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# *Pinjra* Work in the Architecture of Punjab, Pakistan

## A Historical Overview of the Literary and Material Evidence

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**Abstract**

*Pinjra* work represents one of the most profound decorative technique and design repertoires in the Architecture of Punjab. The craft demands an expert artisan with a developed sensibility for finesse and a unique vocabulary of design. The technique has been deployed mainly in wood, although the design repertoire extends to other materials. Given various examples of exquisite *pinjra* work in the Subcontinent since thirteenth century, the origin of the craft remains shrouded in mystery. There seems to be a possibility that *pinjra* work came from Central Asia to the Subcontinent but the material evidence suggests otherwise. This paper explores the literary and material evidence in a historical overview in order to trace whether the tradition of *pinjra* making was originated in Persia or it was born in the plains of Punjab. On the basis of analysis of various examples in the region of Punjab and Central Asia, it suggests that

*pinjra* work was a result of an organic amalgamation of cultural and aesthetic components that took place with the arrival of Muslims in the Subcontinent.

**Introduction**

Wood has been a preferred ornamental choice in the architecture of small towns and developing cities of Punjab. Although baked brick and mortar were used as the principal building materials, however, an aesthetic of intricacy prevailed and we observe that the doors, windows, balconies and vents were made in wood. This ornamental choice is particularly noticeable in the surviving structures of Bhera and Chiniot. The wooden structures that adore the baked brick buildings are made using *shīsham,* which in local dialect is called *tahli*. Given the hardness *shīsham,* it has never been an easy subject for carving, nevertheless, we find in Bhera and Chiniot a remarkable expression of craftsmanship. The geometric designs carved in *shīsham* and found frequently on the panels located above the doors and on the vents and balconies show a meticulous and profound use of expertise. The perforated panels are called *jālis* in the local dialect.

The primary purpose of these *jālis* was ventilation, which was a necessary requirement of local architecture due to weather that was both hot and humid. A secondary purpose was to grant privacy to the interior of the house and its inhabitants. The *jālis* tempered the air entering the house and also helped in sufficiently lighting the house in the absence of electricity. The *jālis* being an integral part of the architectural character of Bhera and Chiniot also display a unique and exquisite feature, which is called *pinjra* work. *pinjra* is a Persian word, which means a latticed window or cage. In the region of Punjab, it is commonly used to denote a cage. Another Persian word, ‘mauj’ is also used alternatively, which literally means ‘wave’ or ‘corrugation’, however, in the design language it refers to the undulating lines, which are a hall mark of woven carpets.

*Pinjra* work exhibits a technique, wherein, various small and precisely cut pieces of wood are assembled with mortise-and-tenon joinery to form a screen. The joinery used in the method has been spelled out by Percy Brown in *Industrial Art Pattern* (1903) in the following words: 'The joinery of this sort is often very good, each piece being neatly dowelled into its neighbor; but glue is seldom used'.[1] However, on closer observation of illustration shown in the book (figure 1), the joinery cannot be explained as dowelling. Dowelling would mean using extra wooden pieces for joining. What we observe is a technique in which the wooden pieces are chiseled on the ends in order to fit into each other. And this technique was probably deployed since the medium was *shīsham,* which due to its strength would hold such kind of joinery. This technique is closer to tenon joinery instead of dowelling. The *pinjra* workers would create screens made from hundreds of wooden pieces to create complex design patterns. The work was so precise that the joinery remained invisible to the naked eye and it would seem as fretwork. It may appear that such joinery would have remained fragile, but in fact, it has survived hundreds of years. In some cases, to add more strength, the *pinjra* makers used a cord to connect the outer pieces, however, in most cases, it is the joinery itself that gave the requisite strength to the intricately patterned screen.

The art of *pinjra* making has evolved over centuries but it is difficult to trace its origins. The question that whether it came from Central Asia to the Subcontinent or it was a a local innovation? Is what concerns the present study. The following study

[1] John Lockwood Kipling, "Punjab Wood-carving." *The Journal of Indian Art* 4 (1886): 1-3

takes into account the literary information and material evidence to trace the origin and development of *pinjra* making tradition.

