his unparalleled bravery and strategic skill, he played a vital role in the successful conquests of Kashmir, Peshawar and Jamrod.

The Keller Gate serves as the rear entrance to the fort, opening into Ravlin on its western side. The fort housed 25 cannons, adding to its strong defences. The three towers, connected by a rampart, represent the core values that form a cohesive foundation: martial traditions, a multicultural philosophy, a progressive, creative, and practical outlook, a commitment to resisting oppression, and supporting vulnerable people. A spiritual basis for the protection of Butresses also serve as viewing platforms for troop parades and ceremonial events. Surrounding the fort is a bungalow, built for the fort commander, where the bricks of the old Sikh structure were repurposed in the process of building. We have divided the buildings in Gobindgarh Fort into two parts which are given in Table.

3.1.3 Architecture builds during the Sikh Empire before the arrival of the Britishers

The building is here referred by their common names		
Sr. No.	Name of Building	Picture of Building
1	Circle plinth of bungalow (Dyer's bungalow)	
2	Toshakhana (Coin Museum)	
3	Bastion (The Towers)	

The structure is located at the geometric center of the fort complex, indicating its importance as a primary building. The circular plinth, the only surviving element of the Sikh era, highlights its rich architectural heritage (Plate 7). It is believed to have served as a base for the tall, conical



(Plate.7) Front view source –clicked by scholar

structure based on similar contemporary buildings. The plinth is raised and supported by an outer masonry wall, with intricate decorative masonry detailing. These circular battens are topped with a large capital, adorned with three masonry cornice bands. The cornice extends outwards along the circular wall at plinth level. The platform is built with lime mortar and mortar using 'Nanakshahi bricks'²⁴⁸, and the masonry is finely detailed. A layer of lime plaster may have been applied to the surface for curing and finishing.

In this plinth:

- Plinth Height, approximately 20ft
- The number of stairs is around 25
- It has a brick railing with six semi-octagonal pillars

The structure was originally built using lime plaster (Plate 8) and was built as a Toshakhana by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Centrally located under the northern fort wall, it is a square building divided into “two chambers”. The walls are reinforced with an ornamental masonry tower with three-headed tapering columns with domestic capitals. The chambers have ‘low vaulted ceilings’, covered by a single overarching vault, forming a double-vault system. The “1.5-

²⁴⁸ **Nanakshahi bricks**, also known as **Lakhuri bricks**, were decorative bricks commonly used in structural walls during the Mughal period. These bricks were integral to the construction of important historical Sikh architecture including the Harmandir Sahib complex. Over time, their use expanded, and they became widely employed in Punjab during the British colonial era, continuing their legacy in architectural construction.

meter-thick walls” and masonry are made of Nanakshahi bricks bound with lime mortar. Along the walls of the building were quarters for the soldiers. On the south side, a copper electrical transmission system was invented.

A replica of ‘*Kohinoor diamond*²⁴⁹’ can also be seen here. It is said that no jeweller has



(Plate. 8) Outer view Source- Clicked by



(Plate. 9) Inner view Source- Clicked by Scholar

been able to guess the value of the Kohinoor diamond. Kohinoor is probably the most famous diamond in the world because it was placed here before the British took it away (Plate. 9), which has made the entire country curious about the fort.

It attracts a diverse range of tourists, making it one of the top tourist destinations in India. Legend has it that Maharaja Ranjit Singh stored a huge treasury inside the fort, including precious jewels, gold and silver worth 30 lakhs (the royal currency of the time), which was guarded by 2,000 soldiers.

➤ The Towers (Bastions)

The fort features four towers positioned at its four key points (Plate 10), strategically placed for defense. Each tower is built on an elevated circular plinth integrated into the rampart wall. These robust conical masonry towers are topped with a continuous crenellation band at the upper level.

The Koh-i-Noor was a very valuable diamond presented to Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Shah Shuja and his wife Wafa Begum. Wafa Begum once described its value by saying that if a strong man threw a stone in the four cardinal directions and vertically, the value of the Koh-e-Noor would exceed the amount of gold and precious stones. will give which can fill the resulting space. When not in use, Maharaja Ranjit Singh kept the diamond safe in the Gobindgarh Fort. During transport, it was kept in a pannier on a guarded camel, with 39 other camels carrying identical panniers to maintain secrecy. The Koh-i-Noor was always carried on the first camel behind the guards, but its exact location was kept a closely guarded secret. Only Ranjit Singh's treasurer Misr Beli Ram knew which camel had the diamond. This reference is from the book "Koh-i-Noor: The History of the World's Most Infamous Diamond" (2017) by “William Dalrymple and Anita Anand”.

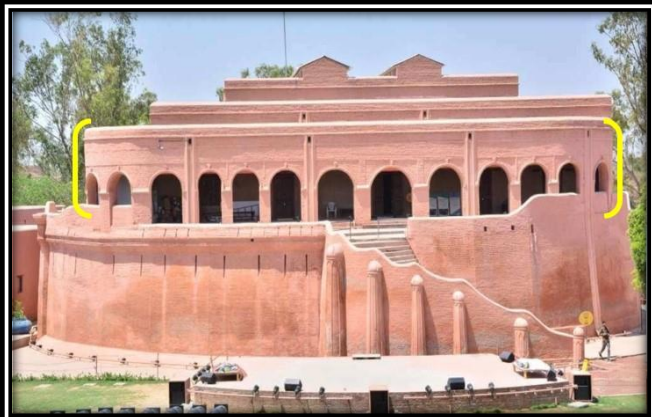
At this point, the towers could be open to the sky.



(Plate. 10) Source- Google Earth

3.1.4 Architecture Built after the Arrival of Britisher's

The buildings are commonly known by their popular names:

Sr. No.	Name of the building	Picture of the building
1	The roof of Towers	
2	The Bungalow (Ancient warfare repository)	

3	Darbar Hall	
4	Barracks (Coffee House)	
5	Chloronium House (Fansi Ghar)	

➤ **The roof of the towers**

After the British took over the fort in the mid-1850s, there was no danger of war against the controlling East India Company, except for a few local revolts which were minor issues, and the use of the fort as an army. There was no need. Active Complex By 1859 the towers began to be used primarily as barracks for residential troops. Because the cannons were no longer fired into the towers (the effect of the cannon fire was no longer a factor), they were used for housing instead. The British drew up the plan for the maintenance, management, and reuse of Gobindgarh Fort, who then rebuilt the roofs on the towers. A changing political landscape began to change the use of the building,

resulting in changes. The interior arched walls were then built into thin sections, repeating the down arrows to raise the walls to the required ceiling level. A typical Madras roof - a traditional flat roof with wooden beams, Perlin, and mud roof tiles, which originated in South India and was adopted by the British - was constructed. Semicircular blogging latticework with ventilated pitched roofs and centrally open skylights were constructed to accommodate the lighting conditions at these large barracks.

➤ **The bungalow (Ancient warfare repository)**



(Plate. 11) Front side source –clicked by scholar



(Plate. 12) Back side source –clicked by scholar

either during or after the occupation of the fort. However, it is worth noting that the British seem to have pulled the building down from the plinth level and re-used the same material to build the superstructure. The central location of the building illustrates its importance in the Sikh era. In 1864(Plate. 11,12), a rectangular superstructure with four officers' quarters was erected (there is a legend that it was a bungalow, but this cannot be confirmed). A magnificent colonial staircase was built with decorative masonry butters.

It is a semi-spiral staircase on the east side, while a service staircase is also on the west side. However, the year of its construction cannot be determined. The design of the quarters was such that all four quarters had individual entrances and a verandah at the

rear. There were 2-3 small living rooms in each quarter. A kitchen and quarters of 8 servants are also recorded to be present, although the evidence on site cannot be confirmed in the present context. According to records, it was made by reusing Nanak Shahi bricks in clay mortar, the flooring was made of cement concrete, while the roof was made of flat tiles like a mud roof.

➤ **Darbar Hall**

The Durbar Hall is located at the eastern end, near the center of the north-south axis. It can be reached through the main road passing through the inner gate. Located on the



(Plate. 13) Source- Clicked by Scholar

south side of the road and to the east of the bungalow (Plate 13), the preserved design of the plinth and wooden louvers suggests that the entrance is on the west side. Historical records show the building was built in the 1850s as a six-bed hospital. It follows a classic colonial architectural style, with a rectangular two-storey layout and a colonnaded verandah surrounding both floors.

The ground floor is divided into three bays of rooms and further divided into two to three rooms. It has a high ceiling. A magnificent masonry staircase with wooden railings leads to the upper floor. Although the ground floor could be a hospital, the upper floor - with a large hall and oval, bright decorative ventilators - is not suitable for this type of use. The use of the floor and its construction period is not specified. It is a large public hall with four fireplaces reflecting a festive mood. The walls are of Nanak Shahi bricks with clay mortar, although it is important to note that special bricks (especially bricks with covering edges) were used in the columns and columns, the floors were of cement concrete. The porch had interesting wooden louvers and bracing rails to keep out the heat of the tropics. The roof and middle floor had a system of

wooden beams (especially the carved edges) that rested on wooden brackets, wooden purlins, and mud-roofed brick tiles.

➤ **Barracks (Coffee House)**

This structure is located near the south side of the bungalow. The original Sikh building likely had a modest scale and an unobstructed design that complemented the bungalow's circular Sikh



(Plate. 14)Source- Clicked by Scholar

plinth. However, colonial modifications have altered the scale and proportions of the building, making it difficult to fully appreciate the bungalow's round Sikh plinth. The building was built on the remains of an earlier Sikh structure, with thick north and south walls and distinctive multi-foliated, orchid-shaped decorative shells, confirming its origin. The central core rooms are believed to be of Sikh origin, later rebuilt in the 1850s as a colonial building during British rule. This rectangular building was divided, east-west, into smaller rooms (Plate 14). A settlement verandah was situated to the west. The building served as a mess hall and barracks for the officers. The thick north-south walls of the Sikh period are made of Nanakshahi bricks with lime mortar, while the walls of the British period are made of non-royal brick and clay mortar. The original flooring is unknown, but during the British period, it was replaced with cement concrete. The original masonry vaulted ceiling, typical of Sikh era buildings, was replaced with an interesting wooden truss system, covered with tiles and mud infill.

➤ **Chloronom house (Fansi Ghar)**

The building is on the west side of “Darbar Hall” and in front of “Mess Hal”¹. It is a “colonial-era” building built in 1853 (according to “MES records” - date of purchase/purchase), used to treat and purify water by “chlorination”.

It was built near a “Sikh-era well”, which was used as a “chlorinating tank”. It has two rooms (Plate. 15), one of which has a ‘circular hole’ to hold the chlorination device

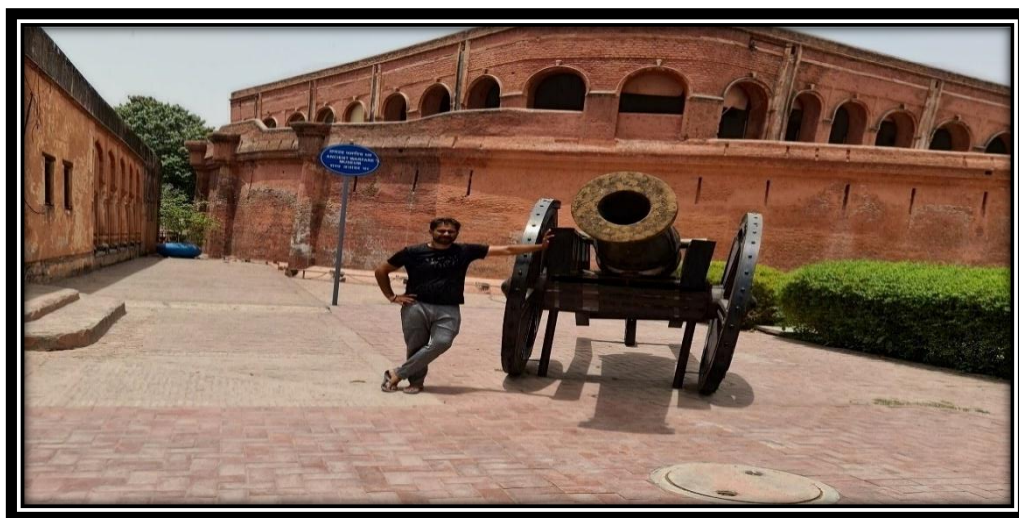


(Plate. 15) Source- Clicked by Scholar

(although, according to mythology, this is a ‘phansi Ghar’ - hanging place). The structure includes a water tank on the roof as part of its water treatment system. It is built with modular bricks, featuring cement concrete flooring and a roof supported by jack arches.

3.1.5 Zamzama Cannon

The cannon known as the Zamzma (Plate 16), related to the Bhangi misal, is a massive, heavy cannon with 80 pounds, 14 feet in length, a 40-inch-wide barrel and a 90-inch bore aperture (Plate 17). . One of the largest cannons ever built in the subcontinent, it was commissioned by Shah Nazir, a metallurgist under the former Mughal viceroy at Lahore in 1757, on the orders



(Plate. 16)Source- Clicked by Scholar

of Shah Wali Khan, prime minister of the Afghan emperor Ahmad Shah Durrani's kingdom.

was run on Researchers suggest that some of the metal used in its construction was obtained through the jizya tax, which took metal vessels from Hindu households in Lahore.²⁵⁰



(Plate. 17) Source- Clicked by Scholar

The cannon has two Persian inscriptions. It goes on to say: "King [Ahmad Shah], by the order of Duri Durran, Shah Wali Khan Wazir made a gun called Zamzama or guardian of the forts." And in the long authentic inscription, it is written: "Even a destroyer of the strongholds of heaven." In 1762, the Bhangi chieftain Hari Singh captured Lahore and captured the artillery, known as the Bhangian cannon. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Amritsar in 1802, the cannon was added to his arsenal. Ranjit Singh then employed it in his campaigns at Daska, Kasur, Sujampur, Wazirabad and Multan. During the siege of the fort in 1810, it was taken to Multan in a specially designed vehicle but failed to leave.

3.2 Phillour Fort

The fort's architecture exhibits a distinct European influence, featuring channels dug along its perimeter, guards stationed at two gates, and four bastions located at the corners of the high

²⁵⁰ Latif, S. M. (1992). Lahore Its History, Architectural Remains And Antiquities. In *Internet Archive* (p. 383). Sang-e-Meel Publications.
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.536426/page/n623/mode/2up?view=theater> (Original work published 1892).

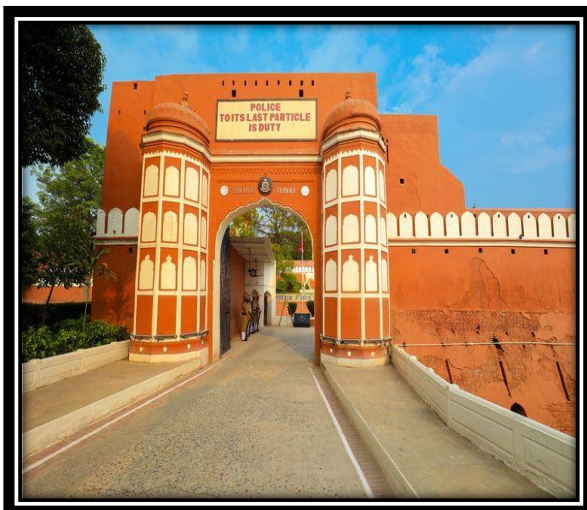
walls that surround the fort. Architecturally, most of the inns along the route follow more or



(Plate. 18) Fort Model, Source- clicked by

less the same plan. They are always square or rectangular structures surrounded by a high battlement curtain wall (Plate. 18). Each corner of the perimeter is fortified with a tower, usually octagonal, resembling forts that the locals still consider forts and call them so. Even some European travelers consider these inns to be forts. Each gateway, named after Lahor Gate (Plate. 19) and Delhi Gate (Plate. 20), one of the two great Mughal cities due to its location, has a magnificent structure 13.35 meters wide and almost as deep.

Each structure is estimated to be 4.7 meters from the perimeter wall. A 3.7 m wide archway provides an entrance with triple openings on either side. At the front of each gateway is a barandri-like domed structure, which is shaded by wide ridges. The low immersion panels arranged in parallel rows facilitate the uniformity of the masks and sidewalls of each gateway. A freeze of floral pattern design indicates the parapet of each structure.



