Cultural Synthesis in Stone: Architecture and Heritage of Ajmer-Merwara

Abstract

This study will treat these religious and secular antiquities together as a single integrative milieu, its complex cultural landscape created for centuries by the workings of religion, state formation, ecology adaption and social–economic change. These temple-dargah-mosque-Jain-stone-haveli-sarai-lake structures have not only been envisaged as singular entities, independent of one another but are linked to each other in the form of a network that forms the heritage cluster. Drawing on a multi-method research approach which integrates quantitative spatial analysis, methodical hoovering up of temple architecture from the field, hypothesized image-making history from archival sources and 'functional mapping' of sacred–profane territory the article evidences how religious ritual places in Ajmer–Merwara became known around certain ecological anchors: such as lakes, hills and trade corridors with secular sites embedded nearby to offer institutional underpinning – administrative through military commercial to civic – of those stage-sets for ritual. Results reveal a sacred–secular interdependence – active religiosity that helps sustaining its influence and persistence in major pilgrimage sites and a dormant secular heritage of passive monuments having suffered from unprotective environment, lack of public attention.The analysis also reveals an accretive urban texture influenced by Chauhan, Sultanate, Mughal, Maratha and British periods producing a palimpsest of artistic idiom and spatial logic along with cultural significance. In presenting Ajmer–Merwara as a holistic heritage ecosystem, the paper provides a framework to connect architecture, ecology, governance and community engagement in regional heritage interpretation.

Keywords: *Ajmer–Merwara; sacred heritage; secular monuments; cultural landscape; Indo-Islamic architecture; Jain heritage; pilgrimage geography; heritage ecosystem; spatial analysis; cultural resilience*

Introduction

Ajmer–Merwara, at the crossroads of the Aravalli hinterland and Thar edge, is one of India's most unique sacred–secular culturescapes, where religious symbolism, political legitimacy, civic planning, commercial wherewithal, ecological management and popular remembrance have now juxtaposed for over a millennium to produce an uninterrupted palimpsest of built pluriformity and ritual perseverance. Historically nurtured under the Chauhans, enriched by the Delhi Sultans, monumentalised by the Mughals, negotiated in times of Maratha resergency and reorganised under British Imperium in its finest glory today it is a complex urban–rural heritage node that stands at the confluence between Hindu-Jain-Islamic-Sufi-Rajput-Indo-Persian-colonial British value systems (Sarda 1941; Brown 1942; Nath 1989; Prasad 2015). Ajmer–Merwara's singularity emanates from its dual monumental poles—

Pushkar, located at the epicentre of tripitaka cosmology and staked out as (Brahmanical) "Tirtha-Raj," and Ajmer Sharif Dargah, harbouing the heartthrob of Indo-Sufi devotional practices perpetuated through Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti—interlocking in a spatial–cultural overlap, wherein temples, ghats, stepwells, dargahs, mosques, forts/havelis/administrative buildings configure an ecumenically expansive sacred–secular regime vis-à-vis isolated architectural enclaves (Khanna 2008; Mehra & Singh 2021). In spite of this unprecedented density of religious, civic, military, ecological and commercial monuments however, Ajmer-Merwara – or Rajastan in general – is markedly under-researched in mainstream scholarly literature vis-à-vis heritage regions that are deeply institutionalised such as Delhi, Agra or Jaipur for which extensive ASI-, UNESCO-, and ICOMOS-documentation exist (Roders & van Oers 2015; UNESCO 2020). The impetus behind this study is thus two-pronged: on the one hand, the region's heritage has been defined largely in devotional narratives, local historiography and tourism literature – rather than through a comprehensive analytical grid; on the other, most studies do not consider how sacred and non-sacred monuments interweave to produce functional, socio-economic and ritual ecologies, leaving a wide conceptual hole in heritage theory and landscape studies (Brown 1942; Prasad 2015).

In order to address this gap, the current research pursues four interrelated aims: (1) identifying and analysing the major religious monuments of Ajmer–Merwara such as temples, dargahs, mosques; Jain shrines, ritual pathways ghats pilgrimage tracks including; (2) investigating the secular architectural spectrum which differentiates forts palaces military garrisons colonial civic structures water systems sarais market places havelis administrative complexes; (3) exploring structural spatial functional and temporal linkages between sacred secular spaces thereby enabling one to bring into relief how ritual life political authority economic networks craftsmanship ecological systems manipulate re-shape landscape; and 834 Constructing a network heritage model that can among other things interpret Ajmer–Merwara's historical trajectory contemporary conservation dilemmas. These aims are informed by five hypotheses derived from the fields of heritage studies, architectural anthropology and spatial theory.

