

Legacy of Colonial Public Buildings of Kendujhar District: An Architectural Study

“Architecture is a visual art, and the buildings speak for themselves.” – Julia Morgan, Architect.

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Abstract

The Kendujhar district is one among the twenty six princely states of Odisha. It is also the third largest princely state with an area of 8303 sq km. The location, lying in the state's northern region, is renowned for its abundant mineral resources, thick forests, tribal culture, waterfalls, and historical legacy. From ancient times to the present, Kendujhar has been a significant part of Odisha's political, economic, and cultural history. Further, it is densely inhabited by forty six scheduled tribes, the major ones of which are Bathudi, Bhuyan, Bhumij, Gond, Ho, Juang, Kharwar, Kisan, Kolha, Kora, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Saora, Shabar, and Sounti. It creates a great Socio-cultural diverse place. From time immemorial, this place has a rich history. From the 12th century, this place was ruled by the Bhanjas, who submitted to the British on 16th December 1804 A.D. by signing the subsidiary alliance. For effective rule, they built public buildings such as administrative offices, courts, schools, hospitals, police stations, Jails, and forest institutions. Which not only strengthened the rule, law, and order but also brought development in the district. These are built on a blended Indo- European design with regional architectural modifications necessary for Odisha's climate and environment. This paper is about the study of these public buildings.

Keywords: Kendujhar History, Built Heritage, Colonial Architecture of Kendujhar, Colonial Architecture of Odisha, Colonial Heritage buildings, Kendujhar Collectorate, Ananandapur Sub-Collectorate Office.

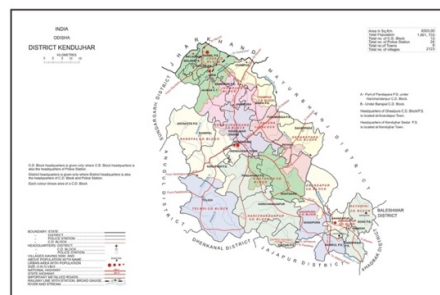
Introduction:

The Kendujhar district is located between 21^o 1' North and 22^o 10' North latitudes and between 85^o 11' East and 86^o 22' East longitudes. It is a prominent district of Odisha due to its strategic location and natural resources. The history of Kendujhar, dates back to the Stone Age. On 1st January 1948, Kendujhar emerged as a district of Odisha from a princely estate. It has an area of 8303 sq km. and shares

its boundary with Bhadrak, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Sundargarh, and Jharkhand.¹ The name of Kendujhar is believed to have originated from two words: Kendu-jhar. Kendu refers to the Kendu tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), a tree abundantly found in the forests of the region. Its leaves are widely used for making traditional bidi (leaf cigarettes). Jhara or Jhar- means stream, waterfall, or forest-covered area in local Odia and tribal usage. Thus, the word “Kendujhar” roughly means “the land or stream surrounded by Kendu forest”. Cobden-Ramsay also claims that the name of the former state of Kendujhar was changed to Keonjhar. According to him, Kendujhar refers to the Kendu (ebony) tree, Jhara, or Jhar-a spring.² The earliest Bhanja king of Kendujhar, Jyoti Bhanja, is believed to have established his capital at Jyotipur; it bears his name. Later, he moved his capital from this town to a more central location and constructed a fort next to a perennial spring (jhara or jhar) that came from the foundation of a Kendu (ebony) tree. Because of this accidental physical characteristic, the new capital town was called Kendujhar (Kendu+Jhar).