(Plate. 19) (Lahor gate) Source- clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 20)(Delhi Gate) Source- clicked by Scholar

3.2.1 The Mazar

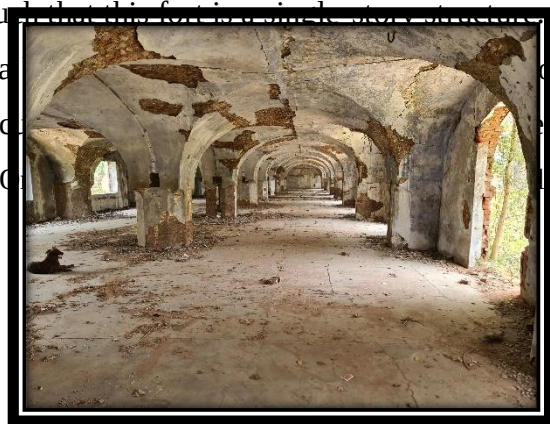
Inside the fort is the tomb of Pir Baba Abdullah Shah Ji, a saint who dedicated his life to spreading the values of love and compassion. According to legend, during the construction of the fort under the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, an unusual incident interrupted the progress - the walls built during the day mysteriously collapsed overnight, hampering the work.

3.3 Lodhi fort

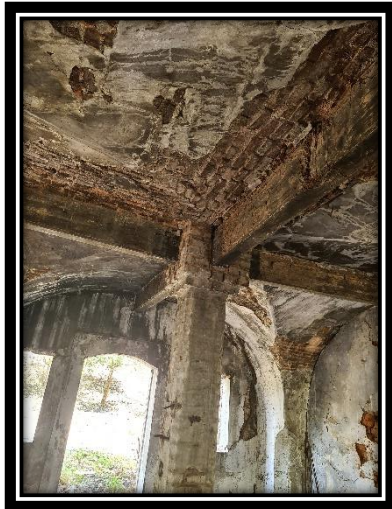
Maharaja Ranjit Singh attached his residential tower across the Sutlej River at Phillaur to Lodhi fort. However, only the tunnel entrance is visible, and the road is closed with rubbish and debris. The current conditions of this fort are such that this fort is a single story structure. The structure on the western side of this fort is in a state of ruin. It consists of several open halls with arched ceilings supported by large circular pillars. It was used as a resting place for soldiers. (Plate. 21,22). One of the rooms has



(Plate. 21) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 22) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 23) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 24) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 25) Source- Clicked by Scholar

several open rooms supported by wooden beams on all sides. Between these rooms are pillars with an arched design. (Plate. 23). Between each of the two rooms is a staircase leading to the terrace along the back wall. Each room has a circular skylight (Plate. 24). In these rooms, there is a

closet like a closet inside the wall (Plate. 25), which may have been made to keep some kind of stuff. These rooms may have been reserved for high-ranking officers. The fort was well maintained during British rule and for decades after independence. Now there is no sign or board in the fort which can tell the historical significance of this place. Lodhi Fort was known as the “Government Institute of Textile and Dyeing Technology” for many years.

3.3.1 Bricks were brought from Sunet village

Millions of bricks were needed to build a fort near Daresi. But bricks and soil were not found anywhere. If the soil was taken from the surrounding, then the ground would have become deep there. Then someone told Jalal Khan that the height of Sunet village is high, so bricks were made by taking out mud from there and the fort was built from it.

3.3.2 Secret way out of the fort

When Jalal Khan built the fort, he made a secret underground passage to exit it. It is said that this path was built so that the king and prominent people could be taken out of here during the external invasion. While some historians believe that when the Mughal Sultanate was



(Plate. 26) Source- Clicked by Scholar

weakening, the fort, including some parts of Ludhiana, was captured by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

He had this fort for about three years and it was he who had prepared this underground passage to go to his fort in Phillaur. Now, this road is completely closed (Plate. 26).

3.3.3 the fort is in ruins

Sikandar Lodhi's cantonment, later the British cantonment, even after the country became independent, this fort remained a cantonment for a long time. The Sikh regiment stood here for a long time. But as soon as the Sikh Regiment left this fort, no one took care of it and this



(Plate. 27) Source- Clicked by Scholar

legacy was ruined. Now only the remains of the fort are left. The administration has not put any signboard anywhere in the fort. (Plate. 27)

3.3.4 Qila Mohalla around the fort

The Lodhi Fort was built on about 5.6 acres of land. When the administration did not take care of the fort, a large part of the fort was occupied, so the fort is no longer visible. A mohalla has been built around the fort, which was named 'Qila Mohalla'.

3.4 Patti Fort

An aerial view of this fort built by the Mughals in 1755-56 AD looks something like this (Plate. 28) . This fort was used as a prison because anyone who rebelled was imprisoned here. beyond



(Plate. 29) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 28) Source- Google earth

the entrance of the left side of this fort is an arched opening leading to three arches, about three feet wide supported on pillars with polygonal shafts. These arches open into a rectangular room, the roof of which is missing and the walls bear rectangular niches, recently restored. The wall to the right of the entrance rises up to the height of two storeys and the wall on the second storey facing the internal courtyard has a round arched opening flanked by arched alcoves with small niches set in rectangular panels. This fort of Patti while being restored remained in the middle for some reason. (Plate. 29). Some portions of this wall have been restored. To the east is a well surrounded by a two-feet-high wall (Plate. 30) and on the other side two six-foot high tower (Plate. 31)-like structures from which water was drawn.

On the same side there is a wide low step below the plinth to provide easy access to the well.



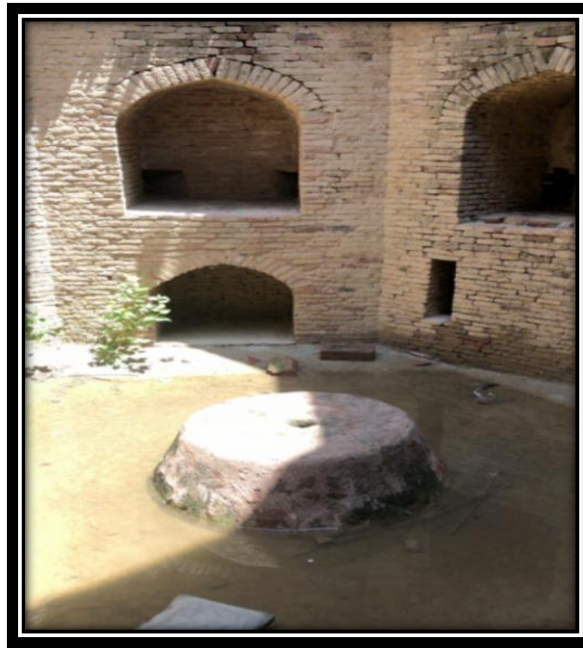
(Plate. 30) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 31) Source- Clicked by Scholar

The entire structure is made of Nanakshahi mud bricks. Currently only four towers, wells and battlemented parapets remain, forming an open courtyard with a central area.

All the towers are two-storeyed and internally spiral staircases are provided for access to the top. There is also a small circular structure with a hole in the ground floor of the northeast octagonal tower. The structure has a 'hand mill' or a 'Chakki' (Plate. 32) attached to it which probably supports the argument that the fort was used to harass the rebels. Because when rebels were arrested including women and children, they were made to run this mill as punishment. According to the local people, up to 'sva mann' (about 50-60 kilos) used to be sweated at this mill.



(Plate. 32) Source- Clicked by Scholar

In the north-east bastion walls, there is an archway above each facet of the wall, and the archway below it alternates with two arches.

3.5 Bajwara Fort

During the British rule, the fort served as a military prison before it was demolished. Today only two of its towers remain intact. It is said that the ruler Sher Shah Suri was born here in



(Plate. 33) South Side Bastion,

Source- clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 34) East Side Bastion,

Source- clicked by Scholar



1486. Although there were once seven minarets, only two towers remain, one on the south (Plate. 33) and the other on the east side (plate. 34). A section of wall connects these walls. Two tunnels are said to have passed through the south bastion, one leading to Jaijon and the other to Allahabad. From the remains it can be inferred that the fort may have had a square plan, and the remains of the turrets indicate that they were octagonal with arrow holes. From the remains it can be inferred that the fort may have had a square plan. The round arches of the

wall connecting these two towers are low (Plate. 35). This once impressive brick structure is falling into ruins, which has no maintenance.

3.6 Dasuya Fort

The fort structure in Dasuya town is present in the north of the town. which was demolished in 1848. This fort has been one of the strongholds of the “Ramgarhian Misl”. “Maharaja Ranjit



(Plate.36) Source- Clicked by Scholar

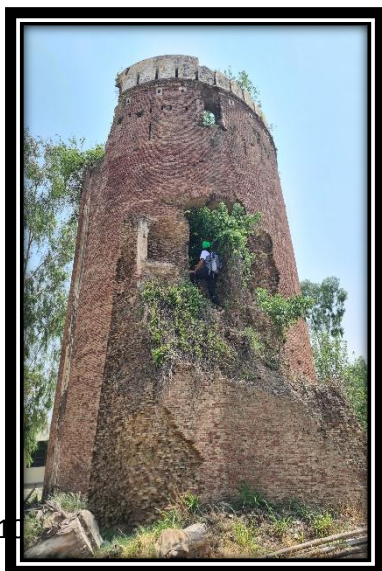


(Plate. 37) Source- Clicked by Scholar

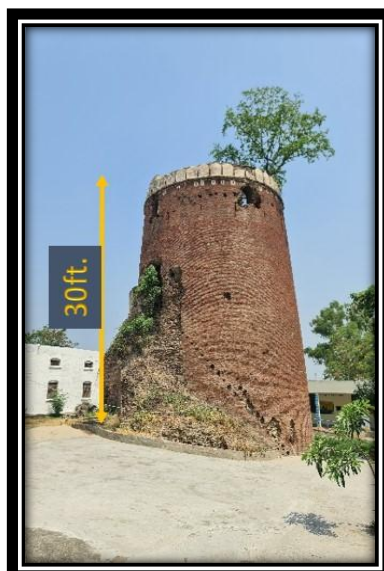
Singh” captured it in 1818 AD and held it for 14 years and later gave it to “Tara Singh Gaiba”. A Government Girls High School has been established there (Plate. 36). A tower stands on the north side of the school (Plate. 37). From which it can be assumed that there can be a fort at this place. Nothing remains of the remains of the fort except arrow holes and a tower standing next to a window (Plate. 38). Now this tower is also standing in a bad condition.

3.6.1 Tower

Small bricks and mud make this Tower. The height of the tower is around 25 to 30 feet (Plate. 39). Even though the condition of this tower is dilapidated inside, it still shows its existence (Plate. 40).



(Plate.38) Source- Clicked by Scholar

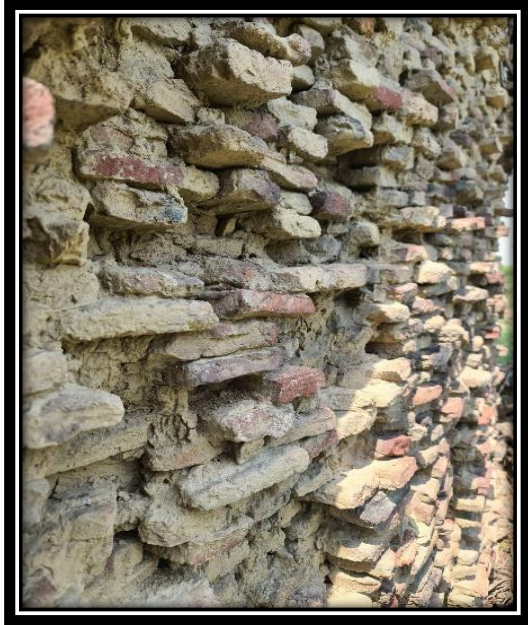


(Plate. 39)Source- Clicked by Scholar

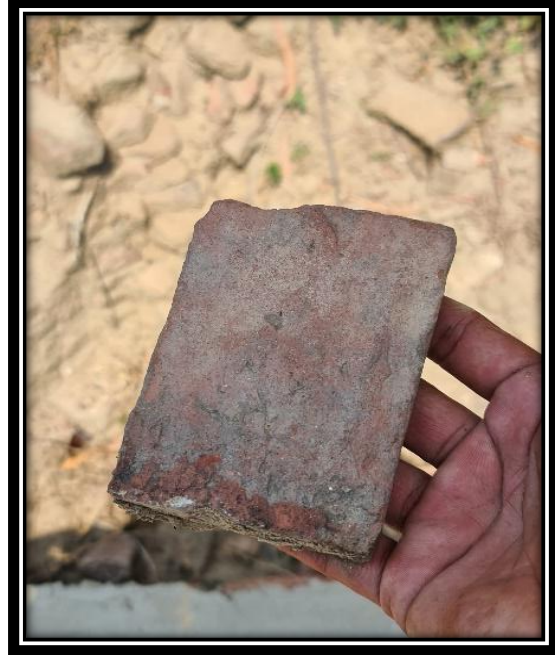


Plate. 40)Source- Clicked by Scholar

The construction of this tower is made of brick and mud (Plate. 41). The walls of which are about one meter thick. The size of bricks used in it is 4x5x1 inch (Plate. 42). These were used to build walls with mortar.



(Plate. 41) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 42)Source- Clicked by Scholar

3.7 Dinanagar Fort

Dinanagar was the former “Summer capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh”. According to the local people, “the boundary wall built here during the British rule was demolished”. whose remains



(Plate. 43)Source- Clicked by Scholar

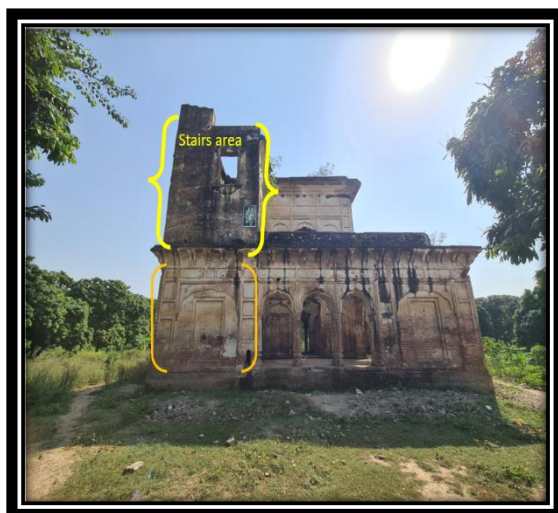
have also disappeared. But the structure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's summer palace is still standing there (Plate. 43). The roof of this structure is missing.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh made Dinanagar the summer capital²⁵¹. Which used to be in the months of June and July. The structure is square and has two floors (Plate. 44). This structure is on the eastern side of the colonies built behind the bus stand of Dinanagar. Where many bushes have grown due to lack of cleanliness. Earlier, litchi gardens used to be here, but now nothing else is visible except bushes. The shape of this surviving structure seems to be of Sikh architecture. The doors of the building have arched design pillars (plate. 45).

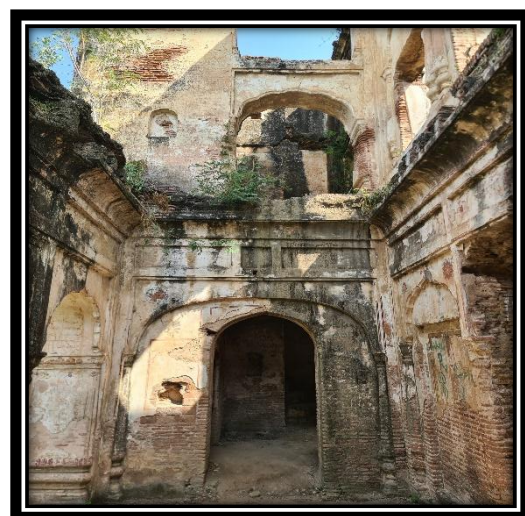


(Plate. 44) Source- Clicked by Scholar

There is a hall-type room at the center of this building. A gallery will be built on all four sides. Three corner rooms with vaulted arched doors separate the gallery. In its fourth corner is a



(Plate. 46) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 47) Source- Clicked by Scholar

²⁵¹ Grewal, J. S., & Banga, I. (1982). *Maharaja Ranjit Singh The State and Society*. Guru nanak Dev University.

circular staircase (plate 46), under which there is a small living room (plate 47), which may be used to store important information.

Looking at the upper floor, there is a wall of a room above, below the middle hall. Apart from this, the stairs are also covered with walls. The roofs of all these buildings are missing. However, the projecting roof from the outside still exists with an inner gable of about 2 ft. with

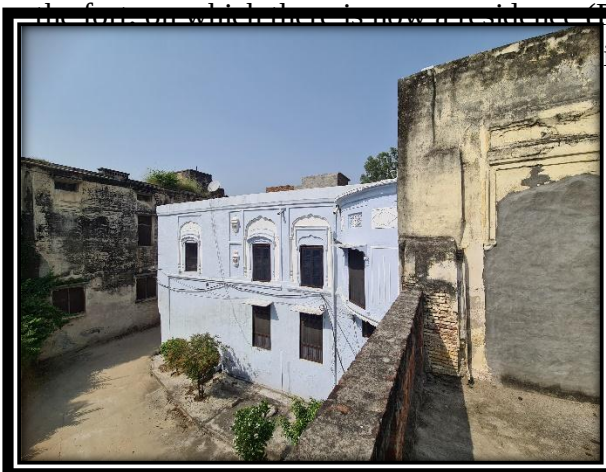


(Plate. 48) Corbel design Outer side, Source- Clicked by Scholar
(Plate. 45) Arch design Door, Source- Clicked by Scholar

corbel design at the corners (Plate. 48) and semi-circular moldings with colored fills on the inside. A modern photo of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is hung outside this structure.

