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“The study of Saddar Bazar Quarter through the lens of endurance and urban palimpsest in modern Karachi”

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The Saddar Bazar Quarter of Karachi is an area with multi-dimensional layers of urban and architectural traces of different transformations and interventions since its establishment by the British in 1839. The British developed the Saddar Bazar for shopping, dining, and leisure for the British officers and their families on iron-grid urban pattern along with buildings in European architectural styles from Palladian, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Romanesque, Art Deco, and Art-Nouveau representation, which forms the very first historic layer of the area. In the last quarter of the 19th century, a layer of a ‘hybridized-classical or imperial vernacular style’ or ‘colonial architecture’ was formed, when the locals started building their buildings. With this intervening of locals, the natives and businessmen were allowed to live in these buildings with a schematic arrangement of the ground floor as commercial and upper stories for residential or storage purposes.

Since 1947 independence from the British, the city of Karachi has undergone many demographics, economic, and cultural changes which have developed the city into one of the biggest metropolitan city in the world. As a result, the Saddar Bazar has lost its position as the central hub, but still, the area carries significant urban and architectural traces of its multi-layered history, in the form of its iron-grid urban layout, and many historic buildings. Based on a literature review and field study research work done during December 2020-January 2021, the paper presents a comparison between the British concept of Saddar Bazaar and its informal adaptive reuse in independent Pakistan till the present day. The study will read the Saddar Bazar Quarter on the concept of Endurance and as manuscript composed of past, present, and even future textual layers, and its capacity to withstand changes and continuing as a commercial center, as a hub for shopping and leisure center. The conclusion will reflect a critical overview of the adaptive reuse potential of Saddar Bazar and its hybridized heritage.

Keywords: Saddar Bazar Quarter, British heritage, urban palimpsest, adaptive reuse, Karachi.