The Kendujhar state was part of Khijjinga territory, with its headquarters as Khijjinga Kota, identified with modern Khiching. It became a separate state in the twelfth century during the rule of Jyoti Bhanja. King Gobinda Bhanja ruled over the southern half of the district in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Kendujhar stretched from Mayurbhanj in the east to the borders of the states of Banai, Palalaha, and Anugul in the west, and from Singhbhum in the north to Sukinda in the south. As a follower of Lord Ram, he built a temple for Ram, Laxman, and Sita in the village that bears his name, Biragobindapur. Two small portions of Tillo and Jujhpada were purchased from the Jamindar of Kantajhari and added to the district during the reign of Pratap Balabhadra Bhanja (1764–1792). The East India Company recognized these as parts of Kendujhar in the Sanad granted to Raja Janardan Bhanja in 1804. Raja Janardan Bhanja paid 2976 rupees, 11 Annas, and 11 Pahas to the Britishers to get the right to rule.³ Up to its merger with the state of Orissa, the district's boundaries remained unchanged.

Map-No-1-Map of Kendujhar District



(Courtesy- District Census Handbook Kendujhar, Directorate of Census Operations Odisha, Series-22, Part XII-B, 2011)

Currently the district consists of three subdivisions, namely Kendujhar, Anandapur, and Champua, and each subdivision is under the control of a sub-collector. This is also divided into 13 tahasils, which are Telkoi, Barbil, Champua, Patna, Kendujhar, Ghatgaon, Anandapur, Hatadihi, Jhumpura, Banspal, Saharapada, Harichandanpur, and Ghasipura. Each Tahasil is in charge of a Tahasildar. Similarly, in order to look after the developmental activities, the district is divided into 13 CD blocks, and each block is kept under the administrative control of a Block Development Officer. The list of CD Blocks with the number of Gram Panchayats and villages is given below.

Table No- 01- List of Community Development Blocks, Gram Panchayats, and Villages.

Sl. No	Name of the CD Block	No. of Gram Panchayat	No. of villages
1.	Joda	15	120
2.	Champua	23	150
3.	Jhumpura	22	153
4.	Banspal	21	164
5.	Telkoi	22	149
6.	Harichandanpur	25	219
7.	Kendujhar Sadar	24	225
8.	Ghatgaon	26	142
9.	Patna	20	153
10.	Saharapada	20	139
11.	Anandapur	16	127
12.	Ghasipura	22	164
13.	Hatadihi	31	223
		287	2128*

*Includes 5 villages declared as census towns.

(Courtesy- District Census Handbook Kendujhar, Directorate of Census Operations Odisha, Series-22, Part XII-B, 2011, p. 12)

There are twenty-four police stations, including Telkoi, Kanjipani, Nayakote, Kendujhar Sadar, Kendujhar Town PS, Barbil, Joda, Champua, Bolani, Rugudi, Bamebari, Jhumpura, Baria, Turumunga, Patana, Ghatagaon, Pandapara, Harichandanpur, Daitari, Ghasipura, Anandapur, Soso, Nandipada, and Sainkul. Barbil, Joda, Kendujhar, and Anandapur are the four municipalities. Additionally, the district has five non-statutory census towns: Balagoda (Bolani), Jajanga, Champua, Jhumpura, and Daitari to maintain law and order in the district.

Methodology:

The study is based mostly on primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected by visiting important sites of colonial architectural heritage of Kendujhar District of Odisha. In these trips construction details like layout, materials, decoration, spatial organization were recorded by direct observation, photographic documentation and architectural sketching.

Information about the history and use of these structures was obtained from fieldwork, supplemented by a few informal conversations with locals, historians and caretakers. But it is much more a study of observation and visual than of a large oral history.

Secondary data has been collected from different sources such as published books, research journals, archival records, government reports and articles on colonial architecture in Odisha. Comparative references have also been made to place the architecture of Kendujhar in the larger architectural trends of colonial India.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select significant buildings which best represent the influence of colonial architecture in the area. The criteria for selection are historical importance, architectural uniqueness and state of preservation.

The research uses a descriptive and comparative data analysis. The architectural elements like symmetry, arches, columns, roofing patterns and use of materials are studied. Then these features are compared with the famous colonial architectural designs to find out the influences and adaptations of Kendujhar.