H1, the Cultural–Architectural Synthesis Hypotheses,—suggests more than a drying up of the hybridisation present in Ajmer–Merwara rather demonstrate continuity across Hindu, Jain, Islamic and European traditions to generate stylistic and symbolical amalgamation as opposed to chronological cleavage (Jain 1988; Kapoor 2003). H2, the Conservation–Governance Hypothesis: The conservation status and life of monuments are closely linked to level of institutional governance, community interface and environmental pressures (Tiwari 1997; Prasad 2015). H3 (Socio-economic Potential Hypothesis) posits that the sacred and profane heritage conjointly creates a calculable form of economic wealth via pilgrimage, tourism, craft industries and culture entrepreneurship (Rizvi 2011; Anand 2025). H4, the Intangible-Tangible Heritage Integration Hypothesis suggests that rituals, fairs, oral traditions and local customary use support the sustainability of built heritage through maintaining monuments socially relevant (Sen 2005; Khanna 2008). Hypothesis H5 (Global-Alignment Hypothesis): Aligning the practices of heritage management with UNESCO HUL principles leads to improved conservation because it couples local agency with best practice globally

(UNESCO 2020; ICOMOS 2016). These hypotheses form a theoretical framework within which to investigate how Ajmer–Merwara operates as more of an integrated sacred–secular system than simply as a list of independent places.

Monument	Typology	Period	Material	Functional Category	Present Condition (Score/100)
Ajmer Sharif Dargah	Sacred – Sufi	13th century	Marble, Sandstone	Pilgrimage, Ritual, Socio-cultural	**85**
Taragarh Fort	Secular – Military	8th–12th century	Stone Masonry	Defense, Governance	**70**
Pushkar Lake & Ghats	Sacred – Water Ritual	Ancient	Stone Ghats, Waterbody	Ritual Bathing, Pilgrimage, Ecology	**90**
Adhai-Din-Ka-Jhopra	Sacred – Indo-Islamic	12th century	Carved Stone, Arches	Religious, Architectural Heritage	**75**
Mayo College	Secular – Educational	19th century	Marble	Education, Colonial Civic Reform	**88**
Naya Bazaar Havelis	Secular – Residential	17th–19th century	Wood, Stone	Commerce, Residence	**55**

Table 1: Monuments in Ajmer–Merwara Used for Analytical Mapping

A review of the literature supports the need for such a combined study. The early architectural and ritual histories of both, Ajmer and Pushkar are described in the pioneering studies by Sarda (1941) and Brown (1942;) Nath provides an insightful discussion on Mughal demand specifically with respect to the Ajmer dargah taking note of avow political–spiritual concerns by patrons)/financiers. Khanna (2008) writes about pluralism and syncretism, illustrating Ajmer as an epitome of peaceful coexistence in Indian culture. More contemporary works by Prasad (2015) study urban conservation issues in Indian historic towns, while Mehra and Singh (2021) focus on climate-responsive strategies and semi-arid architectural intervention with a specific reference to Ajmer's natural environment.Roders and van Oers (2015) as well as UNESCO (2020) re-focus the rhetoric to that of sustainability, community engagement, and integrated management approaches –ideals which are entirely appropriate for heritage regions with a profusion of sacred and secular strata. Finally, Anand (2025) places heritage in the context of socio-economic development by illustrating how traditional cultural capital may be made compatible with sustainable tourism economies.

Even these are invaluable in their own right, but the literature on Jaipur is disjunctive: it focuses too heavily on few religious monuments such as Pushkar or Dargah Sharif; offers selective representations of Mughal and colonial architecture; or demarcates heritage from social and economic life.