3.8 Alawarpur Fort

About the structure of the fort, he said that this fort was used for residential purposes. As the generations changed, there were a few changes (plate. 49). After the partition of india in 1947, the first IG, “Sardar Sant Parkash Singh”, built rooms on the side of the main gate of the fort on which there is now a residence (plate. 50). The fort construction was used for



(Plate. 49) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 50) Source- Clicked by Scholar

The arched entrance, standing approximately 10 feet tall, is adorned with wooden doors and adorned with four rows of wrought-iron finials. Three windows are surrounded by rectangular panels on the floors above the entrance. Inside, archways lead to chambers once utilized as courts. On the right are the living quarters of the present owners of the fort (plate. 51). The living space is configured around a central lawn surrounded by rooms on all sides. The main residence is a two-story building adapted to meet the family's current needs. Just in front of the main entrance stands an old building, which accommodates the fort's domestic workers and their families. A large two-storied structure stands on the right. Possibly formerly serving as a court hall, with round arches and now broken doors, standing outside in a state of disrepair. On the other side, there was a stable for horses, the remains of which are now found because it has collapsed due to lack of maintenance (Plate. 52).



(Plate. 52) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 51) Source- Clicked by Scholar



(Plate. 54) 4-year-old picture, Source- Picture received from a man from Malot village

“Sardar Harprakash Singh” who is the heir of “Himmat Singh Jallewalia”, from his conversation with his wife and his son revealed that the walls of the fort extended almost to the middle of the town. But` now only those in which they have their residences have been made livable. The rest are so weak that they have collapsed on their own and some have been demolished, and the rest have become ruins.

A separate two-storied structure for women was built in the fort. Its two doors indicate that it is divided into two parts. Earlier, they were made of wood, now they are made of both iron and wood (Plate. 53).

3.9 Malot Fort

Malot Fort is an undiscovered fort located in Hoshiarpur. Which is built right on top of the hill. This fort was built by Bahlol Lodhi in 1485 AD. Which was destroyed by Babur in 1526 AD. When Daulat Kha Lodhi had a fight with Babur, Daulat Kha was trapped here



(Plate. 53)Source- Clicked by Scholar

Malot town is a small town 10km north of Haryana located in Hoshiarpur. This fort is built on a hilltop 2 km away from the town. It is not easy to reach this fort. Its path passes through a narrow hill. This



(Plate. 55) 4 year old picture, Source- Picture received from a man from Malot village



(Plate. 56) Source- Clicked by Scholar

route is full and surrounded by wild bushes. When this fort is built, there is no information yet about the route from the fort to the bottom of the hill. According to local people, a few years ago, arched open gates disappeared (Plate. 54,55). According to the found remains of this fort, bricks made of stone and lime would have been used in the construction of this fort (Plate. 56).

This fort is also said to be associated with the ruler of the “Sikh kingdom”, “Maharaja Ranjit Singh”. According to local people, “Maharaja Ranjit Singh” used to give donations in ancient temples in “Dholbaha and Malot’ areas. Apart from this, no other information regarding this area of Sikh state has been found yet.

Chapter 4

Social, Economic and Military Role

Forts have greatly influenced the history of Punjab, shaping its social, economic and military dynamics. These architectural marvels served multiple purposes and left a lasting impression on the region. Socially, the forts of Punjab served as centers of governance and administration. They were centers of power and authority, where rulers and local officials lived. Forts served as symbols of prestige and power, instilling a sense of pride in the local population. They also fostered a sense of community as people gathered within their walls for various social and cultural events. Forts became the nucleus around which towns and cities developed, creating growing centers of social interaction and economic activity. Economically, forts played a crucial role in facilitating trade and commerce. Many strategically located forts served as major trading posts and centers of economic exchange. Merchants and traders would congregate at these forts, bringing goods from various parts of the region and beyond. These forts provided a safe environment for trade transactions, stimulating economic growth and prosperity in the surrounding areas. In addition the forts served as warehouses to store valuables, contributing to the region's economic stability. Militarily, the forts of Punjab served as strong defense structures. Located on high ground or on strategic routes they provided special points for surveillance and protection. A strong fortification consisting of massive walls, gates and watchtowers served as a deterrent against external threats and protected the area from attacks. Forts also served as military bases, residential outposts and garrisons. Due to which they became important strongholds during conflicts and wars. The forts of Punjab have left an indelible mark on their history and heritage. They continue to attract tourists and researchers interested in exploring the region's rich cultural and architectural heritage. Today, these forts are reminders of a bygone era, reflecting their social, economic and military importance in shaping the destiny of Punjab.

Strategic and Regional Significance of Forts in Punjab

The forts and fortifications of Punjab occupied a central position in the political, military, and administrative structure of the region during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Owing to the geographical location of Punjab as the north-western gateway to the Indian subcontinent, forts emerged not merely as defensive structures but also as important centres of governance, communication, frontier regulation, and economic control. The strategic importance of Punjab historically exposed the region to repeated invasions from Central Asia and Afghanistan,

making the development of fortified military centres an essential component of regional security and state formation. During the Sikh period, forts were systematically utilized to consolidate territorial authority and maintain administrative control over strategically significant regions. Important forts such as Gobindgarh Fort, Phillaur Fort, Attock Fort, Multan Fort, and Dinanagar Fort functioned as military strongholds guarding major trade routes, river crossings, and frontier zones. These forts enabled the Sikh administration to maintain surveillance over important communication networks while simultaneously securing economic movement and regulating commercial activity across the region. Their strategic positioning reflected a deliberate military policy aimed at integrating geographically diverse territories into a centralized imperial structure.

The military significance of Sikh-period forts further increased with the growing threat posed by Afghan incursions and the expanding British East India Company during the early nineteenth century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh recognized the importance of modern military organization and therefore introduced several reforms in military infrastructure and fortification systems. European officers such as Jean-François Allard, Jean-Baptiste Ventura, Paolo Avitabile, and Claude Auguste Court contributed significantly to the modernization of the Sikh military establishment.²⁵² Their influence is visible in the incorporation of artillery platforms, bastions, layered defensive walls, and European military engineering techniques in several Sikh forts, particularly Gobindgarh and Phillaur. This interaction between indigenous military traditions and European military technology produced a distinct form of Sikh military architecture adapted to the changing nature of warfare in the nineteenth century. In addition to their military role, forts also functioned as centres of political authority and administrative regulation. Several forts housed military officials, administrative officers, armouries, treasuries, and supply depots necessary for maintaining imperial governance. Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar, for instance, served not only as a defensive structure but also as a treasury and administrative centre closely associated with the authority of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Similarly, frontier forts such as Attock and Multan were strategically important in securing the western boundaries of the Sikh Empire and regulating movement across frontier territories. The regional distribution of forts across Majha, Doaba, Malwa, and frontier Punjab further demonstrates the interconnected military and administrative structure of the Sikh Empire. Forts located along the Grand Trunk Road and near important rivers such as the Sutlej, Ravi, and Indus facilitated military mobility, communication, and economic integration. Consequently,

²⁵² Jean-Marie Lafont, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Lord of the Five Rivers* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 112–118.

forts in Punjab cannot be understood merely as isolated architectural monuments; rather, they formed an integrated network of military, political, and economic institutions that contributed substantially to the consolidation and stability of the Sikh Empire between 1799 and 1839.

Located in Amritsar, Punjab, Gobindgarh Fort holds significant historical and cultural importance. It has played a vital role in shaping the social, economic, and military landscape of the region. Socially, the fort stands as a powerful symbol of Sikh heritage and identity. Maharaja Ranjit Singh named it in honor of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh,²⁵³ who had spent time within its walls. This fort was built by Gujjar Singh Bhangi, the head of the Bhangi Misl, which was called the first "Fort of Bhangis". Maharaja Ranjit Singh's occupation of the fort made it a holy place for Sikhs, attracting pilgrims from far and wide. It serves as a center for religious gatherings and events, promoting a sense of community and shared spirituality among the Sikh population. Economically, Gobindgarh Fort had a profound impact on the trade and commerce of the region due to its strategic location at the crossroads of major trade routes. This made it a key center for economic activities, facilitating trade between India, Central Asia, and other parts of the world. Traders and merchants passing through the fort brought their goods, which stimulated the development of markets and boosted commercial activity in the surrounding areas. Militarily, Gobindgarh Fort played a crucial role in the defense of Amritsar and Punjab, serving as a vital gateway to the city. Its massive walls, strategic location and strong architecture made it a stronghold of military importance. Over the years this fort has seen many battles and sieges. Different rulers tried to control this fort together. The Gobindgarh fort acted as a protective barrier against attacks and provided a safe haven for "Sikh warriors" in times of conflict. Apart from its social, economic and military roles, Gobindgarh Fort also serves as a center of artistic and cultural activities. It houses museums, galleries and performance spaces showcasing the rich heritage of Punjab. The fort became a platform for promoting local art, music, dance and crafts, contributing to the cultural life of the region.

Gobindgarh Fort, particularly under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, emerged as a vibrant cultural hub. It served as a center for the arts, where musicians, poets, and artists were supported by the royal court. The fort also housed the empire's valuable treasures, including the renowned Koh-i-Noor diamond, highlighting its cultural significance. Additionally, the fort held religious importance, functioning as a place where Sikh principles were not only preserved but also

²⁵³ *Development of Gobindgarh Fort Amritsar on Public Private Partnership Mode Draft Feasibility Report Infrastructure* (2015). Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited.
<https://www.readkong.com/user/gladys-lloyd-4388494>

propagated. Religious gatherings and ceremonies were regularly held, reinforcing the fort's role as a focal point for spiritual activity.

Currently, Gobindgarh Fort stands as a historical monument and tourist attraction, preserving the heritage of Punjab's past. Its cultural significance, architectural splendor and tales of heroism continue to fascinate visitors. The fort is a reminder of its important role in shaping the social fabric, driving economic growth and protecting the region in times of conflict.

Phillour Fort, located in the “Jalandhar district of Punjab”, India, is a historic fort that has played an Crucial role in the “socio-economic and military” history of India. It was built in the 18th century, amid Mughal-Sikh tensions for control of northern India. From a socio-economic perspective, the fort served as a trading center to control trade routes and encourage businesses to flourish in the surrounding areas. The fort's strategic location at the confluence of the Beas and Sutlej rivers, and its control over the Grand Trunk Road, aided the development of trade and commerce in the region, turning it into a bustling economic hub. The fort was converted into an important artillery depot after the Revolt of 1857 which was later withdrawn in 1863. This is the only detail of the fort complex on record. But even more interesting is the history and architectural analysis of the original caravan inn before it was converted into a fort. According to Subhash Parihar-

"Before the introduction of modern vehicles, people used bullocks, bullock-carts, camels, horses or other such means for transportation. None of these methods could cover great distances in a day. Cities and There was a great distance between the towns. These two factors forced people to travel in large groups called caravans. After a tiring day's travel, some safe places to stay for the night were necessary and where they could count on food and water for themselves and their animals. Caravan inns at intervals of about eight kos or 32 km provided the need. Portuguese missionary Fray Sebastian Manrique, who 1641 passed through the Punjab in, poetically describes Mughal inns as "shelters and shelters for travellers, weary and weary, traveling with fever or heat, which causes the titanic and the shining planet [the sun]." ²⁵⁴

From a military perspective, the fort served as a formidable stronghold of the Sikh Empire, defending against the Mughal Empire and other invaders. It played a crucial role in the Anglo-Sikh Wars, standing as a symbol of resistance against British imperialism.²⁵⁵ Phillaur Fort

²⁵⁴ Subhash, P. (n.d.). *PHILLAUR FORT* by Subhash Parihar. Apnaorg.com. from <https://apnaorg.com/prose-content/english-articles/page-70/article-4/index.html>

²⁵⁵ *History of Punjab Police Academy, Phillaur | Punjab Police Academy.* (n.d.). [Www.punjabpoliceacademy.com](http://www.punjabpoliceacademy.com/history-punjab-police-academy-phillaur), from <http://www.punjabpoliceacademy.com/history-punjab-police-academy-phillaur>

played an essential role in the “socio-economic development of North India” as a trading center, maintaining law and order, and providing a safe environment for businesses to prosper. The fort played an important role in “India's military history”, serving as an important stronghold against foreign invaders and imperialist powers. Its strategic location and strong defenses make it an important landmark in India's historical landscape.

Phillaur Fort, strategically located on the banks of the Sutlej River in Punjab, is not only a military structure but also an important cultural monument. Originally established during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early 19th century, the fort was designed with the assistance of European (especially Italian and French) military engineers, giving it a distinctive Indo-European architectural character. Its construction was part of a larger effort to protect Punjab from external threats, but beyond its military purpose, Phillaur Fort soon developed as a center of cultural exchange. The fort's rulers and officials were known for promoting local traditions, supporting musicians, poets, and artisans who contributed to a vibrant cultural life within its vast walls. The fort also played an important role in promoting religious activities. Given its secure and prominent location, Phillaur Fort often became a venue for religious gatherings, spiritual discussions, and festivals. During important Sikh and Hindu celebrations, the fort served as a safe and accessible center for pilgrims and religious leaders to gather. Some accounts suggest that spiritual discourses, kirtans (religious singing), and community prayers were regularly held within or around the fort. Its religious role reinforced the fort's image not only as a stronghold of power, but also as a symbol of community unity and spiritual resilience.

Today, Phillaur Fort stands as a testament to Punjab's storied history, combining military might with cultural richness. Although it now houses the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Punjab Police Academy, efforts have been made to preserve its historical and cultural heritage. Researchers and historians emphasize that the story of the fort is not just about battles or political strategies, but also about its role in shaping the cultural and spiritual life of the region. Thus, Phillaur Fort remains an enduring symbol of the artistic, religious and historical vibrancy of Punjab.

The Lodhi Fort was built in the late 15th century by Sikandar Lodhi, a ruler of the Lodhi dynasty, due to its strategic location on the banks of the Sutlej River. Two generals appointed by Sikandar Lodhi, Nihan Khan and Yusuf Khan, oversaw its construction and later lived in the fort. Their presence in the fort played a key role in helping the Lodhi dynasty maintain its territorial power. During the period of Mughal weakness in Delhi in the 19th century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh successfully took control of the fort, which passed into British hands after his death. However, after capturing the fort, “Maharaja Ranjit Singh’ built a tunnel connecting it

with the nearby “Phillaur Fort” on the opposite side of the “Sutlej River”. The tunnel is now closed. Historian “Muhammad Usman Rahmani” says that this fort is associated with the freedom movement.²⁵⁶ He said that when Mangal Pande raised his voice against the British by adopting a rebellious tone in Meerut, at that time the soldiers in the “Ludhiana cantonment” also rebelled against the “British rule” and occupied this cantonment under the leadership of “Maulana Shah Abdul Qadir Ludhianvi”.²⁵⁷ However, after a few days, the British recaptured it. This fort was first the cantonment of Sikandar Lodhi, later the cantonment of the British, even after the independence of the country, this fort remained a cantonment for a long time. The Sikh regiment stood here for a long time. But as soon as the Sikh regiment left this fort, no one took care of it and this heritage was ruined. Now only the remains of the fort remain. The administration has not installed any signboard anywhere in the fort.

Lodhi Fort, also known as the Old Fort of Ludhiana, was once a major cultural and social center of Punjab. Built during the reign of the Lodhi dynasty in the 15th century, the fort was a testament to administrative authority and regional pride. In addition to its military and governance functions, Lodhi Fort nurtured a thriving cultural atmosphere, regularly hosting artistic and social events. Local musicians, poets, and dancers often performed in the fort's spacious courtyards, which played a significant role in perpetuating Ludhiana's traditional art forms. These performances not only provided entertainment but also helped preserve Punjab's folk heritage and cultural expression during times of political change. The fort also served as an important religious center for local communities. Its spacious and protected premises made it an ideal venue for religious ceremonies, fairs, and festivals. During major Sikh and Hindu celebrations, the fort would come alive with gatherings, prayers and communal meals (langars), reflecting the inclusive spiritual traditions of the region. By offering a common space for people of different faiths to come together and celebrate, Lodhi Fort significantly strengthened the community bonds essential to Ludhiana's social life.