However, careful planning does not remove the study's limitations. Challenges include limited access to some of the heritage buildings, lack of detailed archival records and limited previous research on the area. The results are also site specific and may not be representative of all the colonial structures of Kendujhar.

Colonial Public Buildings:

In the colonial era, this district was also well administered by the ruler along with Britishers. For the smooth functioning of the state, they had constructed many public buildings for administration, education, law, and order, which were built in the Indo-European architectural style. These buildings played a vital role in the development of this highly tribal populated estate. Although many of them are destroyed in the course of time, a few heritage buildings are still functioning and holds their rich historic identity. Thus are discussed below:

1. Administrative Heritage Buildings:

During the colonial period, Kendujhar was governed as a princely state under the Bhanja dynasty. Modern systems of government, tax collection, the judiciary, and public administration were progressively implemented via administrative reforms after the British establishment of indirect sovereignty over several Odisha princely kingdoms in the nineteenth century. The district administration's main administrative office became the Collectorate Building. Because the administration dealt with land revenue collection, law and order, forest administration, judicial functions, public works and infrastructure, and Co-ordination between the princely state and British authorities, the position of Collector or Deputy Commissioner became crucial during the colonial era. The structure came to express the colonial period's development of a bureaucratic government.

1.1 Collectorate Building of Kendujhar:

The Collectorate building of Kendujhar is a prominent example of a colonial-era administrative structure. It was inaugurated by Lt. E.B. Cobden Ramsay, I.C.S., the Political Agent of Princely States on 1920 A.D.⁴ From 1926 A.D. King Balabhadra Bhanja started Durbar at this place.⁵ It emphasizes the symmetry and proportion of the building. It is a single storey structure with an elongated façade, which is emphasized by a strong axial composition, horizontally oriented, conveying stability and permanence. The prominent features are the sloping red-tiled roof, small tower-like projections, and ventilating turrets that punctuate the roofline. The decorative parapets and moldings are providing a classical finish to the elevation. The continuous front verandah supported by columns provided shelter and an entrance to the structure. The building is really a well-preserved colonial structure.



Figure: No-1- Collectorate building of Kendujhar

1.2 Sub Collector Office, Anandapur

One of the most important administrative built heritages of the Kendujhar district is the Sub-Collector office of Anandapur, which represents the steady development of modern administration in Odisha during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Anandapur's administrative growth as a regional centre is intimately related to the Sub-Collectorate's heritage. The office of the Sub-Collector developed under the British administrative structure. The Sub-Collector functioned as an important officer under the District Collector and was responsible for managing subdivision-level administration. It was established to better oversee the Anandapur subdivision and the surrounding rural regions. Revenue administration, land settlement issues, public complaints, development initiatives, disaster management, and coordination of law and order maintenance were all within the office's supervision. The establishment of subdivision headquarters brought government closer to rural people and reduced administrative strain on the district headquarters in Kendujhar town.

The Sub Collectorate building of Anandapur is a prominent colonial-era architecture, built in a classical European architectural style. The prominent architectural element is the row of tall Ionic columns with indigenous capital on both the ground and first floors of the building. The simple base and capitals emphasizing the strength, discipline, and elegance of the building. This colonnade provides full shaded circulation space, allowing light and air for the smooth functioning of the administration. The roof is flat and concealed by a decorative parapet.



Figure: No-2- Sub Collector Office, Anandapur

1.3 Superintendent of Police office:

A significant administrative organization connected to the development of colonial administration and law enforcement in the erstwhile princely state of Kendujhar is the Superintendent of Police (SP) Office of Kendujhar which was the Royal Infantry Unit building during the Colonial Era. The evolution

of law enforcement institutions from traditional royal administration to contemporary district police under British and post-independence rule is reflected in the history of the SP Office. The Superintendent of Police office in Kendujhar embodies a refined blend of European classical structure. It is a single storey building, marked by symmetry, proportion, and simplicity with a little ornamentation for a colonial-era administrative structure. The use of lattice or perforated screens shows a sensitivity to the climate. The building is a well-maintained structure in the district.