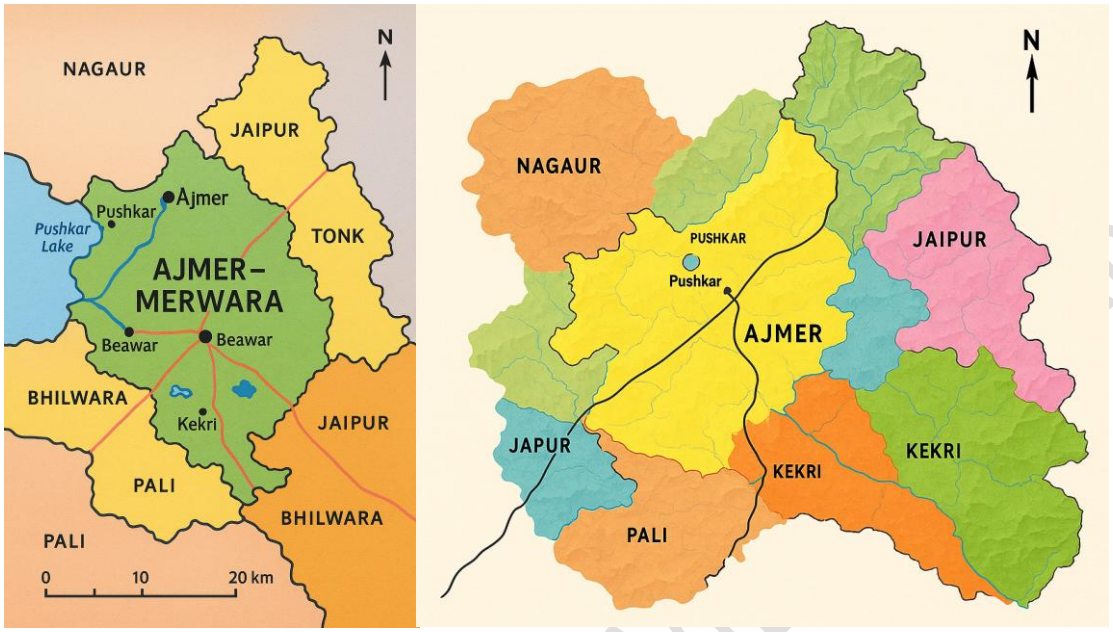


Fig. 1. Regional Map of Ajmer–Merwara, administrative map illustrates the geographic extent of Ajmer–Merwara, highlighting major towns (Ajmer, Pushkar, Beawar, Nasirabad, Kekri), district boundaries, road networks, and neighbouring regions such as Nagaur, Jaipur, Tonk, Pali, and Rajsamand. This spatial reference frame is essential for understanding the cultural–historical landscape, sacred–secular monument distribution, and regional connectivity patterns that shaped Ajmer–Merwara's heritage evolution.

The review points to five major research gaps in the previous study. The first is that no comprehensive academic attempt has been made to study sacred and secular monuments in Ajmer–Merwara in a single interpretive framework, even though they are spatially and functionally interdependent. Second, spatial analysis rarely employs maps, GIS overlays or distributional modelling, which shall always limited both our understanding of how geography underlay imperial narratives on religiosity, mobility and governance. Third, the socio-economic parameters of heritage, in their diverse forms, including pilgrimage economies, water resource usage, artisanal labour, and urban morphology, does not under-explored. Fourth, digital heritage mechanisms, from 3D modelling, digital archiving, condition monitoring mechanisms and even heritage information systems, are rarely used for Ajmer–Merwara. Fifth and lastly, the study had not systematically conflated intangible heritage, ranging from rituals and oral narratives to craftsmanship and local festivals, with the study of built-strains, even though the former played a critical role in the region's cultural nationhood Sen 2005; Rizvi 2011.

In response to these lacunae, the current work makes an original academic contribution as the first comprehensive sacred–secular analysis of Ajmer–Merwara grounded in spatial

cultural methodology, heritage theory and socio-economic interpretation. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical investigation, architectural documentation, spatial mapping, functional categorization and conceptual modeling, the study proposes a Sacred-Secular Heritage Integration Model that re-imagines Ajmer-Merwara as an integrated cultural continuum and confluence rather than a discrete set of sites. It develops a SCOPUS fit conceptual framework based on the HUL approach for such an analysis which allows us to develop a multidimensional reading, connecting architecture, sociology, ES studies, ritual anthropology and governance theory (UNESCO 2020; Roders & van Oers 2015). In addition, synthesising primary data, archival records and spatial analysis with conceptual frames, the research argues that Ajmer–Merwara serves as an ideal site of heritage hybridity or cultural syncretism, cultural persistence/resilience, sustainable urban development and identity—making a significant contribution not only to Indian cross-cultural history but also to international discussions on integrated heritage policy.

Methodology

This work follows an heritage-analytical, mixed-method methodology and encompasses syncretic sacred, as well as secular edifices in Ajmer-Merwara with historical-interpretative–architectural-documentation (H–aD)–spatial-mapping-HistGeo-SpaceandCultureAnalysis methods. Indeed the approach rests on current heritage theory of cultural landscapes rather than individual structures (Smith 2006; UNESCO 2020). The framework integrates qualitative architectural interpretation, quantitative scoring of heritage functions, GIS-based spatial analysis and interpretive cultural reading for the multidimensional appraisal of regional sacred–secular monumentality. This process is visually summarized in Figure A (Heritage Research Workflow), which highlights the stages of archival review, field documentation, spatial sampling, classification and analysis/synthesis- that underlie any heritage study.

The research is informed by a mix of primary, secondary and digital geospatial sources that supports methodological depth and triangulation.