Today, although much of Lodhi Fort has been ruined by neglect and urban development, its cultural heritage continues to attract the interest of historians and heritage advocates. Restoration efforts have been proposed to preserve the fort and revive its historical and cultural significance within the rich heritage landscape of Punjab. Lodhi Fort remains a powerful

²⁵⁶ Jain, A. (2019, December 31). *Ripe with history, Ludhiana's Lodhi Fort lies forgotten without ASI protection*. The Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ludhiana/ripe-with-history-ludhianas-lodhi-fort-lies-forgotten-without-asi-protection-6192424/>

²⁵⁷ *The First War of Independence in Punjab and Abdul Qadir Ludhianvi*. (n.d.). INDIAN CULTURE. from <https://indianculture.gov.in/digital-district-repository/district-repository/first-war-independence-punjab-and-abdul-qadir>

symbol of an era when forts were not just defensive structures but vibrant centres of culture, community and spirituality, reflecting the dynamic and pluralistic spirit of Punjab.

Patti was a tehsil of Lahore district before the partition of Punjab. The old name of this city was Haibatpura. Patti city became part of the newly formed Tarn Taran district after the Amritsar revenue district was bifurcated. Patti has been a power center and by some estimates, has been so for 1000 years. It was known as “9 Lakh Patti” in the medieval days. This means that it generated a higher income of Rs 9 lakh. The city had stories of a particular mansion of its ruler, Mirza Talib Beg, which was later destroyed for agricultural purposes.²⁵⁸ The territory of Patti used to be in the hands of three Chaudharys. They used to collect three lakhs each from this area. That is why it was also called "Nau Lakh Patti". Abundant references are found in the Sikh history of Patti.²⁵⁹ Especially when "Sikh Jathedars"²⁶⁰ (raiders) were oppressed by the Mughal Empire and the inhabitants of this city were plundered. The fort was used to prosecute rebels. His stories became part of daily Sikh prayers.

Patti Fort was not just a defensive stronghold but also served as a vibrant cultural and religious center for the local community. Built during the Mughal period and later coming under Sikh influence, the fort became a central gathering place where people celebrated festivals, maintained traditions, and participated in cultural activities. Its spacious courtyard and protected surroundings made it an ideal venue for fairs, musical performances, poetry readings, and other social events that highlighted the rich artistic heritage of the region. Religious life also flourished within Patti Fort, which often hosted important ceremonies, spiritual gatherings, and community prayers. Reflecting the diverse religious scene of Punjab, the fort served as a meeting place for followers of different faiths, especially during major Sikh and Hindu festivals. Special events such as religious gatherings, processions and community kitchens (langar) were held in and around the fort, reinforcing the values of unity and spiritual inclusion that are core to Punjab's cultural identity.

²⁵⁸ Patti: A Patented Page of Punjab's Surviving Past. (2010, January 3). Web.archive.org.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20100103010418/http://www.kartarpur.com/Arch/patti.htm>

²⁵⁹ Hooja, R., & Jain, S. (2016). Conserving Fortified Heritage: The Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Fortifications and World Heritage, New Delhi, 2015. In *Google Books: Vol. Chapter six- Brick Fort of Punjab by Grumeet Singha Rai*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Conserving_Fortified_Heritage/8CFUDgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Brick+Forts+of+Punjab:+Value

²⁶⁰ **Jathedar** was made a chief within a troop or jatha of Sikhs. He was chosen to ensure discipline. He used to be a highly respected leader.

In addition, Patti Fort played an important role in supporting the local economy and artisan traditions. It probably housed workshops where artisans – such as weavers, potters, blacksmiths and carpenters – made goods for the fort’s residents as well as for nearby villages. These artisanal enterprises helped to perpetuate traditional skills, ensuring that cultural craftsmanship and knowledge continued to be passed down from generation to generation. In this way, Patti Fort stood not only as a symbol of defence and governance, but also as a vibrant centre of culture, economy and community life, making a lasting contribution to the preservation of the region’s heritage.

Bajwara town was settled by “Pashtun Muslims” from the ‘Solomon Mountains’ in the late 15th century²⁶¹. From this town, the “Pathans” kept an eye on the “local Hindu hill rulers” in case they tried to rebel against Lodi's rule. Bahlul Lodi also used this town as a strategic stronghold during his military campaigns. In the 15th century, during the Mughal rule, Rajput ruler Raja Sansar Chand constructed a fort here, known as Bajwara Fort.²⁶² The region increased until the 18th century, before coming under the control of the Sansi Sikh ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Bajwara was a prominent trading hub, serving as a key point of commerce between Bukhara and Delhi. The area also encompassed 22 villages of Bassi. For military purposes, Bajwara Fort was used as a stronghold by the “Sikh Empire’ during the “Anglo-Sikh Wars” in the mid-19th century. The fort is famous for the Battle of Bajwara which was fought between the “Sikhs and the British army” in 1849; It played an important role in making the strategy of the struggle.²⁶³ Additionally, it served other military purposes in the past, including providing a vantage point to monitor troop movements and be used in sieges, battles, and invasions. In 1857 AD, the British also used it as a prison.²⁶⁴ According to local people, the bricks of this fort were also used to build the road from Jalandhar to Hoshiarpur.

²⁶¹ Punjab (India). (1980). Punjab District Gazetteers: Hoshiarpur. Supplement. In *Google Books* (p. 432). Controller of Print. and Stationery.

https://books.google.co.in/books?redir_esc=y&id=kBRuAAAAMAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=bajwara

²⁶² India Director of Census Operations, P. (1996). Census of India, 1991: Hoshiarpur. In *Google Books* (p. 21). Controller of Publications.

https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Census_of_India_1991_Hoshiarpur/msoUAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=historic+importance+of+bajwara&dq=historic+importance+of+bajwara&printsec=frontcover

²⁶³ Punjab (India). (1952). District Census Hand Books. In *Google Books* (p. 13). Controller, Print. & Stationery, Punjab.

https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/District_Census_Hand_Books/OnzFXqBJIPYC?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=bajwara+fort&dq=bajwara+fort&printsec=frontcover

²⁶⁴ Nadiem, I. H. (2006). Punjab and the Indian Revolt of 1857. In *Google Books* (p. 95). Sang-e Meel Publications.

Located in the historic town of Bajwara near Hoshiarpur in Punjab, Bajwara Fort played a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape around it. Built during the early medieval period and later associated with both the Mughal and Sikh eras, the fort served not only as a military stronghold but also as a vibrant center where local traditions, craftsmanship, and community life flourished. Its spacious courtyards and protected environment provided an ideal setting for festivals, social gatherings, and public celebrations, all of which reflected the rich cultural heritage of the region. During these events, artisans, poets, musicians, and dancers would showcase their talents, contributing to the preservation and continuity of Punjab's diverse folk traditions. The fort also had deep religious significance. It served as a sacred place for the local population during religious festivals and spiritual ceremonies, especially for followers of Sikhism and Hinduism. Major occasions like Baisakhi, Diwali and Gurgurab were marked by ceremonies, communal prayers and langars (communal feasts) within the fort walls. In a region renowned for its spiritual diversity, Bajwara Fort emerged as a symbol of communal harmony, providing a common place for people of different faiths to unite in devotion and celebration.

In addition, Bajwara Fort played an important role in sustaining traditional crafts and the local economy. It likely hosted artisan workshops where weavers, potters, blacksmiths and carpenters produced goods for both the residents of the fort and the nearby villages. These activities encouraged a thriving artisan culture, ensuring that indigenous skills and craftsmanship were preserved for generations. Thus, Bajwara Fort stood not only as a stronghold of defense, but also as a vibrant center of culture, spirituality, and community life, deeply embedded in the historical and cultural narrative of Punjab.

According to a 1977 report in "*The Tribune*", the city of Dasuya is believed to be the region described as "*Virat Ki Nagri*" in the ancient Indian epic "*Mahabharata*". This connection has led to the town being referred to by this name even today. In the late 14th century, Dasuya became the site of military struggles between armies and the Muslim conquerors, Abu Bakr and Amir Timur, on at least two occasions. Later, in December 1557, Akbar's army, led by Khizr Khan, the governor of Lahore, camped in the town, successfully neutralizing the threat posed by Sikandar Sur.²⁶⁵ Dasuya, a town in present-day Punjab, India, witnessed various roles during the Mughal and Sikh empires. Dasuya probably served as part

https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Punjab_and_the_Indian_Revolt_of_1857/pohuAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=bajwara+fort&dq=bajwara+fort&printsec=frontcover

²⁶⁵ (iv). (2012, February 4). Web.archive.org.

https://web.archive.org/web/20120204161802/http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/gaz_hsp2.htm

of the administrative and governance structure during the Mughal Empire. As a region under Mughal control, it was governed by appointed officials responsible for tax collection, law and order maintenance and smooth administration. Dasuya may also have had strategic importance due to its geographical location, possibly serving as a military outpost or an outpost on a trade route. Dasuya played an Crucial role during the period of “Sikh Empire” under “Maharaja Ranjit Singh”. It served as an important center for military and administrative purposes. Dasuya's strategic location made it valuable for military operations and defense of the region and contributed to overall Sikh dominance. In addition, Dasuya probably appointed Sikh administrators who administered the town, collected revenue and maintained law and order. It is worth noting that specific historical details about Dasuya's roles in these empires cannot be extensively documented. Further exploration of historical sources and records specific to Dasuya and the relevant time period will provide more in-depth information about the town's special functions, administration and significance within the Mughal and Sikh empires.

Dasuha Fort, located in the historic town of Dasuha in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, holds significant cultural and religious significance. Dasuha itself is an ancient town, often associated with Hindu mythology as the birthplace of Sita's father, King Janak, and has been referenced in the Mahabharata. The strategic location of the fort near such an important religious center suggests that it has played an influential role in supporting and promoting religious activities over the centuries. Given the strong historical presence of Sikhism in the region, especially during the era of Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji (1595–1644) and the later Sikh Sangh period, it is likely that Dasuha Fort served as a venue for religious gatherings, including festivals such as Baisakhi and GURPURAB. These events would have brought local communities together for prayers, kirtan (devotional singing), and communal meals (langar), which strengthened social cohesion. In addition to its religious significance, the fort was also a centre of cultural life. It would likely have featured performances of traditional Punjabi music and dance forms such as Bhangra and Giddha, which are deeply connected to celebrations and seasonal festivals. Poetry recitals, especially varas (stories) and performances of kavishari (oral poetic performances), would have been common, preserving the oral traditions of Punjab and passing them on for generations. Architecturally, although much of the Dasuha fort has deteriorated, historical descriptions suggest that it was solidly built, characteristic of medieval Punjabi forts that combined military utility with civic and cultural functions.

Today, the fort stands as a testament to Dasuha's vibrant historical tapestry, encompassing both a wartime legacy and a thriving cultural-religious life. Conservation efforts can further

highlight its layered past, highlighting its role as an important center for religious festivals and the celebration of Punjabi cultural identity.

Alawalpur Fort is located in Punjab and has a lot of historical importance and has played a role during different periods: Alawalpur Fort was built during the Mughal era. It probably also served as a strategic military outpost. Mughal rulers used forts like Alawalpur to assert authority, maintain control over territories, and protect against internal and external threats. Alawalpur Fort continued to be of military importance during the “Sikh Empire” under “Maharaja Ranjit Singh”. As the Sikh Empire expanded its “territories”, forts like Alawalpur became important for controlling territory, enforcing law and order, and defending against potential invasions or rebellions.

After the fall of the Sikh Empire, the British East India Company captured Alawalpur Fort and repurposed it for administrative purposes. The British frequently transformed historic forts into administrative centers, using them to symbolize their authority and facilitate governance in the region. Following India's independence in 1947, the fort passed into the hands of the descendants of its original owners, and it is currently maintained by the seventh generation of this family.

Alawalpur Fort, located in the town of Alawalpur in the Jalandhar district of Punjab, was historically more than just a military stronghold; it served as an important center for religious and cultural activities. Like many forts in Punjab, its walls witnessed battles, administrative events, and spiritual gatherings that nourished the souls of the surrounding communities. The fort became a focal point for religious festivals, serving as a place where people from nearby villages and towns would gather to celebrate important Sikh and Hindu religious occasions. Events such as Baisakhi, Gurpurab (celebrations of the birthdays of the Sikh Gurus), and Diwali were likely celebrated in its grounds. Community prayers, kirtans, and community kitchens strengthened the social fabric, reflecting the Sikh principles of equality and shared service. In addition to religious gatherings, Alawalpur Fort contributed significantly to the region's cultural vitality. It hosted events that showcased local art forms, preserving and promoting traditional Punjabi music, dance, and poetry. Bhangra and Giddha performances, both vibrant expressions of Punjabi joy and heritage, would have been a common sight during festivals and special occasions. In addition, the fort probably provided a space for oral storytelling traditions, where folk tales, heroic sagas (varas), and spiritual teachings were passed down from generation to generation. Such cultural practices entertained and educated, keeping historical memories and community values alive. Architecturally, while little detailed

documentation exists about Alawalpur Fort today, forts of its era in Punjab typically combine defensive features with open courtyards and large gathering spaces, suitable for gatherings and festivals. These places naturally lend themselves to public celebrations and spiritual gatherings.

In modern times, although the physical structure of Alawalpur Fort may be affected by neglect and urbanization, its historical role as a center of religious and cultural life is a testament to the deep-rooted traditions of Punjab. Reviving such places through conservation efforts can provide valuable insights into the daily lives, spirituality, and artistic achievements of past generations.

The earlier name of Dinanagar was Adinanagar. Because it was built by Adina Beg in 1730 AD. Adina Beg built this fort on the banks of the Hansali (Shah Nahar). He established it as a residence and cantonment. During the reign of “Maharaja Ranjit Singh”, Dinanagar was the summer capital. They used to bring their court here in summer. It used to be a walled city. The city had six strong gates. Mugrali Gate, Avianwala Gate, Marhianwala Gate (Gandhi Gate), Awankh Gate (Subhash Gate), Taragarh Gate and Paneeri Gate. This wall was later demolished by the British. After the British occupied Punjab, they destroyed it. After the accession of Punjab as a British territory in March 1849, a new district named Adinanagar was created, with headquarters at Dinanagar. The district included Gurdaspur tehsil, significant parts of Batala tehsil and 181 villages of Pathankot tehsil. However, in July 1849, due to deteriorating conditions at Dinanagar, the civil and military escorts were transferred to battalions. Finally, in 1852, Adinanagar was included in Gurdaspur district. In March 1919, the Rowlatt Act was passed, giving the government broad powers to suppress any political movement.

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Dinanagar as his summer capital, the city became a seasonal centre for court life. The Maharaja's court brought with it poets, musicians, artists and scholars. This environment encouraged the development of Punjabi art forms such as classical music, traditional storytelling and court poetry. The presence of the royal court elevated Dinanagar's status as a place where not only political but also cultural matters were discussed and celebrated. The design of Dinanagar - a fortified city with six magnificent gates - reflected the architectural sensibilities of the time, combining Mughal and emerging Sikh styles. Forts and city walls in Punjab often served a dual purpose: defence and ceremonial display. The elaborate gateways and structured city layout were expressions of power, prosperity and cultural sophistication. The city hosted religious gatherings during important Sikh festivals like Baisakhi and Gurdpurab, serving as a place where devotional music (kirtan) and community

feasts (langar) strengthened social bonds and religious traditions. Such community activities promoted Sikh values of equality, service, and unity among the people. During British colonial rule, although Dinanagar's political prominence declined, the city remained culturally active. It quietly contributed to the broader spirit of Punjabi resistance through the preservation of traditional practices and oral storytelling. The cultural memory, sustained through music, folk tales, and communal traditions, became a form of subtle resistance against colonial cultural dominance.

Today, while much of Dinanagar's historic architecture has disappeared, the cultural memory of its vibrant past lives on. The locals take pride in remembering the city's role during the era of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Adina Beg. Traditional festivals continue to be celebrated with enthusiasm, maintaining the continuity of centuries-old traditions in the modern context.

Malot played a significant role during Babur's invasion when it came under the control of Daulat Khan, the rebel Subedar of Punjab. Babur recounts the events in his memoirs.²⁶⁶ After marching from Kalnaur, Babur sent several demands to Ghazi Khan, either to surrender or, if that failed, to prevent the escape of the garrison from Malot. Babur crossed the Beas near Kahnuwal, and after three days of marching, he reached Malot, where Ghazi Khan had sought refuge. Daulat Khan quickly sought peace, which Babur accepted, allowing him to retain control of his clan and villages while confiscating his other properties. Babur captured the fort and discovered a collection of valuable books belonging to Ghazi Khan. However, Ghazi Khan managed to flee to the hills, leaving his family behind in Babur's custody. The fort was later abandoned by Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang, and Malot came under Babur's control as he advanced through the small hills of Ab-Kand.²⁶⁷ Malot (early name Mal Kot), a small town in Hoshiarpur, has an undiscovered fort near Mahingowal. This fort is built on a small hill about 2 km from the town. This fort is now destroyed. Ghazi Khan Lodhi, who was the son of “Daulat Khan Lodhi (Governor of Punjab to Sikandar and Ibrahim Lodhi)”, had a library of valuable books in Malot fort, which Babur handed over to Humayun and Kamran after capturing the fort. This library had books on Arabic and Persian literature. Due to this, it was called the largest literature library in Asia²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Govt, P. (1904). PUNJAB DISTRICT GAZETTEERS VOLUME XIII A HOSHIARPUR DISTRICT (p. 16). REVENUE DEPARTMENT, PUNJAB, CHANDIGARH.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.17.