Figure: No-3- Superintendent of Police office, Kendujhar

1.4 Sub Collector and Divisional Magistrate Office Building, Champua:

The Sub Collector and Divisional Magistrate Office Building, Champua was erstwhile Court building of Champua. In advance of the establishment of contemporary courts, the kings of the Kendujhar princely state used customary methods to administer justice in the Champua area. In general, judicial proceedings were handled by: Village councils and traditional institutions, local leaders and zamindars, and the monarch or royal officers. Standard rules and royal power were used to resolve disputes pertaining to property, taxes, criminal activity, and social issues. British influence spread across Odisha and the princely kingdoms throughout the nineteenth century. Kendujhar remained a princely state, but its legislative and judicial institutions were progressively impacted by British administration practices. In many places, traditional judicial procedures were eventually superseded by formal courts.

The Sub Collector and Divisional Magistrate Office Building, Champua was built in 1916 A.D. as Court building. The building is single storeyed including a triangular pediment crowning the entrance which is a typical feature of classical Greek and Roman architecture. The pediments still hold the colonial identities i.e. the Court Building: 1916. The high ceiling suggesting the precaution towards the humidity of the place. The building is a blend of classical European and Indian architecture for the Indian climate. The building is a strong proof of British administrative policy in Kendujhar district in colonial Odisha.



Figure: No-4- Sub Collector and Divisional Magistrate Office Building, Champua

1.5 Police Station, Champua:

The administrative, economic, and colonial growth of Champua in the Kendujhar district is closely linked to the history of the Champua Police Station. Prior to the development of contemporary police administration, the Bhanja dynasty's was in charge of upholding law and order in the Champua area. Royal guards, village watchmen (chaukidars), local chiefs and feudal officials, and the customary legal system were the foundations of the old police system. These structures were primarily designed to maintain social order, protect trade routes, and maintain the ruler's power.

The building constructed on a high plinth on a compact and symmetrical plan with a central entrance; a short flight of steps was also attached to this. The pillar and veranda provide this structure with horizontal banding. It has a high ceiling with small windows to avoid the humidity and also to get natural light for office management. Although this building is currently abandoned, it is in good condition to function as a heritage place.



Figure: No-5- Police Station, Champua

1.6 Police station, Anandapur:

The British and princely state officials saw the necessity for formal police control as Anandapur's economic and administrative significance developed. The following factors influenced the police station's establishment: road communication expansion, market and trade growth, revenue management, maintaining law and order, district movement monitoring, and control over rural and forest areas. Eventually, the Anandapur Police Station became one of the subdivision's major police centers.

The old police station building of Anandapur is a beautiful colonial building that shows the maintenance of law and administration of the region since the British era. The building is a single storeyed structure that reflects a vernacular adaptation of classical Odisha's architecture. The front veranda forms a focal architectural feature by the support of thick square masonry columns with simple capital and base. The building is currently in a dilapidated condition and needs urgent care.



Figure: No-6- Police station, Anandapur

1.7 District Jail, Kendujhar:

The development of colonial administration, legal structures, and law enforcement in the erstwhile princely state of Kendujhar is intimately linked to the history of the Kendujhar prison. The district jail's establishment was a reflection of the progressive implementation of contemporary jail management both under and after British control. Under the changing legal systems of colonial and contemporary Odisha, the jail was an important organization for maintaining law and order, carrying out court punishment, and overseeing prisoners. There are three jails built in the Kendujhar district, One in Kendujhar, one in Anandapur, and one in Charampa. The District Jail of Kendujhar was built in 1916 A.D. ⁶ In 1918 A.D., the Champua Sub Jail was constructed.