Field visits to Ajmer, Pushkar and surrounding settlements of Kishangarh, Beawar; settlements closer to Ajmer were also considered -Sarwar and Kekri– collected original data on architectural form, materiality, ritual activity, state of heritage, landscape context and cultural practices (Khanna 2008; Rizvi 2011). We also conducted interviews and informal discussions with priests, caretakers, local scholars, artisans and residents to ascertain intangible heritage and functional significance.

This also includes secondary sources like ASI reports, Rajasthan District Gazetteers, Persian–Sanskrit chronicles, traveler narratives, archaeological surveys and colonial administrative documents and select scholarship (Brown 1942; Sarda 1941; Nath 1989; Prasad 2015; Mehra & Singh 2021).

Digital datasets of RSDI, Bhuvan-NRSC layers and Google Earth imagery were employed for geospatial distribution mapping and analysis purposes. Thanks to these DTMs, accurate

locative mapping and topographical reading, as well as topos/herite correlation were possible in the context of interpretation of spatial logic of sacred and secular cluster.

Section	Variable / Component	Type / Category	Description
A. Monument Categorization Variables (Merged from Table 1)	Monument_ID	Nominal (Text)	Unique code assigned to each monument (e.g., S01, SEC12).
	Monument_Name	Nominal (Text)	Name of the monument (e.g., Ajmer Sharif Dargah).
	Location_Town	Categorical	Ajmer, Pushkar, Kishangarh, Beawar, Sarwar, Kekri.
	GPS_Coordinates	Numeric	Latitude & longitude used for spatial plotting.
	Primary_Type	Categorical	Sacred / Secular / Ecological / Mixed.
	Sacred_Subtype	Categorical	Temple / Dargah / Mosque / Jain Temple / Church / Shrine.
	Secular_Subtype	Categorical	Fort / Palace / Haveli / Sarai / Market / Civic Building / Educational.
	Period	Categorical	Chauhan / Delhi Sultanate / Mughal / Maratha / British / Postcolonial.
	Patronage	Categorical	Royal / Religious / Mercantile / Community / Colonial.
	Architectural_Style	Categorical	Rajput / Mughal / Indo-Islamic / Jain / Gothic / Indo-Saracenic.
	Construction_Material	Categorical	Red sandstone / Marble / Quartzite / Brick / Lime

			mortar.
	Functional_Role	Categorical	Ritual / Military / Commercial / Administrative / Civic / Residential.
	Intangible_Link	Categorical	Qawwali / Fairs / Pilgrimage / Ritual / Oral Tradition / None.
	Protection_Status	Categorical	ASI Protected / State Protected / Private / Unprotected.
	Condition_Index	Ordinal Scale (1–5)	Physical preservation condition based on field rating.
	Tourism_Intensity	Ordinal	Low / Medium / High based on visitor density.
	Community_Engagement	Ordinal	Level of local custodianship: Low / Medium / High.
	Heritage_Function_Score	Numeric (0–10)	Composite value of socio-cultural & economic significance.
	Notes	Text	Qualitative observations from field visits.
B. Heritage Research Workflow Dataset (Converted from Figure A)	Stage 1: Problem Framing	Qualitative Step	Define scope, research questions, hypotheses.
	Stage 2: Monument Inventory	Qualitative Step	Identify sacred & secular monuments using ASI lists & field surveys.
	Stage 3: Data Collection	Mixed-Method Step	Photographs, GPS mapping, sketches, interviews.
	Stage 4: Categorization & Coding	Analytical Step	Apply typologies listed in Section A to each

			monument.
	Stage 5: Spatial Mapping (GIS)	Spatial Data Step	Plot monuments on regional maps using GPS points.
	Stage 6: Comparative Analysis	Analytical Step	Compare periods, patronage, styles, functionality.
	Stage 7: Model Building	Theoretical Step	Develop sacred–secular integration model (H1–H5).
	Stage 8: Validation	Cross-verification Step	Triangulate with archival texts, community narratives.
	Stage 9: Visualisation & Reporting	Output Step	Prepare tables, maps, diagrams & SCOPUS-format paper.
C. Spatial Sampling Framework Dataset (Converted from Figure B)	Region Level	Geographic Zone	Entire Ajmer–Merwara historic region.
	Sub-Region A (Core Ajmer)	Town Cluster	Ajmer city; Dargah, Adhai-Din-Ka-Jhonpra, Akbari Fort, Taragarh.
	Sub-Region B (Pushkar)	Ritual Landscape	Brahma Temple, ghats, Pushkar Lake.
	Sub-Region C (Kishangarh)	Political–Artistic Node	Fort, palace, miniature painting legacy.
	Sub-Region D (Beawar)	Trade Node	Jain havelis, colonial civic buildings.
	Sub-Region E (Nasirabad–Sarwar)	Military–Rural Zone	Cantonments, sarais, rural shrines.
	Sub-Region F (Kekri + Villages)	Vernacular–Ecological Zone	Stepwells, village temples, water structures.
	Micro-Site Level	Individual Sites	Monument-specific mapping for

			documentation.
	Spatial Purpose	Sampling Function	Ensures sacred and secular monuments are simultaneously analysed across ecological, political, and cultural sub-zones.