²⁶⁸ Zahiraddin Muhammed Babur. (1826). *Memoirs of Zehir-Ed-Din Muhammed Baber, Empereur of Hindustan, Written by Himself, in the Jaghatai Turki, and Translated, Partly by the Late John Leyden, . Partly by William Erskine . with Notes and a Geographical and Historical Introduction.* (p. 298).

In his autobiography Baburnama, Babur describes the events around Malout Fort. After marching from Kalanaur, he issued demands to Ghazi Khan Lodhi, who had taken refuge in the fort, asking him to either surrender or prevent the garrison from escaping. Babur crossed the Beas River near Kahnuwan and, after three days of marching, reached Malout. Facing Babur's approach, Daulat Khan Lodhi - Ghazi Khan's father and former Subedar (governor) of the Punjab under Sikandar and Ibrahim Lodhi - sued for peace. Babur accepted his submission, allowing Daulat Khan to retain authority over his tribe and some villages while confiscating his other properties.²⁶⁹

After capturing Malout Fort, Babur found a magnificent library containing valuable Arabic and Persian manuscripts owned by Ghazi Khan Lodhi. He later passed this vast collection on to his sons, Humayun and Kamran. Contemporary accounts indicate that the library was considered one of the largest collections of literary works in Asia at that time.²⁷⁰ After Babur's victory, Ghazi Khan managed to escape to the nearby hills, leaving his family behind, who were later taken into Babur's custody. Later, the fort was sacked by Muhammad Ali Jang-Jang, and Malout fell completely under Mughal control as Babur advanced through the steep hills of Ab-Kand.

4.1 Impact on Local Communities

The forts in Punjab, such as Dinanagar, Gobindgarh, Patti, Dasuya, Malot, Bajwara, Alawalpur, Phillaur, and Lodhi, have historically played crucial roles in shaping the economic and social fabric of their surrounding communities. These forts often functioned as key administrative and military centers, attracting traders, artisans, and merchants. For example, Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar became an important hub for trade and commerce, especially during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, greatly contributing to the prosperity of the local economy. Similarly, forts in regions like Dasuya and Patti, which were surrounded by fertile agricultural land, played a crucial role in the protection and management of these resources. The presence of these forts ensured the safety of local farmers, allowing them to work the land without the constant threat of invasions or raids, thus stabilizing the local economy. Additionally, the construction, upkeep, and functioning of these forts provided employment to the local population, offering various roles in the military, administration, and trades such as masonry,

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https://www.rarebooksocietyofindia.org/book_archive/196174216674_10156335502831675.pdf

²⁶⁹ Thackston, W. M. (1997). *The Baburnama: memoirs of Babur, prince and emperor 1483-1530* (p. 320). Oxford University.

²⁷⁰ Richards, J. F. (1993). *The new Cambridge history of India. 1.5, The Mughal empire*. Cambridge University Press.

blacksmithing, and carpentry. Forts like those in Alawalpur and Phillaur became centers of cultural exchange, where people from various regions would interact, leading to a blend of cultural practices, languages, and traditions. Festivals, fairs, and other social gatherings often took place around these forts, fostering a sense of community. The forts provided a sense of security to the local population, allowing for the stable growth of communities. This stability encouraged the development of settlements around the forts, with people building homes, markets, and religious places, leading to the formation of vibrant townships. Forts like Bajwara and Lodhi were pivotal in local governance and administration. They were centers of power, where decisions impacting the local communities were made. The presence of these forts often meant that the surrounding communities were directly influenced by the political dynamics of the rulers occupying the fort.

4.2 Regional Role of Forts in Punjab

The forts and fortifications of Punjab performed diverse functions that varied according to regional geography, military requirements, economic conditions, and political priorities. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, forts were not merely defensive structures but formed an interconnected network of military, administrative, and economic centres that contributed significantly to the consolidation of the Sikh Empire. Their functions differed across the regions of Majha, Doaba, Malwa, and the north-western frontier, reflecting the geographical and strategic diversity of Punjab. The forts of the Majha region occupied a particularly important position within the Sikh Empire because the region constituted the political and military core of Punjab. Lahore, which emerged as the capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire, was strategically connected with Amritsar, Multan, Kashmir, and Peshawar. Consequently, forts such as Lahore Fort and Gobindgarh Fort assumed major military and administrative importance. Gobindgarh Fort at Amritsar functioned not only as a military stronghold but also as a treasury and storage centre for arms and ammunition. Historians have noted that the fort became one of the principal centres of Sikh military administration during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.²⁷¹ The strategic location of these forts enabled the Sikh administration to supervise trade routes, maintain military communication, and exercise effective control over the political heartland of the empire.

The Doaba region, situated between the Beas and Sutlej rivers, acquired considerable strategic significance because of its connection with important communication routes and river crossings. The region served as a crucial link between central Punjab and the Cis-Sutlej

²⁷¹ Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. V (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982), 56–72.

territories. Among the important forts of this region, Phillaur Fort emerged as a major frontier stronghold during the early nineteenth century. Owing to its location near the Sutlej River and the Grand Trunk Road, the fort became strategically important in monitoring British movement and securing the eastern frontier of the Sikh Empire. The strengthening of Phillaur Fort reflected Maharaja Ranjit Singh's concern regarding the increasing influence of the British East India Company after the Treaty of Amritsar (1809).²⁷² In addition to its military function, the fort also facilitated communication, movement of troops, and regulation of trade across the region. The Malwa region, located south of the Sutlej River, performed an equally significant role in the military and economic structure of Punjab. The forts of this region contributed to the defence of southern Punjab and enabled the Sikh state to maintain influence over strategically important agricultural and commercial zones. Qila Mubarak at Bathinda and Bahadurgarh Fort became important centres for regional administration and frontier supervision. These forts also protected trade routes linking Punjab with Rajasthan and northern India. Their military significance increased during the period of political rivalry between the Sikh Empire and neighbouring princely states as well as during the expansion of British influence in the Cis-Sutlej region.

The frontier forts of Attock, Multan, and Peshawar occupied a particularly important place within the defensive strategy of the Sikh Empire. These forts functioned as military outposts guarding the north-western boundaries of Punjab against Afghan incursions and tribal resistance. The conquest of Multan in 1818 represented a major achievement of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's military expansion and significantly strengthened Sikh authority in southern Punjab. Contemporary studies on Sikh military strategy observe that the capture of Multan demonstrated the growing effectiveness of Sikh artillery and siege warfare under European military influence.²⁷³ Similarly, the fort of Attock assumed strategic importance because of its position near the Indus River and its role in controlling communication with Afghanistan and Central Asia. The regional distribution of forts therefore reflected a carefully organized military and administrative system. Frontier forts primarily served defensive and expansionist purposes, while interior forts increasingly developed into centres of governance, treasury management, military storage, trade supervision, and communication. The fortification network of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh thus represented an important instrument of imperial consolidation that linked geography, military strategy, economic regulation, and political authority within the Sikh Empire.

²⁷² J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 116–120.

²⁷³ Opcit. Prasad. 162

4.3 Legacy of Forts in Modern Punjab

The forts in Punjab—such as Dinanagar, Gobindgarh, Patti, Dasuya, Malot, Bajwara, Alawalpur, Phillaur, and Lodhi—are deeply intertwined with the region's rich cultural and historical legacy. These forts stand as enduring symbols of Punjab's past, showcasing the architectural splendor, political power, and cultural vibrancy that once thrived within their walls. In modern times, preserving these historical structures has gained importance, as they are essential links to the region's heritage and continue to remind us of Punjab's historical journey and identity.

The forts in Punjab are notable examples of various architectural styles that developed over centuries. For instance, Gobindgarh Fort is an outstanding example of Sikh military architecture, featuring robust defensive structures alongside intricate carvings and grand gateways. Similarly, Phillaur Fort exhibits a unique blend of “Mughal and Sikh architectural” elements, symbolizing the convergence of different cultural influences in Punjab. These forts were constructed using advanced engineering techniques of their time. Forts like Malot and Bajwara feature strategic layouts designed to optimize defense, including thick walls, bastions, and moats. The architectural brilliance of these forts reflects the skilled craftsmanship and strategic vision of their builders. Each fort is deeply connected to Punjab's history, often associated with important battles and political events. For example, Gobindgarh Fort symbolized Sikh resistance and strength during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Conversely, Lodhi Fort holds memories of the “Lodhi dynasty” and its role in the “broader history of North India”.

These forts also served as key administrative centers, where rulers governed their territories, collected taxes, and dispensed justice. Dinanagar Fort, for instance, was a crucial administrative seat during the Sikh Empire²⁷⁴, playing a significant role in regional governance. Forts like those in Alawalpur and Dasuya were not just military strongholds but also social and cultural hubs. They hosted festivals, fairs, and religious ceremonies, becoming centers of cultural exchange. These events fostered community bonds, with traditions passed down through generations. These forts are also repositories of various forms of art, including murals, sculptures, and inscriptions that reflect the religious and cultural diversity of the region.

²⁷⁴ Stronge, S. (2006). Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Artistic Patronage at the Sikh Court. *South Asian Studies*, 22(1), 89–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2006.9628660>

Phillaur Fort, for example, contains inscriptions and art that narrate the stories of different eras, from the Mughals to the Sikhs, each leaving their mark on the fort's history.

The Punjab government, in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), has launched several initiatives to restore and preserve these forts. Gobindgarh Fort has undergone extensive restoration, transforming it into a cultural heritage site with museums, galleries, and cultural exhibits. These efforts focus not just on physical restoration but also on reviving the historical and cultural narratives associated with these structures. Many forts have been designated as protected monuments, ensuring they receive the legal protection necessary to prevent further deterioration. This includes regulating construction around these sites, preventing encroachment, and ensuring that restoration work adheres to historical accuracy. Local communities have played an active role in preserving forts, especially those that are lesser-known or have not received significant government attention. Community-driven efforts in places like Alawalpur and Dasuya have led to the protection and maintenance of these forts. These efforts often include organizing cultural events, educational programs, and awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of these historical structures. In some areas, local communities have revived traditional festivals and events that were once celebrated within the forts. These festivals help preserve the cultural practices associated with the forts and attract visitors, thereby supporting the local economy. To ensure the sustainability of preservation efforts, many forts have been integrated into heritage tourism circuits. This approach not only generates revenue for further conservation but also educates visitors about the historical and cultural significance of these structures²⁷⁵. For instance, Phillaur Fort is now part of a heritage tourism initiative, offering guided tours, historical reenactments, and cultural performances to engage and inform tourists. The development of these forts as tourist destinations has also benefited the local economy. The influx of tourists creates demand for services such as hospitality, guided tours, and local crafts, providing income for the surrounding communities. This economic incentive further encourages the preservation and promotion of these historical sites. Despite these efforts, many forts still face significant challenges, including neglect, environmental degradation, and encroachment. Forts like those in Patti and Lodhi, for example, urgently need restoration and protection. Addressing these challenges requires not only increased funding but also a comprehensive approach involving both government and private stakeholders. Future preservation efforts could benefit from more robust public-private partnerships. These collaborations could provide the necessary resources and expertise to

²⁷⁵ Manisha. (2014, January 28). *Phillaur Fort, Ludhiana: A Citadel of Strength* -. <https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/india/phillaur-fort-ludhiana-a-citadel-of-strength>

restore and maintain these forts. For example, involving private companies in the tourism and hospitality sectors could lead to more sustainable preservation models, where revenue generated from tourism is reinvested into conservation efforts. There is also a need for more educational programs that focus on the “historical and cultural significance” of these forts. Schools and universities could play a crucial role in this by including the study of these forts in their curricula, organizing field trips, and encouraging research on their history and preservation.

Chapter 5

Comparative study of the forts in Punjab

The Punjab region, located in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, has long been a hub of historical significance and architectural magnificence. Spanning across modern-day India and Pakistan, this region bears witness to a drapery of civilizations, each leaving an indelible mark upon its landscape. One of the most striking facets of Punjab's historical narrative lies in its formidable forts, which stand as enduring testaments to the region's tumultuous past. Throughout the annals of history, Punjab remained a coveted prize for invaders and conquerors, drawn by its fertile lands and strategic significance. From the earliest incursions of ancient empires to the more recent colonial ambitions, a procession of forces sought to assert dominance over this land. With the establishment of the *Sikh states*, the era of invasions in the region came to an end. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, founded the Khalsa Panth in 1699 AD. Following Guru Gobind Singh's death, Banda Singh Bahadur arrived in Punjab, rallying the Sikhs together. After the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Dal Khalsa was formed, which eventually gave rise to the 12 Misls.

By the end of the “18th century”, the five most powerful “*misls*” (*ਮਿਸਲ*)²⁷⁶ were “Shukrachakia, Kanhaiya, Nakai, Ahluwalia and Bhangi Sikhs”. Maharaja Ranjit Singh initially formed a trusting alliance with the Kanhais and Nakais. However, some of the smaller Misls, like the Phulkia Misls, shifted their allegiance in the late 18th century, supporting the Afghan army's offensive against their Khalsa brethren. With Ranjit Singh's ascension to the throne of Lahore in 1799, the boundaries of the Sikh kingdom began to expand, stretching up to the Sutlej River. He successfully captured numerous Mughal forts, though many of those built by Ranjit Singh himself were destroyed in subsequent battles. His reign marked a period of reforms, modernization, infrastructure investment, and general prosperity. Ranjit Singh's Khalsa army and government were diverse, comprising Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, and Europeans. The "conquest of Amritsar" was of immense significance for Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as it was not only the second-largest city in Punjab after Lahore but also the spiritual heart of the Sikh community.²⁷⁷ He has no doubt that one of the first things he did on assuming

²⁷⁶ The Sikh Mislas, collectively referred to as the Sikh Confederacy, consisted of twelve independent states known as the Twelve Mislas. These Mislas emerged following the formation of the Dal Khalsa in the 18th century in the Punjab region of northern India. The Sikh Mislas are often credited with playing a significant role in the decline of the Mughal Empire, particularly before Nader Shah's invasion of India (1738–1740).

²⁷⁷ Harmandir Sahib is spiritually the most important shrine of Sikhism.

power was the renovation of the old fort, which was situated just outside the "city of Amritsar". He ordered his commander, "*Shamir Singh Thethar*"²⁷⁸ to rebuild and improve the "fort with fortifications", which took about four years to complete. The result was the construction of the magnificent "Gobindgarh Fort", named in honor of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Maharaja Ranjit Singh embraced the latest European military techniques, and the fort's design reflects this influence. The main defensive walls were strategically arranged in a central formation, with several levels surrounded by a deep and wide moat (5.5 meters). The architecture of the fort incorporated European methods to withstand artillery attacks. Inside the fort, there was a large arsenal, a treasury, and a palace. Originally attributed to Gujjar Singh Bhangi, the fort was built between 1760 and 1770 by the chiefs of the Bhangi Misl. Maharaja Ranjit Singh later constructed it atop the ruins of a fort built by Sardar Gujar Singh of the Bhangi Misl. It took 4 years to build the fort, from 1805 to 1809. The Maharaja entrusted Shamir Singh Thethar with the task of building it and appointed him the first fort. Apart from the dome of the swinging Toshakhana, the fort had eight other minarets. Apart from storing royal weapons and ammunition, a mint was erected here, and the fort was used for the royal treasury *reference of coins*.



Figure 1 Coin issued during the Sikh period bearing inscriptions in Persian and Gurmukhi script, reflecting the political authority and administrative identity of the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The coin demonstrates the continuation of Indo-Persian monetary traditions alongside emerging Sikh state symbolism in early nineteenth-century Punjab. **Source:** British Museum Collection, "Coin, Ranjit Singh," Object No. OR.1723, British Museum, London. Available at: [British Museum Coin Record](#)

The Darbar Sahib, the holy shrine in the "middle of the lake", is surrounded by buildings, of which the building in front of the "Darshan Deodhi" is an "Akal Takht", the main center of "Sikh religious authority". Which was built by the sixth Guru of Sikhs, "Guru Hargobind Ji".

²⁷⁸ Shamir Singh of Thathar was a soldier and commander of the "Lahore Empire". Shamir Singh fought under "Maha Singh" (Ranjit Singh's father) in the battle of "Rasulnagar" in 1778-79. In 1819, 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed him as "Thanedar of Nurpur". He died in 1824'.

