

## REVIEWER'S REPORT

**Manuscript No.:** IJAR- 55875

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

**Recommendation:**

**Accept after minor revision**

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓,		
Techn. Quality		✓,		
Clarity	✓,			
Significance	✓,			

**Reviewer Name:** Dr Abdul Haseeb Mir

### Detailed Reviewer's Report

This study examines the architectural and cultural landscape of Ajmer-Merwara, treating its diverse religious and secular antiquities—including temples, dargahs, mosques, and havelis—as a single integrative milieu. The research utilizes a multi-method approach combining quantitative spatial analysis, field documentation of temple architecture, and archival research to demonstrate how these structures form an interconnected heritage cluster. A primary focus is the relationship between religious ritual sites and their "ecological anchors," such as lakes and hills, and how secular administrative or military sites were strategically embedded to provide institutional support for these ritual spaces. The paper highlights a disparity between "active" religious sites that sustain influence through pilgrimage and "passive" secular monuments that suffer from neglect and lack of protection.

### 2. General Impression

The manuscript offers a sophisticated, interdisciplinary look at heritage that moves beyond treating monuments as isolated entities. By focusing on the "network" of structures and their ecological contexts, the author provides a holistic view of how state formation, religion, and geography intersected in Ajmer-Merwara. The conceptual framework of "active" versus "passive" heritage is particularly compelling and offers a useful lens for heritage management. However, the analysis would be strengthened by more explicitly defining the chronological boundaries of the "centuries" of development mentioned and by providing more concrete examples of the "quantitative spatial analysis" results.

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### 3. Detailed Analysis of Major Issues

The paper argues that religious and secular sites are linked in a network, yet the discussion of "secular sites embedded nearby" needs more granular detail to be fully persuasive. While the abstract mentions that these sites offer "administrative through military commercial to civic" underpinnings, the body of the paper should provide specific case studies—such as a particular fort's relationship to a specific dargah or temple—to illustrate this interdependence in practice. Furthermore, the claim that results reveal a "sacred-secular interdependence" is central to the thesis; therefore, the author should elaborate on the specific mechanisms of this interdependence, whether they were economic (trade corridors), political (state patronage), or strictly functional (military protection of pilgrimage routes).

A second area for critical engagement is the "passive" status of secular monuments. The author attributes this to an "unprotective environment" and "lack of public awareness". To elevate this from a general observation to a rigorous academic finding, the author should analyze the specific policy or social factors in Ajmer-Merwara that have privileged religious preservation over secular heritage. Is this a result of modern tourism priorities, colonial-era administrative legacies, or contemporary community stewardship models? Addressing these underlying causes would significantly increase the paper's impact on heritage studies literature.

### 4. Technical and Formatting Revisions

The methodology section mentions "methodical hoovering up of temple architecture from the field" and "hypothesized image-making history," which are somewhat informal or opaque terms for a professional journal. These should be replaced with more standard academic terminology, such as "comprehensive field documentation" and "visual historiography based on archival analysis." Additionally, the quantitative spatial analysis mentioned in the abstract needs to be clearly presented in the text, ideally supported by maps or data tables that demonstrate the spatial correlations between different types of monuments and ecological features. Finally, the bibliography contains several duplicate entries (e.g., Saha, R., "Hydraulic Landscapes and Fort Design") that must be corrected for publication.

### 5. Recommendations

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The author is encouraged to strengthen the "Results" section by explicitly linking the spatial data to the theoretical claims of cultural synthesis. The distinction between "active" and "passive" heritage should be used to propose specific management strategies, perhaps suggesting how the popularity of "active" pilgrimage sites could be leveraged to bring awareness to "passive" secular ruins. Additionally, providing a clearer chronological map of when these various layers of architecture were added would help the reader understand the "social-economic change" over time that the author references.

### **6. Final Recommendation**

Recommendation: Accept with Minor Revision