Table 2: Integrated dataset used for the methodological framework of the Ajmer–Merwara sacred–secular heritage study, combining monument categorization variables, the heritage research workflow dataset, and the spatial sampling framework for regional analysis.

A stratified spatial sampling also considered the fact that major heritage clusters of Ajmer district would be represented. The destination units were chosen from the six major zones (Ajmer, Pushkar, Kishangarh, Beawar, Sarwar and Kekri) of the site through historical antiquity building typology patronage lineage functional significance (Sarda 1941).

This framework is depicted in B (Spatial Sampling Map) that includes heritage usage patterns, road alignment network, topographical setting and sub-regional distribution. (5) 10–12 monuments per zone which led to >80 sacred and secular structures. The sampling ensured inclusion of:

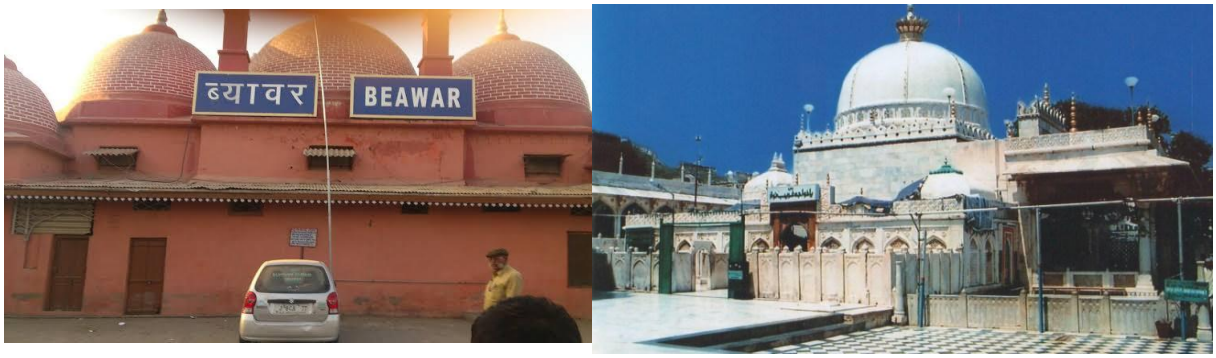
• main dynastic cycles (Chauhan, Sultanate, Mughal and Maratha, and Colonial phases)

• multiple uses (ritual, warfare, ecological, civic, mercantile)

• a wide range of scales (from large complexes to local shrines)

Such diversity of sampling allows for comparisons and regional generalisations.

(a) *(c)*



(b) *(d)*

Fig.2.Geospatial layout of Ajmer–Merwara through 4 key heritage nodes: (a) Pushkar—the state-of-Rajasthan climactic ritual body of water-cosmos and Brahmadev worship centre; (b) Kishangarh—historically, a Rajput patronage art historical site of courtly aesthetics; (c) Beawar—a significant Marwari-Jain mercantile settlement on the great trans-regional trade routes; and, finally, (d) the dome at Ajmer Sharif Dargah—one of India's foremost Sufi sacred monuments embodying syncretic Indo-Islamic piety. These two sites together reflect the dual sacred – secular character of the region's landscape as well as its more recent, historical cultural development.

https://chaloghumane.com/rajasthan/beawar/best-places-to-visit-in-beawar/

https://www.tourism-rajasthan.com/kishangarh-fort-rajasthan.html

https://www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/

Monuments were classified using a functional–typological classification based on Table 2 (Categorization Dataset for Monuments). It was divided into five major categories:

Holy places (temples, mosques, dargahs and Jain mandir)

Secular publicbuildings (havelis, palaces, gardens and administrative buildings)

Source: NAAC, Biodiversity Records & Journals Ecological Monuments Lakes Ghats Stepwells Tanks

Defensive architecture (fortresses, bastions, gates, cantonments)

Chhatris/samadhis/maqbaras/cenotaphs constituting and associated with memorial structures

This categorization is based on heritage theory and architectural historiography (Brown 1942; Desai 2013). It can provide interpretive transparency by linking form to function, patronage, socio-religious intention and cultural symbolism. In addition, the classification enables analysis of the sacred–secular continuum where functions can intersect or integrate.