Mian Imam-Udd-din, one of the three chief *fakir brothers* ²⁷⁹ of the Sikh period, was the head of the fort for many years. The importance of the fort remained even during the British rule. The fort has now been handed over to the Indian people but is still being used by the Indian Army. The fort played an important role in the history of Punjab and witnessed many battles and sieges. The *Kohenoor diamond* ²⁸⁰ was also kept in the Toshakhana of this fort.

Comparative and Critical Interpretation of Forts in Punjab

The forts of Punjab during the Sikh period reflected a combination of indigenous military traditions, Mughal architectural influence, and emerging European military techniques. Although several forts inherited by Maharaja Ranjit Singh had originally been constructed during earlier Mughal, Afghan, or local princely regimes, they were substantially modified and adapted according to the military requirements of the nineteenth century. This transformation demonstrates that Sikh-period fortification was not merely a continuation of earlier traditions but represented a process of military and architectural adaptation shaped by changing political circumstances and advances in warfare. A comparative examination of Mughal and Sikh-period forts indicates important differences in military priorities and architectural planning. Mughal forts such as Lahore Fort emphasized imperial grandeur, ornamental architecture, and administrative authority alongside military defence. Their architectural features often included elaborate gateways, palatial complexes, decorative elements, gardens, and ceremonial spaces intended to symbolize imperial sovereignty. In contrast, Sikh-period forts under Maharaja Ranjit Singh increasingly reflected practical military concerns associated with artillery warfare, frontier defence, and rapid troop mobilization. Forts such as Gobindgarh and Phillaur reveal stronger defensive planning through thicker fortification walls, angular bastions, elevated artillery positions, and reinforced gateways intended to withstand cannon attacks and prolonged military engagements. Similarly, Afghan frontier fortifications were primarily designed for rapid military defence and strategic territorial control over frontier regions vulnerable to invasion and tribal conflict. Sikh military planners adapted several frontier defence mechanisms while simultaneously incorporating modern military engineering techniques introduced through European influence. This resulted in a distinct military

²⁷⁹ Imam ud Din Fakir, second son of Ghulam Mohali ud Din and younger brother of Fakir Azi ud Din, was the Foreign Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was the Kiladar or garrison commander of Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar, where the bulk of the Sikh crown jewels were deposited.

²⁸⁰ This is the diamond that Babur acquired in 1526 AD after the victory of Delhi and Agra in the Battle of Panipat. In the Sikh kingdom, the diamond remained with Maharaja Ranjit Singh for 11 years, after which it passed into the hands of Dulip Singh, then the British East India Company, who handed it over to Queen Victoria.

architecture that combined local building traditions with innovations suited to contemporary warfare. The strategic positioning of forts near rivers, trade routes, and communication centres further reflects the military and administrative priorities of the Sikh state.

Another important distinction can be observed in the functional role of forts during the Sikh period. Earlier medieval forts often functioned primarily as royal residences or defensive enclosures for ruling elites. However, Sikh-period forts increasingly emerged as integrated military-administrative centres. They accommodated barracks, armouries, treasuries, grain storage facilities, artillery depots, and administrative offices within a single fortified complex. This multifunctional character demonstrates a more organized approach toward governance and military management under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The comparative study of forts across regions such as Majha, Doaba, Malwa, and frontier Punjab further reveals variations in military and administrative functions according to regional requirements. Frontier forts such as Attock and Multan were primarily concerned with territorial defence and surveillance against external threats, whereas forts located in central Punjab played a greater role in trade regulation, revenue administration, and maintenance of internal political stability. This regional variation highlights the adaptability of Sikh military planning according to geographical and political conditions. Thus, the forts of Punjab during the Sikh period cannot be viewed merely as static architectural monuments. They represented dynamic institutions shaped by military necessity, political authority, frontier defence, economic regulation, and evolving architectural practices. Their comparative study demonstrates the changing nature of warfare, governance, and state formation in Punjab during the early nineteenth century.

Dinanagar Fort is situated in Gurdaspur, Punjab, India, and was constructed in the 18th century by Maharaja Amar Singh of the Katoch dynasty. It served as the summer capital during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The fort has witnessed numerous battles and invasions, underscoring its strategic significance. Dinanagar, located in the Gurdaspur district of the Majha region in Eastern Punjab, is named after Adina Beg, the Subedar of Punjab under both the Mughals and the Marathas, who made it his residence. During the Sikh Empire, it became a favored summer retreat for Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who held court there, making the city his summer capital. Today, the only remaining structure is the Barandari, built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh with the help of Lahna Singh Majithia. To the east of the Barandari is a platform where Maharaja Ranjit Singh would hold his court. On this place in 1838 AD, the British officers of

the East India Company came to meet with them, an officer *William G. Osborne*²⁸¹ has told his eye-witness that –

“The floor of the Dinanagar Darbar where they reached was covered with very valuable shawls and beads. Another chandoya with a very bright and colorful pashmina stretched about a third of this hall. Its fringes were studded with precious stones. Behind the Maharaja's golden chair stood the Maharaja's chieftains and ambassadors or officials who had arrived from Kabul, Kandahar and Afghanistan. Maharaja Sahib himself was sitting cross-legged on a golden round chair in a milk-white muslin pajama and shirt. He was not wearing any jewelry, except a belt with very precious stones tied around his neck as his girdle. A Kohenoora diamond was tied with a velvet band on the wrist of the left arm.”²⁸² During the rise of the Sikh Misls, Dinanagar was the center of Kanaiya and Ramgaria misls activity. Maharaja Ranjit Singh abolished the power of the Ramgaria and Kanaiya Misls in 1808 and 1811 AD, respectively and became the lord of the entire present-day “Gurdaspur district, including Dinanagar”. The enchanting “location of Dinanagar” won the heart of “Maharaja Ranjit Singh”, who established the town as the “center of his political activities and summer capital”. “Vantura House, Military Stage, Barandri, Private Residence, Hammam, Stables, Cowshed and Shivala” were specially built here during this time. These buildings are a mixture of “Mughal and European art”. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took several important decisions related to his state at Dinanagar, such as the planned suspension of the “invasion of Kashmir”, the decision to meet “Lord William Bentinck” at Ropar in October 1831²⁸³, and the negotiations with the McNaughton Mission about the succession to Afghanistan. The last important Durbar of the Maharaja was held in this city on 31 May 1838.

Patti Fort, also known as Dunichand Fort, is located in Tarn Taran District, Punjab, India Patti is also known as Haibatpur Patti and is named after a fakir named Haibat and his female

²⁸¹ William G. Osborne was the Military Secretary to Lord Auckland, the Governor General of India. Who was sent to the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with an English delegation in May 1838. Where this delegation remained till July 1838. After he stayed with Maharaja Ranjit Singh for a few months, he kept writing in his diary whatever he saw. Which he turned into a book.

²⁸² Osborne, W. G., & University of California Libraries. (1840). The court and camp of Runjeet Sing. In *Internet Archive*. London: H. Colburn.

In October 1831, a significant meeting occurred between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India, at Rupnagar (Ropar), a small town along the Sutlej River. The event lasted for eight days and featured military reviews, entertainment, and feasting, with both parties attempting to outdo each other in expressions of goodwill. At the conclusion of the meeting, Lord Bentinck presented the Maharaja with a document, often mistakenly referred to as the "Treaty" of 1831. In reality, it was a British declaration of goodwill, conveying a desire for peaceful relations with the Maharaja. This gesture can be likened to the diplomatic exchanges between modern heads of state following official summits.

attendant Patti. It is a very ancient place and was mentioned by the Chinese traveler *Huen Tsang*, who visited Punjab in 630 CE under the name China Belt. Its climate is particularly suitable for Punjabis and the natives of the belt are famous for their good physique. It is a favorite recruiting ground; many natives serve in the army. The population is mainly Mughal. The town is walled and the houses are mostly made of solid bricks. It has a good bazaar and paved streets. Public buildings include police stations, rest houses, and schools. The police station and rest houses are situated in a well-built fort of solid masonry about 200 yards from the town to the northeast. Under the Sikh rule, the fort was used as a horse breeding establishment by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The belt supplies large quantities of grain to the towns of Amritsar and Lahore²⁸⁴.

The fort presents a beautiful architectural design and holds historical significance for the Sikh community. Before the Sikhs, the city of Patti was under the Mughal Empire. The Mughals were a major dynasty that ruled the Indian subcontinent from the 16th to the 19th centuries, and Patti was a part of their territory. Patti was a government during the Mughals just as Sirhind was a government, which today was at the level of commissioner officers. The revenue of Patti area used to be nine lakh rupees. That is why it was also called Nau Lakhi Patti. It is said that the entire area here used to be owned by three Chaudhris who were monopolists of three lakhs. Nawab Kapur Singh, founder of Faizalpuria Misal, his nephew Sardar Khushal Singh won this fort by fighting a war from the Pathans. Diwan Mohakam Chand conquered it in 1811 AD and annexed it to the empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. There are ramparts built on the walls of this fort, in which three holes have been made on the same place to defend and there are also some big holes in which cannons will be installed. These few facts show that this fort would have been used as a military fort as well as a temporary prison, in which children and women would have been kept as punishments. Because according to the old elders of Patti city, here small children were hanged on the pegs in front of their mothers.

Dasuya Fort is located in Dasuya town located in the Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, India. The origins of the fort are unclear, but tradition states that this place was the capital of King Virat, as described in Mahabharata. Dasuya was known as "Virat Ki Nagri" in earlier times²⁸⁵. The uneven streets and places of a part of the town on a mound testify to its antiquity. To the north of the city is an old fort. It was demolished in 1848. Ain-e-Akbari mentions the Dasuha Fort

²⁸⁴ Gazetteer of the Ferozpur District: 1883. (1883). In *Google Books* (p. 192). OXFORD UNIVERSITY.
https://books.google.co.in/books?redir_esc=y&id=VJwIAAAQAAJ&q=Patti+fort#v=snippet&q=Patti%20fort&f=false

²⁸⁵ Sharma, B. R. (2012, February 4). "*Punjab Gazetteer: Hoshiarpur*" (ed.1979). Web.archive.org.
https://web.archive.org/web/20120204161802/http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/gaz_hsp2.htm

which was later one of the strongholds of the Ramgarhs. After retaking Afghan control in the northwestern region, the region was divided among various Sikh leaders who formed groups known as misals. These misals often fought each other during the challenging period of the eighteenth century. From 1739 to 1811, the Hoshiarpur district gained historical and political importance. Misal became a contentious area among the chiefs.

Jassa Singh, the founder of the "Ramgarhia Misl", occupied the areas of Dasuha. His son Jodh Singh succeeded him in 1803 but Maharaja Ranjit Singh intervened in 1816 due to family feuds. By 1817, Ranjit Singh had captured all the territories of the Ramgarhia Misal²⁸⁶. Maharaja Ranjit Singh held it for 14 years and then handed it over to Tara Singh Gheba along with the surrounding villages and annexed it. To the north of Dasuha town, an old fort that once held the stronghold of the Ramgarhians still exists. A tower of the fort is still visible, indicating its existence. Now there is a Government Girls High School at this place. There is also an old well near this tower. This fort is believed to have been built by Mughal Emperor Akbar. The fort changed hands several times over the centuries before finally ending up under British rule.

Alawalpur Fort is located in Jalandhar, Punjab, India. Chaudhri Gulab Rai, a Bains Jat from Mahalpur in Hoshiarpur, played an active role in the Sikh conquest of the Sirhind province in 1759. He was granted the village of Jalla, from which his family later adopted the title "Jallewalia" or "Jallavasi." After recognizing the authority of the chief of Nabha, who included Jalla and other captured villages in his domain, his son, Himmat Singh, represented Nabha in negotiations that resulted in the British protection of the "Chiefs of the Sis-Sutlej." In recognition of his efforts, the kings of Patiala and Jind granted him land worth Rs. 20,000 annually. In 1812, Maharaja Ranjit Singh persuaded Himmat Singh to leave Nabha and join his service as vizier, a post he held until his death in 1826. Along with his four brothers, Himmat Singh received the Alawalpur territory in the Jalandhar district, which had been seized from the Pathans. Initially valued at Rs. 1,20,000 annually, the estate's value later increased to Rs. 3,00,000 per year. Additionally, Himmat Singh was granted two villages south of the Sutlej by Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, the ancestor of the current Maharaja of Kapurthala. These villages are now part of Ludhiana District, where the widow of Basava Singh, Himmat Singh's grandson, held a small landholding exempt from revenue duties. Himmat Singh's eldest son, Sardar Albel Singh, was martyred while fighting for Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1825. In honor of his sacrifice, the Maharaja allocated Rs. 5,000 for his mausoleum and granted a free plot for

²⁸⁶ Punjab Government. (1905). "Punjab District Gazetteers Hoshiarpur District" Vol.xiii; Pt.a. In *Internet Archive* (p. 18). Punjab Govt Press.

its upkeep. After Himmat Singh's death in 1829, the Alawalpur villages, valued at Rs. 60,000 annually and carrying the obligation of providing 180 horsemen, were bequeathed to his heirs. In 1832, the estate was divided between his younger son, Kishan Singh, and his grandson.

Bajwara is located about 3 km south-east of Hoshiarpur. It was founded by three immigrants from Ghazni, one of whom was Baiju Bora, a famous singer of the Mughal period. It is believed that the name Bajwara is derived from Baiju Bora. The city of Bajwara was divided into small parts by Raja Todar Mall, Akbar's revenue minister, as a punishment for not paying him due respect. Sher Shah Suri, an Afghan ruler, was born in the fort of Bajwara²⁸⁷. It is believed to have been built during the Mughal era, reflecting the architectural styles of that time. In 1801, Raja Sansar Chand, a hill king, expelled Sardar Bhup Singh Faizullapuria from this town. It was later captured by "Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1825". The British converted the Bajwara fort into a military prison²⁸⁸. According to local people, due to lack of maintenance of this fort, the bricks of this fort were used to build the road from Jalandhar to Hoshiarpur.

Phillaur Fort is located in Jalandhar, Punjab, India. Phillaur Fort was earlier a Mughal Sarai constructed during the reign of "Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan". During the Middle Ages, people used oxen, bullock carts, camels, or horses for transportation. Because towns and cities were located at considerable distances. People used to travel in caravans to move from one place to another because, apart from the distance, robbery was a constant threat. Generally, people could travel about 8 kos or 32 km in a day. After a tiring journey, safe places to stay for the night were necessary to get their animals to safety and ensure food and water security. Hence caravan inns were built at intervals of a day's journey during the Mughal period. These taverns were built along the Agra-Lahore highway. Phillaur City is located between Lahore and Delhi. These inns were mostly square or rectangular in shape, with fortified walls. They were given a bastion at each corner, which was usually octagonal, making them look like forts. They had the Char iwan plan that was developed during the Sultanate period in the 11th and 12th centuries. Centrally the structure was open to the sky and houses were built on the sides. The gates were large enough to allow pack animals like camels and horses to enter. They could either be tied up in the central area of the inn or sometimes a separate stable could be built for them.

²⁸⁷ Puri, B. N., & Das, M. N. (2003). *A Comprehensive History of India: Comprehensive history of medieval India*. (p. 120). Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

²⁸⁸ Baldev Raj Sharma. (1980). Punjab District Gazetteers: Hoshiarpur. In *Internet Archive* (p. 432). Chandigarh, Revenue Department.

In the treaty between "Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the British" in 1809 AD, they regarded the river Sutlej as the border between the two kings. Due to this, Maharaja Ranjit Singh built Phillaur fort instead of the Mughal Sarai, which Shah Jahan built. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the responsibility of building this fort to Diwan Mohakam Chand. Diwan Mohakam Chand commissioned Italian and French generals Allard and Ventura to build this fort²⁸⁹. The fort was a defensive fortification and military cantonment on the banks of the Sutlej River. It was a significant factor in preserving the trade route between Delhi and Kabul. Today, The fort is a police academy converted from the first fingerprint bureau.

The Lodhi Fort, located in Ludhiana, was constructed during the reign of Sikandar Lodhi. The first name of Ludhiana was "Mir-Hota". Two Lodhi chiefs, "Nahin Khan and Yusuf Khan", were appointed by Sikander Lodhi in place of "Mir Hota". Yusuf Khan crossed the Sutlej River in the "Jalandhar Doab" in search of the "Khokhars" who were attempting to escape the Doab and resided at "Sultanpur". When "Nihan Khan" was stationed there, the present city was founded on the site of the village "Mir Hota". The new city was originally known as "Lodhi-ana", meaning "City of Lodhi". Later, this name was changed to "Ludhiana's current name". It was built to protect the city of Ludhiana from foreign invasions. The fort features impressive architectural details. A tunnel was also built in this fort, connecting it with the Phillaur fort. The remains of which still exist today.