2. Educational Heritage Buildings:

Odisha's educational system grew slowly throughout the colonial era, particularly in the princely estate of Kendujhar. Although there were previously indigenous schools and traditional Sanskrit education, formal Western-style education started to proliferate due to British influence and regional rulers' attempts. The tradition of learning is fostered by the Bhanja rulers of Kendujhar. Many *pathsalas* were built throughout Kendujhar. The rulers of this dynasty are outstanding patrons of learning and culture. Some prominent patrons are King Govinda Bhanja, who is himself a poet and wrote many devotional songs. The rulers also patronized scholars such as Nilakantha Mishra and Brajanath Badajena. In the later part of the 19th century, steps were taken by King Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja to establish and promote English education in Kendujhar.⁷ Therefore, he established one Middle English School at Kendujhar and one at Anandapur. It is also revealed from the settlement report of 1898 A.D. of Kendujhar State that there was one Middle English school at Anandapur, one vernacular school at Champua, and three schools at Kendujhargarh, which are one Vernacular school, one Rajkumar *Pathasala* and one Sanskrit Tol. Besides these schools, there are 118 village *pathsalas* kept by *abdhans* or village pedagogues. Education was kept under the supervision of Sub-Inspector of schools, who was in charge of both Kendujhar and Nilgiri. By 1907-08 A.D. there were 164 schools opened and the student number was increased to 2951 boys and 162 girls. The rulers also paid attention to the educated women, backward people, and minorities like Muslims. Exclusively for Muslim children, Muktabs were established separately. Although many of them are ruined, the Dhanurjaya Narayan High School till continued with its full vigour.

2.1 Dhanurjaya Narayan High School:

The Dhanurjaya Narayan High School is situated in the heart of Kendujhar town. It was established by King Bhalabhadra Narayan Bhanja.⁸ It was initially built as a Vernacular school but on 30th August 1934, it was upgraded to a high English School and named Gibson High English School for the obligation towards Mr. E.C. Gibson, C.I.E., I.C.S., the then agent to the Governor-General, Eastern States.⁹

After Independence the school's name changed to Dhanurjaya Narayan High School. As a colonial era, school it is a witness to the educational development in the region. It is a single storey building. The balanced structure of the building is typical of colonial-era building. The school building has architectural features of the colonial period, including: Long verandahs, high ceilings for ventilation, thick masonry walls, symmetrical classroom layout, traditional tiled or sloping roofs in older portions. These characteristics reflect the educational infrastructure that colonialism later brought to Odisha.



Figure: No-7- Dhanurjaya Narayan High School

2.2 Nicholson Forest School:

One of the first forestry training facilities in eastern India, Nicholson Forest Training School is a significant educational establishment from the colonial period in Odisha's forest history. The school, which is situated in Champua, was crucial to the training of forest workers in both British colonial and post-independence Odisha. In starting it was named the Orissa States Forest School in 1939 A.D. its name changed to the Eastern States Forest School; after Independence, it was renamed the Nicholson Forest School, after J.W. Nicholson, IFS, who was the first Conservator of Forests of Orissa.¹⁰ It was established in the year 1927.¹¹ By Dr. H.F. Mooney, the advisor to the Eastern States for imparting practical training in forestry to the foresters of the province of Bihar, Orissa, and Eastern Agency.

The school's establishment has to be seen within the larger context of British colonial forest policy. Odisha's woods gained economic significance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to revenue collection, mining operations, railway development, and timber exploitation. To supervise wood operations, maintain conserved forests, and enforce forest regulations, the British government needed qualified forest officers. As a result, institutions like Nicholson Forest School were crucial for developing technically skilled forestry staff. The development of scientific forestry, which developed in India under colonial rule, is also seen in the school. The building follows a colonial utilitarian style with mild classical influence. Although many new buildings were built throughout the campus for the betterment of education, this old building still stands with its heritage structure, with its symmetry, simplicity, and functionality rather than ornamentation. The facade is dominated by a series of semi-circular arches. This school experienced royal patronage and colonial influence in forestry education during pre-independence Odisha. The reason why Nicholson Forest Training School is important is because it stands for: Odisha's colonial forestry administration instruction in scientific forest management, colonial-era heritage building, the advancement of education in the Kendujhar area, and the relationship in princely Odisha between forests, mining, and administration. Therefore, this school building is regarded as a significant historical

structure of the Kendujhar district and still has a lot of its original colonial aspect. The institution should be preserved as a historic educational facility, according to INTACH members and heritage enthusiasts. Besides these schools, some prominent schools are Sanskrit Tol at Tukuna (1932), Balabhadra Narayana High School, Anandapur (1945), Swarnaprava Pathagar (1941), and Gopaljee Pathagar (1943).