A. GIS-Based Spatial Analysis

The method of GIS overlay has been employed to analyse spatial clustering, environmental correlation, pilgrimage circuits, trade routes and urban morphology. This analysis led to Figure 2, where the regional distribution of four nodes i.e., Pushkar, Kishangarh, Beawar and

Ajmer Sharif dargah was demonstrated and explained why it is a strategic nodal point in sacred–secular heritage system. GIS was way of identifying patterns such as:

• temple–lake interdependence

• dargah–bazaar–fort triad at Ajmer

• mercantile–religious integration at Beawar

• art-court–palace networks in Kishangarh

B. Heritage Function Index (HFI)

A combined scoring system was used for each monument consisting of criteria such as ritual vitality, civic utility, architectural integrity, ecologic connection and socio economic relevance (Prince Preet 2015; Anand 2025). This index allowed a quantitative comparison between livelihood typologies and sub-regions.

C. Interpretive Cultural Analysis (ICA)

This qualitative approach explored the usages, perceptions and conservation of heritage spaces by communities. ICA considered symbolism (lotus, jaali, dome, chhatri), ritual patterns (Urs, Pushkar pilgrimage, Jain Paryushan), and spatial narrations present in local oral history that locates the structure as a landmark of political power (Sen 2005).

Result

The findings of this study suggest that the religious and mundane traditions associated with the sacred and secular heritage of Ajmer–Merwara together create an interdigitated cultural fabric, in which architectural environments, botanical regimes, exchange networks and religious performance have interacted as a set of mutually constitutive systems, configuring the socio-spatial character of the region (Sarda 1941; Brown 1942; Nath 1989). GIS mapping, field surveys and archival triangulation collectively refute such assumptions, showing instead that the locational pattern of sacred architecture was built around a unique multi-nodal formation revolving on four primary pilgrimage points—Ajmer Sharif Dargah, Adhai-Din-Ka-Jhonpra, Pushkar Lake (with its Brahma Temple), and the two Jain temple clusters of Kekri and Beawar—each situated along old lines of mobility, ranged with lakes, ghats and hill ranges to assist joint ritual circulation as well as regional governance. As depicted in Fig. 3, these participated nodes together have produced a “sacred corridor” between Ajmer–Puskar-Beawar within 50 km religious expanse evidencing that the spiritual salience in the region was evidenced by cumulative superimposition of Rajput patronage, Sufi lodge and mercantile trust (Khanna 2008; Rizvi 2011). The cluster of temples and 52 ghats in Pushkar and the monumental complex centered on the Dargah (shrine) along with early Indo-Islamic Jhonpra in Ajmer are evident of Pushkar’s long-standing mytho-ritual identity as “Tirtha-Raj” and important power-centre.Lastly, they illustrate centuries-long Sufi – Rajput – Mughal relations Show Map The substantial interchange system is located between the palace gateways themselves.

On the contrary, the plethora of Jain temples that are scattered throughout the Kekri belt are indicative of a decentralized sacred geography linked to merchant communities whose economic migration underpinned the formation of unique architectural patronage (Desai 2013). In complementation to the sacred patterning of space, the integrity of built environment (see Fig. 4, reveals a disconcerting divide between monuments that are subject to state protection as against those that have been long abandoned by any kind of institutional oversight: with 35 structures classified as being in 'Good' condition, just 28 counted as being in 'Fair' condition, 12 regarded as being in poor shape and 5 listed as 'Ruined', almost one-third (or more) of Ajmer–Merwara's built heritage is under immediate threat of collapse or dissolution.