Malot Fort is located in Hoshiarpur district. The first name of Malot town was Mal-kot from which the fort got its name Malot. This is an undiscovered fort located in Hoshiarpur. A historic fort exists in a dilapidated condition in Malot village, 10 km from Haryana. It was built during the time of Bahlol Lodhi and was used by Babur to imprison Daulat Khan Lodhi and Ghazi Khan, the rebel governors of Punjab²⁹⁰. The fort being on top of a hill could defend itself. Before the battle of Panipat in 1526 AD, Babur crossed the Beas and encamped in front of the Shivalik hills from the area of Kahnuwal. Daulat Kha Lodhi remained imprisoned in this fort for fear of war with Babur, on which the Malot fort was built. After which Babar left for Delhi. It is also said that some days of Akbar's childhood were spent in this fort. This fort had the largest library of Arabic and Persian literature in Asia.

²⁸⁹ Goswamy, B.N., "A sense of History, Sunday spectrum, The Tribune, Chandigarh, July 3, 2011

²⁹⁰ Punjab Government. (1905). Punjab District Gazetteers Hoshiarpur District Vol.XIII a. (p. 20). Punjab Govt Press Lahore.

These forts have a unique historical background, architectural style and cultural significance. They represent the region's rich heritage and historical significance and a visit to each of these forts can provide a glimpse into this fascinating history.

British Reuse and Neglect of Forts

Forts have long stood as silent guardians of history, reflecting the power, culture and resilience of the regions they once protected. In Punjab, the forts of Dinanagar, Gobindgarh, Patti, Dasuha, Malout, Bajwara, Alawalpur, Phillaur and Lodhi were not just military structures; they were the nerve centres of strategic operations, economic control and political authority during turbulent times. These forts played important roles in the military logistics, supply chains and movements of the armies of the Sikh Empire and its predecessors.²⁹¹ However, with the advent of British colonial rule, their importance waned, leading to a gradual decline²⁹². During the height and earlier periods of the Sikh Empire, these forts were crucial for the military and administrative control of Punjab. Each fort served as a centre for strategic operations, facilitating the movement of troops, storage of supplies and defence of important areas. For example, the Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar was not just a military stronghold but also a centre of power, housing the treasury and armoury of the Sikh Empire. Similarly, the strategically located Phillaur Fort, on the banks of the Sutlej River, was important for controlling the northern frontier and served as a key military outpost protecting the empire's borders. Beyond their military importance, these forts were integral to economic stability. They protected important trade routes, ensuring the smooth flow of goods, artisans and resources throughout the region. The forts of Dasuha and Bajwara, for example, protected trade corridors through the lower Shivalik hills, which were essential for maintaining regional trade and prosperity. The presence of these formidable forts deterred invasions, maintained internal order, and strengthened the sovereignty of local rulers, making them indispensable pillars of the historical landscape of Punjab. However, today, these architectural wonders stand largely neglected, bearing silent witness to a glorious but fading past. This article explores the historical significance of these forts, the factors behind their decline, and the contemporary efforts and challenges involved in their conservation and restoration.

²⁹¹ Singh, K. (2014). *The Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab*. Penguin UK.

²⁹² Grewal, J. S. (2003). *The Sikhs of the Punjab*. Cambridge University Press.

Impact of the British Annexation

The role and location of forts in Punjab, including Dinanagar, Gobindgarh, Patti, Dasuha, Malot, Bajwara, Alawalpur, Phillaur and Lodhi underwent many changes after the British occupation of Punjab in 1849. Here is a brief overview of how these forts developed during the British period. After the annexation, Dinanagar Fort's strategic importance declined as the British established new military and administrative centers. The fort was no longer a primary military outpost. The fort may have been repurposed for administrative functions or left under the control of local authorities, with a diminished role in military logistics. Gobindgarh Fort retained its military significance under the British. The fort was used as an armory and garrison for British troops, given its location in Amritsar, a major city. The British strengthened and modernized the fort's defenses, adding new military installations and using it to store weapons and ammunition, reflecting its continued strategic importance. With the consolidation of British power, Patti Fort's role in border defense diminished. The British relied more on newer fortifications and military stations closer to the frontier. The fort might have been repurposed for local administration or left to decay, as the British focus shifted to other strategic locations. Dasuya Fort, like many others, saw a reduction in its military role. The British did not prioritize it for military operations, focusing instead on more strategically located forts and cantonments. The fort may have been converted for civil use or neglected, as the British streamlined their military logistics and supply chains. Malot Fort's role as a military stronghold declined under British rule. Its strategic significance was reassessed, and it likely saw reduced military activity. The fort might have been abandoned or repurposed for non-military functions, with its previous role in regional security largely diminished. Bajwara Fort's control over access routes became less critical under British rule, leading to its reduced military significance. The fort likely fell into neglect, as the British consolidated their power and focused on modern infrastructure for military and administrative purposes. Alawalpur Fort, like others, experienced a reduction in its strategic role. The British were less reliant on these older forts for military logistics. The fort may have been repurposed for local administrative use or left to decay, with its military importance significantly reduced. Phillaur Fort retained its military importance due to its location near the Sutlej River. The British used it as a military outpost and training center. The British made modifications to the fort, enhancing its defenses and adapting it to their military needs. It became one of the few forts in Punjab that continued to play a key military role. Lodhi Fort saw a decline in its military role as the British established new military stations and infrastructure in the region. The fort might have been repurposed for civil administration or left

to deteriorate, with its strategic importance fading under British rule. The British focused on modernizing military infrastructure, building new cantonments, and fortifications in strategic locations, reducing the reliance on older forts. Many forts were repurposed for administrative or civil uses, such as offices, prisons, or storage facilities, reflecting their reduced military importance. Some forts fell into neglect and disrepair as they were no longer deemed critical for defense or logistics. A few forts, like Gobindgarh and Phillaur, were maintained due to their strategic importance or historical value, while others were abandoned or dismantled. The British annexation marked a significant shift in how these forts were utilized, reflecting changes in military strategy, administrative practices, and the overall approach to governance in Punjab.

Decline After British Annexation

The British annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 marked a turning point in the history of these forts. The British, with their superior military technology and different strategic priorities, saw less value in the traditional fortifications that had once been central to the region's defense. Advances in artillery and firearms made the thick walls and bastions of these forts less effective, as they could be easily breached by modern cannons. Consequently, the British shifted their focus to building new military infrastructure, such as cantonments and railways, which were better suited to their needs. The forts that once thrived as centers of military logistics and regional control were either repurposed for administrative functions or abandoned altogether. For example, while Gobindgarh Fort continued to serve a military purpose under British rule, many others, like Malot and Bajwara, fell into neglect. The shift in trade routes and the consolidation of power in centralized locations further diminished the strategic importance of these forts. As a result, the once-mighty bastions of Punjab's military might began to crumble, both physically and in terms of their relevance. The decline of forts in Punjab as military structures, especially after the British annexation, can be attributed to several key factors: The development of artillery, especially cannons and later firearms, rendered traditional fortifications less effective. The thick walls and bastions that were once impregnable could be breached more easily with modern artillery. The introduction of rifles with greater accuracy and range reduced the need for close-quarter defensive structures like forts, which were originally designed to withstand assaults by infantry and cavalry. The British military strategy emphasized mobility, rapid deployment of troops, and the use of modern transportation networks, such as railways. This reduced the reliance on static fortifications. The British established large, centralized cantonments that were better suited to

accommodate and mobilize modern armies. These were strategically located in places like Lahore and Ambala, reducing the need for smaller, scattered forts. After annexing Punjab, the British consolidated their control over the region, diminishing the strategic need for many of the forts. With reduced threats from local rulers and neighboring states, the necessity for numerous defensive structures decreased. The British developed new trade and communication routes, including railways and roads, which bypassed many of the older forts. This shift further reduced their strategic importance in controlling trade and movement. Maintaining large forts was expensive, and as they became less militarily relevant, the British were unwilling to invest in their upkeep. Many forts were allowed to fall into disrepair due to the high costs associated with maintaining them. Some forts were repurposed for civil administration, storage, or even as prisons. While this extended their use, it often led to their decline as military structures, as they were no longer maintained for defense. As cities expanded, some forts were engulfed by urban development. This led to their degradation or conversion into urban spaces, losing their military character. Changes in population patterns, driven by economic and social factors, also contributed to the decline of forts. As people moved to urban centers, the areas around some forts became less populated and less strategically important. Many forts suffered from natural decay over time. Without regular maintenance, structures built centuries ago deteriorated, especially those made from materials prone to erosion. After the British annexation, many forts were simply neglected. Without a strategic purpose or active maintenance, these forts were left to decay, with some being dismantled for building materials. The transition from the Sikh Empire and local rulers to British colonial rule brought about substantial changes in governance that reduced the need for forts as symbols of power bases and authority. The cultural significance of forts as symbols of power and resistance diminished under British rule, contributing to their abandonment and decline. Some forts, especially those near rivers or in hilly regions, suffered from erosion, flooding, or landslides. These environmental factors could cause structural damage over time. The harsh climatic conditions in certain areas, such as extreme heat, humidity, or monsoon rains, contributed to the deterioration of fort structures. Several factors contributed to the decline of these forts as military structures. The foremost was the evolution of military technology. The introduction of long-range artillery and rifles rendered traditional forts obsolete. The British military strategy, which emphasized mobility and centralized command, further reduced the need for these static defenses. Economic factors also played a significant role. Maintaining these large fortifications was costly, and with their diminished military value, the British were unwilling to invest in their upkeep. This led to many forts being neglected and falling into disrepair. Additionally, the urbanization and expansion

of cities like Ludhiana and Amritsar led to the encroachment on some forts, such as Lodhi Fort, further contributing to their degradation.

Preservation and Current Status

Efforts to preserve and maintain the forts in Punjab, including Dinanagar, Gobindgarh, Patti, Dasuya, Malot, Bajwara, Alawalpur, Phillaur, and Lodhi, vary widely, and their current conditions reflect a range of outcomes, from well-preserved to neglected. Here's an overview:

Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar is one of the best-preserved forts in Punjab. The fort has been extensively restored by the Punjab Government and other heritage organizations. It is now a popular tourist attraction, featuring museums, cultural exhibitions, and light and sound shows that highlight its historical significance. The fort is in excellent condition and serves as a cultural hub. Phillaur Fort has seen some preservation efforts, especially since it was used by the Punjab Police as a training center. The fort's historical importance has been recognized, and there have been attempts to maintain its structure. The fort is in relatively good condition, although it could benefit from more focused conservation efforts. It continues to serve a functional purpose, which has helped in its upkeep. Malot Fort has not seen significant preservation efforts. The fort's remote location and the lack of resources have contributed to its neglect. The fort is in a dilapidated state, with much of its structure deteriorating due to weathering and lack of maintenance. It is largely in ruins, though it still holds historical interest. Bajwara Fort has not received much attention from preservationists. There have been some local efforts to maintain parts of the structure, but these have been limited. The fort is in poor condition, with much of it crumbling. It is at risk of further deterioration without significant intervention. Lodhi Fort in Ludhiana has seen some preservation efforts, primarily driven by local heritage enthusiasts and government initiatives. However, these efforts have been inconsistent. The fort is in a mixed state. Some parts have been preserved, while others have fallen into disrepair. Urban encroachment has also affected the fort's surroundings. Dinanagar Fort has not been a major focus of preservation efforts, leading to its gradual decline. It can be ascertained from the conditions of this fort that many important parts of it have become ruins. Local interest in its history exists, but without substantial preservation work, its condition continues to worsen. Like many smaller forts, Patti Fort has not benefited from significant preservation efforts. The fort is largely in ruins, with little remaining of its original structure. It has been largely forgotten and is at risk of being lost entirely if no action is taken. Dasuya

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Fort has seen limited efforts in preservation, mostly at the local level. The fort is in poor condition, with much of it having collapsed or been overtaken by vegetation. It is in dire need of conservation efforts to prevent further decay. Alawalpur Fort has also been largely neglected in terms of preservation. The fort is in a dilapidated state, with very little of its original structure intact. Like many other forts, it faces the threat of complete ruin without significant intervention. Many of these forts suffer from a lack of funding, awareness, and expertise in heritage conservation. While some, like Gobindgarh and Phillaur, have been maintained and restored, others are in various stages of decay. There have been sporadic initiatives by the Punjab Government, local organizations, and heritage enthusiasts to preserve these forts. However, the success of these efforts has been uneven, often depending on the fort's location, historical significance, and available resources. Increased awareness of the historical and cultural value of these forts could help garner support for their preservation. Promoting these sites as tourist destinations might also provide the financial backing needed for their upkeep. The condition of these forts today reflects a combination of neglect, limited preservation efforts, and in some cases, successful restoration. Without more consistent and widespread efforts, many of these historical structures risk further deterioration. In the present day, the condition of these forts varies widely. Some, like Gobindgarh Fort, have been successfully preserved and repurposed as cultural and historical sites. The Punjab Government, along with heritage organizations, has undertaken extensive restoration work to turn Gobindgarh into a tourist attraction, complete with museums and cultural exhibitions. This fort stands as a testament to the successful preservation of Punjab's historical legacy. However, not all forts have been as fortunate. Many, such as Malot and Bajwara Forts, are in a state of ruin, with little left of their original structures. These forts suffer from a lack of funding, awareness, and expertise in heritage conservation. While there have been some local efforts to maintain these sites, they are often insufficient to prevent further decay. Urbanization, neglect, and environmental factors continue to threaten the survival of these historic structures. The forts of Punjab are more than just remnants of a bygone era; they are symbols of the region's rich history and cultural heritage. While some have been preserved and continue to tell the story of Punjab's past, many others are at risk of being lost forever. The decline of these forts reflects broader changes in military strategy, economic priorities, and governance that came with British colonial rule. However, the current efforts to preserve these forts, though uneven, offer a glimmer of hope. By recognizing the historical significance of these structures and investing in their preservation, there is still an opportunity to preserve and learn from these guardians of Punjab's history for future generations.

Conclusion

The location of Punjab at the crossroads between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent is one of the major reasons for its composite nature in religious, cultural and architectural domains. The region became a corridor to India, welcoming all. Punjab was one of the earliest regions to harbor fortifications in the region's deep history. Regarding the Punjab of undivided India, the Harappan site of Sanghol in Ropar [Indian Punjab] and Harappa [Pakistani Punjab] may be used as examples. Being in the plains immediately after the outer layer of the Himalayas, Punjab was prone to invasions from Central Asia via Hindukush. Though the habitation of the region dates back to 2600 BCE, with established IVC sites like Harappa, the economy of the region bloomed due to the availability of water for irrigation and the fertile soil with renewed silt layer almost every year. The region is still known for producing grains and earned the name Granary of India. Thus, the feature of the corridor to India, known for its trade, crafts and Gold, especially towards the 10th and 11th century CE and the fertile region in a time when agriculture comprised almost 80% of the net state revenue. As a historical phenomenon, the surplus production paved the way for the increase in population and the establishment of urban centers, which we have evidence of since the Harappan civilization. Due to this, there was always a need for fortifications, which can be sampled from the Indus Valley Civilization as there is evidence of fortified settlements found in archaeological excavations.

The Aryan Invasion theory, initially proposed by scholars such as Mortimer Wheeler, posits that the Indus Valley Civilization collapsed around 1500 BCE due to invasions by Indo-European tribes. Wheeler, a prominent British archaeologist, cited the discovery of skeletons at Mohenjo-daro and suggested they were victims of an Aryan invasion. He linked it to the Vedic texts that refer to Purandhara Indra, "destroyer of forts". The Aryans interpret these descriptions as historical accounts of conquests. This literary evidence from the Rigveda, where Indra is celebrated for his warlike prowess and destruction of forts (puras) corroborates Wheeler's archaeological findings. Presents a case for the Aryan invasion as a contributing factor to the decline of the Indus civilization. The importance of the defence system increased with time. As the metals were discovered, the method of defence also improved. The earlier fortifications took the shape of forts in this manner. These forts were built on elevated positions, higher than the city, so that the entire city could be monitored and the lives of the people inhabiting the city could be saved in case of the aggression. In Indian context even today we have many forts especially belonging to Marathas and Rajputs, which were built on locations generally considered extremely unsuitable for construction like the mountain tips with

extremely hard approach routes. The safety measures in the forts can be understood from the usage of the term in context to almost invincible.