Figure: No-8- Nicholson Forest School, Champua

3. Hospital:

British influence introduced modern medical systems to Odisha and the princely kingdoms throughout the nineteenth century. Colonial administrative methods increasingly impacted public health services, despite Kendujhar's status as a princely state under the Bhanja dynasty. The necessity for structured healthcare facilities was brought about by the expansion of administrative headquarters, trade and communication, forest management, mining operations, and urban settlements. Initially there were three dispensaries opened, located at Kendujhar in 1917 A.D.,¹² Anandapur in 1922 A.D., and Champua in 1923 A.D., and it increased to six by 1943-44 A.D. Later the following Hospitals were built for the people of Kendujhar before independence:

Table No-2: List of the hospitals before 1947

Sl. No	Name	Location	Year of Establishment
1.	District Headquarters Hospital	Kendujhar	1917
2.	Subdivisional Hospital	Anandapur	1922
3.	Subdivisional Hospital	Champua	1923
4.	Dumuria Hospital	Dumuria	1941
5.	Gonasika Dispensary	Gonasika	1947
6.	Hatadihi Dispensary	Hatadihi	1947
7.	Harichandanpur Dispensary	Harichandanpur	1947
8.	Rajanagar Dispensary	Rajanagar	1947
9.	Soso Dispensary	Soso	1947

(Source- Orissa district gazetteers: Kendujhar, 1986)

Conclusion:

Colonial public buildings in Kendujhar significantly contributed to the development of the state during colonial rule. It evolved the state's social, economic, political, and religious conditions. The state's educational institutions elevated the population's literacy rate. The libraries help the population to enhance their knowledge. The hospital improves the health of the community. The police station and jail across the state not only uphold peace and harmony but also reinforce the princely governance in Kendujhar. The Collector Office, Sub Collector Office of Anandapur, and Superintendent of Police Office of Kendujhar at the state's center uphold law and order. The structures exhibit both the functionality and development of the state, as well as a combination of Indo-European architectural styles. In terms of architecture, these structures combined climate adaptations appropriate for Odisha's climate with colonial design. They continue to be significant representations of Kendujhar's historical development from a princely kingdom to a contemporary administrative district. Understanding the colonial legacy, administrative history, and cultural development of the Kendujhar area depends on their preservation.

Results:

The study is based on the field observation and analysis of colonial architectural structures in the Kendujhar district. The study identified different types of colonial buildings such as palaces, administrative offices, churches and institutional buildings, mostly located in the Kendujhar district of Odisha. Architectural analysis reveals that most of the buildings have symmetrical layout with spacious verandahs, high ceilings and large arched openings. Many structures exhibit classical European style columns namely Doric and Ionic. Materials used are mostly brick and lime mortar with laterite stone and timber used for structural support. The study also shows a significant mix of European and indigenous architectural elements. While the external design reflects colonial aesthetics, the internal spatial planning shows adaptation to local climatic and cultural conditions.

The study also find out the benevolent works and effective rule of Bhanja rulers in Kendujhar. The establishment of these public buildings marked an era of development in all spheres for the state. In terms of preservation, several buildings are found to be in a deteriorating state due to inadequate maintenance, whereas a few structures maintained by government authorities remain in relatively excellent condition. There are few heritage public buildings still in use with certain modifications. But many were in the state of deterioration. If these could be well maintained, then they could function as built heritage tourism centres.

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