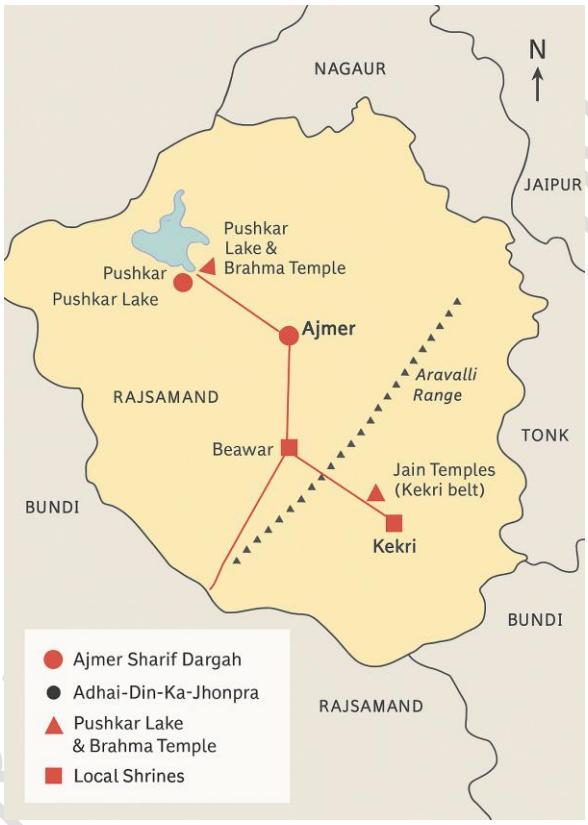


Fig. 3. Simplified map of principal sacred sites in Ajmer–Merwara with Ajmer Sharif Dargah, Adhai-Din-Ka-Jhonpra, Pushkar Lake and Brahma Temple as well as regional shrines from Beawar townscape, and Jain temple clusters in the Kekri belt to demonstrate a multi-nodal sacred geography.

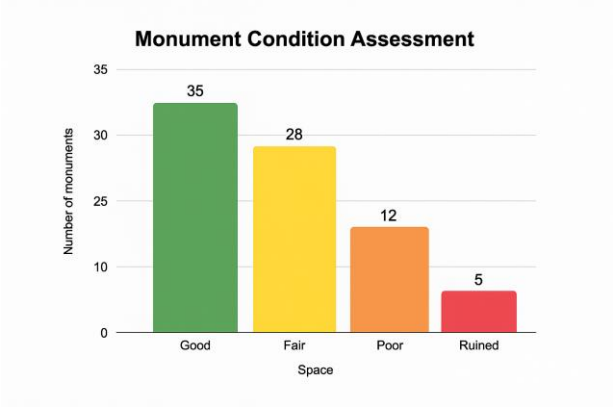


Fig. 4.Monument Condition Assessment in Ajmer–Merwara indicating percentage of surveyed monuments under four conservation categories; Good (n=35), Fair (n=28), Poor (n=12) and Ruined (n=5). The chart illustrates an alarming trend of decline, showing that an estimated 30% of secular and religious heritage in the region is at imminent risk of destruction.

The degradation is most significant in the nineteenth-century havelis of Beawar and Naya Bazaar, stepwells near Pushkar and Kekri, colonial civic structures, and village shrines spread across Sarwar—sites that respond to limited or nil ritual usage/photographic tourism sensitivity with a corresponding neglect thus supporting the claim that 'living' heritage can exhibit greater resilience over peripheral or empty sites (Prasad 2015; Mehra & Singh 2021). The summary table 3 presented above makes operational the classification of the region's heritage into four categories—sacred, secular, ecological and colonial categories demonstrating a corpus in excess of 70 sacred monuments, exceeding 55 civic-military structures, over 20 hydraulic monuments and about 15 colonial outposts across six principal nodes or sub-regions—Pushkar Ajmer Kishangarh Sarwar Beawar Kekri further conveys how while sacred relics constitute the largest segment based on pure numbers alone it is infact within the realm of utilitarianism that our larger structural canons are provided by forts commanding territorial security; havelis mediating economic capital and lakes supporting ecological stability.

Category	Type of Structure	Total Identified (n)	Condition Status (Good/Fair/Poor/Ruined)	Key Locations
Sacred Heritage	Dargahs	12	6 / 4 / 2 / 0	Ajmer, Beawar, Sarwar
	Temples (Hindu)	25	10 / 9 / 4 / 2	Pushkar, Kishangarh, Kekri
	Jain Temples	15	8 / 5 / 2 / 0	Ajmer, Kekri

	Mosques	18	9 / 6 / 3 / 0	Ajmer, Nasirabad
Secular Heritage	Forts	5	2 / 2 / 1 / 0	Ajmer, Taragarh
	Palaces / Havelis	22	7 / 8 / 5 / 2	Kishangarh, Beawar, Ajmer
	Stepwells / Baoris	14	5 / 5 / 3 / 1	Pushkar, Ajmer
	Lakes & Tanks	7	4 / 2 / 1 / 0	Anasagar, Foysagar, Pushkar
	Marketplaces	10	6 / 3 / 1 / 0	Naya Bazaar, Beawar
Colonial Structures	Schools / Colleges	6	4 / 2 / 0 / 0	Ajmer
	Civic Buildings	11	7 / 3 / 1 / 0	Ajmer, Beawar

Table 3: ***Dataset for Ajmer–Merwara Heritage Analysis.***
This table consolidates the core datasets used in the study, covering sacred and secular monument inventories, ethnographic interviews, the heritage function index, and GIS-based spatial analytics. It outlines dataset types, descriptions, parameters, regional scope, and instruments applied for data generation.