The presence of paintings and sculptures in the forts of Punjab is an important aspect of their cultural heritage. *Victoria* provides a comprehensive overview of the arts, including paintings and textiles, in the Sikh states and Kumar discusses the development of Sikh art, including the unique Sikh style influenced by various cultural traditions. *Cooper* focuses on the Mughal murals in the Lahore Fort and Asghar on the haveli paintings in Kallar Saydan. A study of these collectively reveals the rich artistic heritage of the forts of Punjab. Since ancient times, these forts have been the center of culture and history. A strong wall was built around the outside of the city to protect the city from outside attacks. A moat was made outside that wall in which crocodiles were released so that no one could cross it even by swimming in the water left in this moat. Forts and fortifications served as bulwarks against invading armies. They provided strategic locations to control trade routes and river networks. Successive civilizations, from Alexander the Great to the Maurya Empire and the Kushans, sought to fortify Punjab's borders and establish their rule over its fertile plains. The last decade of 12th century CE was going to play an important role in the fortification in India. During the Sultanate period, the route from Agra to Lahore was the Delhi-Multan Road via Ghuram, Samana, Sunam, Bathinda and Abohar. This road had been connecting Punjab with the north-western world for a long time. Which later became difficult to pass through the desert. This desert was in Rajasthan. Due to the difficulties encountered in this route, the northern route was adopted. This was the same route as the route of the Mughal period. This route passed through many cities of Punjab like Sultanpur Lodhi, Nakodar, Nurmahal, Phillaur, Ludhiana, Doraha, Payal, Khanna, and Sirhind. Many forts were built along these routes, with which this route could be monitored, as this route was also used for trade.

Punjab, a South Asian region, has been a crossroads of different cultures, religions and civilizations. Its rich and fertile land, strategic geographical location and vibrant cultural history have made it a popular territory for many invaders over the centuries. Punjab's location acts as a gateway between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, making it a prime target for attackers. Five rivers pass through this region's fertile plains, providing Punjab with rich agricultural land. Punjab's abundant agricultural resources and prosperous cities attracted invaders in search of wealth and resources. Its location on the Silk Road facilitated trade and commerce. Continued political instability and fragmentation within the Indian subcontinent made Punjab vulnerable to frequent attacks. The attackers took advantage of these weaknesses to establish their control over the area.

Many invaders came intending to spread their religion and culture. For example, the spread of Islam was significantly facilitated by invasions of Muslim rulers from Central Asia. Alexander's invasion (326 BCE) introduced Greek culture and influenced local art, architecture, and urban planning. The intermingling of Greek and Indian cultures led to the rise of the Indo-Greek kingdoms. Attacks by various rulers, including Afghani invaders such as Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad of Ghor, led to the establishment of an Islamic state in the Punjab. This period introduced new administrative systems, business practices and cultural exchange. Sufism and other Islamic traditions became embedded in the local culture. Under rulers like Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire brought significant changes to Punjab. The region saw the development of arts, architecture and literature under Mughal patronage. Contemporary Mughal culture influenced Punjabi music, cuisine and social customs. Similarly, the rise and expansion of the Sikh Empire took place until Maharaja Ranjit Singh, which was a period of prosperity and prosperity for Punjab. Sikhism became a major cultural force and the region experienced a renaissance in art, culture and education. The Sikh military tradition and establishing a unified political entity had a lasting impact on Punjabi identity. The external attacks on Punjab greatly affected the main language of Punjab. Persian, Arabic, Turkish and later English influenced Punjabi.

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion founded by Guru Nanak Dev in the 15th century that emphasizes devotion to God, equality among individuals and selfless service. However, beyond its spiritual aspects, Sikhism also includes important political and military aspects. The importance of political power and the need for fortresses in Sikhism can be traced to the turbulent historical context in which the religion developed. This article explores how political power and military strongholds became integral to Sikhism. This ensured the existence of a community and facilitated the establishment of a just society. At the time of the introduction of Sikhism, India was under the Mughal Empire, which often persecuted everyone. The Sikh Gurus recognized that political authority and military power were necessary to protect their followers and propagate their teachings. Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru, was the first to adopt the concept of "Miri-Piri," representing political and spiritual leadership. He carried two swords, which symbolized dual responsibilities. The assertion of political power by the Sikh Gurus was not only for self-preservation but also to establish a society based on justice, equality and righteousness. This political consciousness reached its peak under the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who founded the Khalsa Panth in 1699. The Khalsa was a community of saint soldiers dedicated to protecting the weak and maintaining religion. Through the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh institutionalized the militarization of the Sikh community. Ensuring that they

are always ready to defend their faith and freedom. Forts played an important role in Sikh history due to the strategic and defensive needs of the Sikh Empire. They served as centers of administration, military training and shelter during times of conflict. Punjab, the region where Sikhism originated and flourished, was a crossroads of empires and a frequent site of military campaigns. The construction and maintenance of forts was necessary for several reasons, such as:

- Défense and security
- Political and military headquarters
- A symbol of sovereignty
- Training grounds

The forts provided the Sikh community with a safe place to defend against attacks and raids by enemy forces. They were strategically located to monitor and control important routes. Forts served as administrative centers where decisions about governance, military strategy, and community welfare were made to ensure the security of the Sikh population and their resources. These were the centers where the Gurus and later Sikh leaders coordinated their resistance against oppressive regimes. The presence of forts shows the sovereignty and autonomy of the Sikh community. It was their declaration of independence and resistance against Mughal rule. The most important example is the Anandpur Sahib fort, established by Guru Gobind Singh and symbolized Sikh strength and resilience. The forts were also used as training grounds for Khalsa warriors. Here, the Sikhs were trained in martial arts, horse riding and the use of weapons. This training was essential to maintain a disciplined and effective fighting force capable of protecting society. The political power and strategic importance of forts in Sikhism had a lasting impact on the resilience and identity of the community. The military power and political acumen developed during the Guru period enabled the Sikhs to establish their own empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early 19th century. Known for its secular rule and military might, this empire reinforced the importance of political power to achieve social and religious goals.

The forts of Punjab, such as Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar, Phillaur Fort, Dinanagar Fort, which was the summer capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, etc. offer a glimpse of the region's glorious past. These formations have seen the rise and fall of empires, the valor of warriors and the cultural fusion of various communities. Each fort tells a unique story, reflecting its time's architectural styles, military strategies and cultural influences. For example, while the

Gobindgarh Fort reflects Anglo-Sikh architecture, the fort has been a great strategic fortification that has always protected the holy city of Amritsar of the Sikhs. This fort continued to serve as the Amritsar mint in the Sikh Empire. Likewise, Phillaur Fort remained a military cantonment because Maharaja Ranjit Singh handed over the Lodhi Fort to the British in the Treaty of Amritsar. Both these forts were on the opposite banks of river Sutlej, due to which Maharaja Ranjit Singh made Phillaur fort a military cantonment. Despite its historical and cultural importance, many forts in Punjab are in a dilapidated condition, such as Lodhi Fort in Ludhiana, which is very dilapidated. This fort is of great historical importance as it is connected to the Phillaur fort on the other bank of the Sutlej through a secret tunnel. Another important city is Dinanagar, where Maharaja Ranjit Singh made his summer capital. Due to his lack of maintenance, nothing remains there today except a baradari. The condition of that remaining community is dilapidated, and its roof has collapsed. Factors such as neglect, lack of funds, environmental degradation and unplanned urbanization have contributed to their destruction. This neglect diminishes the aesthetic and historical value of these structures and the sense of identity and continuity they provide to local communities. The loss of these fortresses would mean the loss of solid connections to our past, which are essential to understanding our present and building our future. Preservation of the forts of Punjab is important for several reasons as firstly, it helps to preserve our cultural heritage. This ensures that future generations can learn about and appreciate their rich history. Second, restored forts can become major tourist attractions, boost the local economy and promote cultural tourism. This can raise awareness and generate funds for further conservation efforts. Preserving these forts can play an important role in strengthening unity in diversity. Punjab has always been a melting pot of different cultures, religions and communities. The forts embody this multicultural ethos with their diverse architectural styles and historical narratives. By restoring and promoting these sites, we can foster a sense of shared heritage and mutual respect among different communities while strengthening the idea of unity and diversity.

The forts of Punjab hold immense historical significance, serving as tangible reminders of the region's rich and turbulent past. These fortifications were more than just military structures; they were symbols of power, resilience, and strategic acumen, playing crucial roles in the defense, administration, and cultural life of Punjab. Each fort depicts a unique narrative of the empires and rulers that shaped the region, from the mighty Sikh Empire to the colonial British period. Their decline after the British annexation of Punjab marks a shift in the region's military and political landscape, reflecting broader changes in governance, technology, and economic priorities. While some forts, like Gobindgarh, have been preserved and continue to stand as

testaments to Punjab's heritage, many others face the threat of oblivion due to neglect and changing times. The historical significance of these forts lies not only in their past roles but also in their potential to educate and inspire future generations. Preserving these structures is crucial to maintaining a connection with the region's history, providing insights into the lives of those who built, defended, and lived within these walls. As guardians of history, the forts of Punjab remind us of the enduring legacy of the past and the importance of preserving it for the future.

Punjab's architectural heritage is a testament to its dynamic history and cultural diversity. Over the centuries, the architecture of Punjab has easily adopted various influences to meet the evolving needs of its people. From the grandeur of Mughal designs to the resilience of Sikh forts and the practicality of modern constructions, each era has left its mark on Punjab's architectural landscape. This adaptive nature of Punjabi architecture reflects a practical approach to design and functionality. The intricate frescoes and domes of Mughal structures were seamlessly integrated with the strong, fortified designs of the Sikh period. Modern Punjab continues this tradition by incorporating contemporary architectural styles and technologies to accommodate urbanization and economic growth. Such a synthesis not only highlights the region's capacity for innovation while respecting tradition but also underscores a broader cultural principle of unity in diversity. As Punjab moves forward, this combination of historical respect and modern adaptation will continue to shape its architectural identity and ensure that it remains vibrant and relevant for future generations.

Map

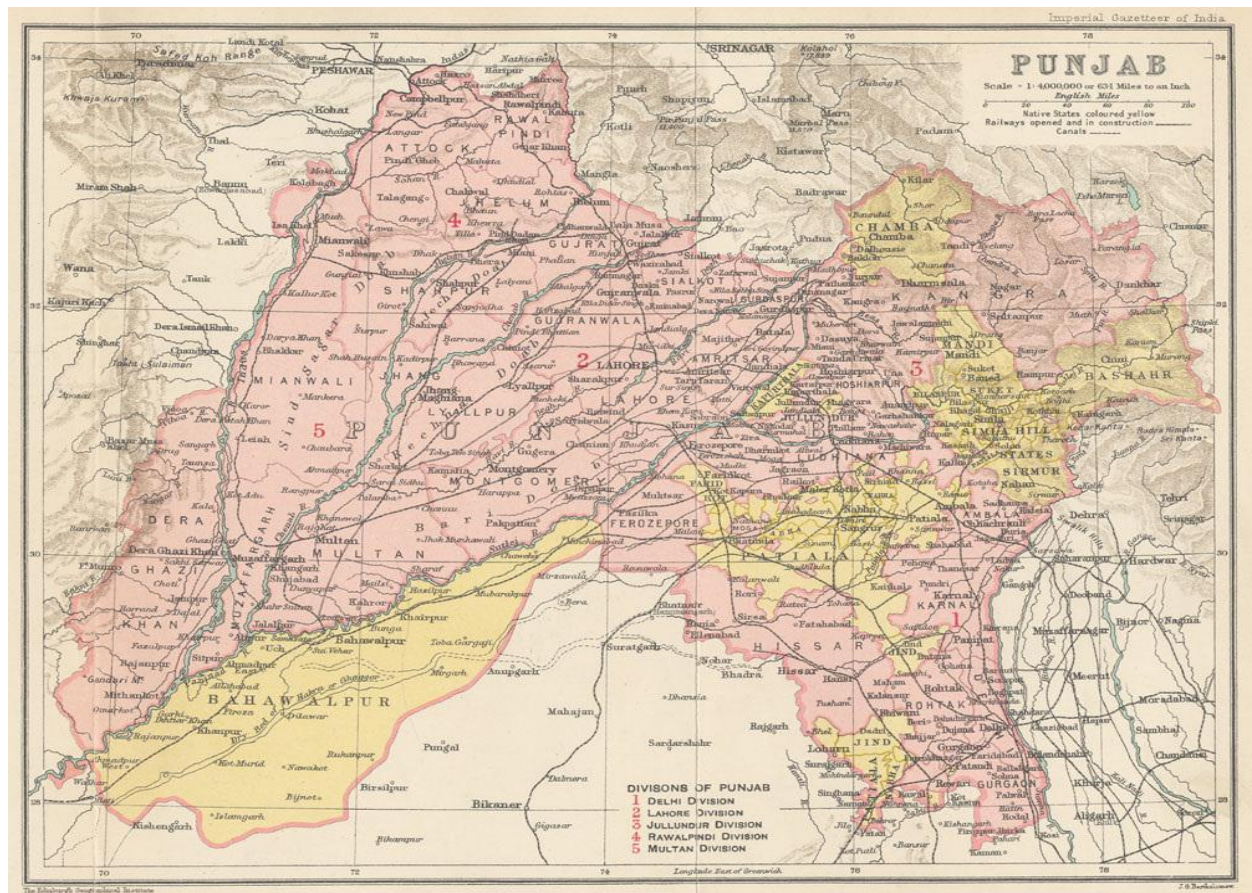


Figure 4.1: Administrative Divisions and Major Communication Networks of Punjab during the Colonial Period. The map illustrates the territorial divisions of Punjab, including Lahore, Jullundur, Rawalpindi, Multan, and Delhi divisions, along with major rivers, railway lines, and important urban centres. The geographical distribution shown in the map helps explain the strategic importance of forts and communication routes in Punjab during the nineteenth century.

Source: *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XX, Oxford University Press, 1908. Adapted from the Survey of India maps.

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Glossary

<i>Akal Takht</i>	The Akal Takht is one of the five major seats of authority in Sikhism. Established by Guru Hargobind Ji in 1606 at Amritsar, it represents the temporal authority of the Sikh community and stands opposite the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple).
<i>Arthashastra</i>	An ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, politics, military strategy, economics, and administration traditionally attributed to Kautilya (Chanakya). The text contains detailed discussions on forts, defence systems, espionage, and warfare.
<i>Bastion</i>	A projecting part of a fortification wall designed to allow defensive fire in several directions. Bastions became especially important after the introduction of artillery warfare.
<i>Citadel</i>	The fortified central area of a town or city, generally elevated and heavily defended. In ancient settlements such as Mohenjo-Daro, the citadel functioned as an administrative and defensive centre.
<i>Fortification</i>	A military defensive structure or system built to protect territories, settlements, military bases, or strategic locations from enemy attacks and invasions.
<i>Gobindgarh Fort</i>	An important Sikh-period fort located in Amritsar. Strengthened under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, it functioned as a military stronghold, treasury, and administrative centre of the Sikh Empire.
<i>Grand Trunk Road</i>	One of South Asia's oldest and most important trade and communication routes connecting Bengal with Afghanistan. Many forts in Punjab were strategically located along this route.
<i>Harappan Civilization</i>	Also known as the Indus Valley Civilization, it flourished around 2600–1900 BCE and is known for urban planning, drainage systems, fortified settlements, and organized civic structures.
<i>Indo-Islamic Architecture</i>	An architectural style that developed through the interaction of Indian and Islamic artistic traditions, combining arches, domes, minarets, decorative carvings, and local building techniques.
<i>Kartarpur</i>	A historic town established by Guru Nanak Dev Ji in present-day Pakistan. It became one of the earliest centres of Sikh religious activity and community organization.

<i>Maharaja Ranjit Singh</i>	Founder of the Sikh Empire (1799–1839), often called the “Lion of Punjab.” He unified Punjab politically and strengthened the region through military modernization and fortification systems.
<i>Miri-Piri</i>	A Sikh doctrine introduced by Guru Hargobind Ji symbolizing the union of spiritual authority (Piri) and temporal or political authority (Miri).
<i>Mohenjo-Daro</i>	One of the principal urban centres of the Indus Valley Civilization, located in present-day Pakistan, famous for advanced urban planning and defensive architecture.
<i>Phyllaur Fort</i>	A strategically important Sikh-period fort situated near the Sutlej River and Grand Trunk Road. It was strengthened to defend the Sikh Empire from British expansion.
<i>Qila Mubarak</i>	A historic fort complex in Punjab associated with princely and Sikh rule. The term literally means “Blessed Fort.”
<i>Siege Warfare</i>	A military strategy involving surrounding and attacking a fortified place to capture it through starvation, bombardment, or direct assault.
<i>Sikh Empire</i>	A powerful kingdom established under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early nineteenth century, extending across Punjab, Kashmir, and adjoining regions.
<i>Strategic Frontier</i>	A border region considered militarily important for defence against invasions or political threats. Punjab historically functioned as the frontier gateway to India.
<i>Trabeate System</i>	An architectural method based on beams and columns, commonly used in ancient Indian architecture before the widespread use of arches and domes.
<i>Urban Fortification</i>	The process of strengthening cities and settlements through walls, gates, bastions, moats, and defensive structures to protect inhabitants from attacks.