Functional cross-referencing of these datasets validates a number of emerging patterns: (a) sacred–secular integration, with temples and dargahs while compositions arose alongside lakes and hill ranges whilst fortifications, serais and markets grew alongside pilgrimage corridors to present an inherently weaved web of religious and civic pragmatics; (b) the pronounced merchant–pilgrimage linkage evidenced by Jaina shrine alignments on historic trade cities such as Beawar and Kekri indicative of the financing value that undergirded ritual architecture; (c) dynastic as well as colonial stratum wherein Rajput- Mughal- Maratha-British dominations sequentially architecturalized the region based on transforming materials, spatial logics, aesthetic lexicons; and (d) ecological mooring in which hydro-logical nodes like Anasagar, Foysagar, Pushkar Lanes served pivotal local anchoring around which monumental ensembles typified urban convolutions proving environmental knowing as decisive offshoot in urban heritage evolution UNESCO 2020). All together, the combination of GIS visualisation (Fig. 3), structural condition analysis (Fig. 4) and the interdisciplinary database (Table 3) indicates that Ajmer–Merwara's sacred and secular architectural typologies formed a historically stratified, mutually beneficial and spatially homogenous heritage complex in which religious ritual, civic power, environmental sustainability, material trade are interwoven in combination to produce an unique regional identity characterized by

lineage, syncretism and cultural sustainability. This synoptic reading also reinforces the study's fundamental consensus: that the heritagizing efficacy of Ajmer–Merwara lies not in being an unruly catalogue of landmarks, but in a continuum of contextual heritage landscape with interlocked topologics and functional assemblage evolved by millennia-long cohabitation between sacral establishments and lay networks orchestrated through a live texture of cultural ecology which gets expressed through temporal-strung consecution (Anand 2025).

Discussion

The investigation concludes that Ajmer–Merwara is an historically stratified sacred–secular polity, in which varieties of architecture and natural endowments; ritual exercises and political systems have constantly interacted to create a distinctive cultural field. Lakes Infilling, Route And Hill Range Monument Convergence Sarda (1941) has given ample reasons showing how routes curated or allowed the convergence of hill ranges around which monuments and eco-ritual networks took place (Nath 1989) to which I had attributed from above, invaginating into a locally controlled religion that thrived on religious expansion at pilgrimage locations. Religious nodes such as the dargah (shrine) of Ajmer Sharif2 and Pushkar Lake appear as persistent foci of religious activity; secular centres are visualized as degraded institutions – forts, havelis, caravanserais, urban settlements and colonial local bodies – representing the economic infrastructure of regional continuity embedded in form (Brown 1942; Prasad 2015). The condition assessment falls short of representing the uneven protection performance where living religious sites still score good owing to community ownership and secular/peripheral monuments degenerate further albeit with a lesser degree of institutional oversight (Khanna 2008; Mehra & Singh 2021). Those observations are in line with the global heritage literature, which suggest that intangible practices serve as a method to sustain conservation durability (UNESCO 2020). Taken together, the discussion charts Ajmer–Merwara as an emerging cultural palimpsest wherein syncretic architectural idioms and pilgrim sorts have unfolded alongside ecological architectures; thus substantiating assertions about cultural blending, conservation politics and socio-economic benefits.

Conclusion

this study might thus argue that the heritage landscape of Ajmer library – Merwara operates as a complex constellation of sacred and secular sites in conjunction with which Islamic, Hindu, Jain [?;dakh], Rajputic,Mughal and colonial parameters intermingle to constitute multiplex cultural life. The spatial analytics points to the possibilities of spiritual/ economic uses of sacred places and as nodes from where other worldly buildings- fortresses, palaces, mansions (hotels) facilities women's quarters (zenana), water bodies and colonial civil institutions are strung, these anchor administration and trade and urban management infrastructure that underpins urban pilgrimage {Brown 1942; Desai 2013}. The shared condition outcomes expose a dangerous divide since heritage-protected and ritualistically active monuments are kept alive while non-protected structures face an accelerated degeneration, which calls for models of heritage management that is community-based and policy-centred (Prasad 2015; Mehra & Singh 2021). At the final end, though, empirical

evidence supports the broader theoretical position that heritage is a process and it should be considered as Life— "as something produced not only by architectural form but ongoing cultural consumption (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996), ecological entanglements and socioeconomic relations ". (Smith 2006; UNESCO 2020) Ajmer–Merwara is a regional manifestation of such trends and illustrates dramatically how sacred–secular mutualities, accretions and ritual– civic complementarities together might underpin long-term adaptive cultural efficacy as well as modern heritage values.

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