## *Pinjra* Work in the Architecture of Punjab

In the reign of Akbar, *pinjra* making was a well-respected profession. The *pinjra* worker received five to seven times of what a skilled carpenter would earn. The more geometrical complexity was involved in *pinjra* patterns, the greater was the amount charged.[2] For instance, the dodecagonal design patterns were the most yielding for the *pinjra* worker as compared to hexagonal. Moreover, it has also been mentioned that the *pinjra* workers using tenon joinery were paid more than those who used string for fastening the pieces. Fred Andrews writes in his article "Indian Arts and Crafts": "Indian wooden *pinjra* is not cut with a fretsaw, but is built up of pieces all joined together. This method avoids the weakness of cross-grain. It is highly skilled work demanding accuracy, patience and capable hands."[3]

The complexity of geometric patterns involved in the *pinjra* making has been discussed in three historical documents. One is 'Punjab Woodcarving' an 1886 article by John Lockwood Kipling, the second, and early twentieth century book *Vishvakarma* and the third is *Tohfa Mistri Mohammed Qazi,* which uses an Iranian word girih (knot) for geometric patterns. Based on these sources, the following table of design patterns can be deduced in order of increasing complexity.

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[2] Abu I. Fazi Allami, *Ain-i Akbari* (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2002), 235.

[3] Fred H. Andrews, "Indian Art And Crafts," The Studio 124, no. 593 (August 1942): 59.

| No. | Title | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Girih jharnā* | Jharna is an Urdu word used to denote a stream or small spring. The title therefore refers to a design patterns that has a flow and continuity like a stream. |
| 2 | *Lulīdār* | A design that is composed of horizontal and vertical grooves. The word comes from Persian roots and means that which is delicate. |
| 3 | *Girih chār murabbi* | A geometric pattern that is based upon octagons and squares. *chār murabbi* means four squares. |
| 4 | *Kāṭ'āran dār* | *Kāṭ'ār* means a dagger. The pattern is made by using polygons in a triangular shape. |
| 5 | *Kunja rati mauj* or *pinjra,* | *Kunj* means corner, while *mauj* means wave. Both words are Persian and they refer to a pattern, which stems from a corner and proceeds in a flow. |
| 6 | *Sheṣh ṭ'oṭ'ā* | A pattern comprising of six polygons arranged in a star formation. |
| 7 | *Girih cheh-kaliā* | A name for six-pointed star. |
| 8 | *Shash tārā* | A design with six petals. |
| 9 | *Kulandār kunja rati* | A design that begins from a corner and has a flower like formation |
| 10 | *Deh tūl* | A pattern with ten-sided polygon. |
| 11 | *Bārah tūl* | A pattern with twelve-sided polygon. |
| 12 | *Girih Sarr* | Sarr is a Persian word which means radiating. It refers to a pattern that emerges from a star and radiates outwards. |
| 13 | *Hasht-Panchik* | a geometric pattern based on eight and five-pointed star formation. |
| 14 | *Chhe bāra* | A design pattern which uses six-pointed and twelve-pointed stars. |
| 15 | *Aṭ'h-bāra* | A formation with eight-pointed and twelve-pointed star. |
| 16 | *Akbari* | A complex pattern using kunj rati pattern in rotation |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | G*irih gardā* | Garda in Persian means whirling. This design pattern proceeds through intersection and overlapping. |

A common use of *pinjra* panels can be observed in the architecture of Punjab particularly in the arches, above the doors and railings. The use was limited to residential building and these panels were usually made in a smaller scale. Most of the panels range from one to two square feet. Wherever a greater space is to be covered two or three panels have been used. In such cases, especially in northern Punjab, we observe three panels joined together, with central being the larger one (figure 2). The scale is bigger in comparison as we move towards the South. In the funerary architecture, the *pinjra* screens extend to six feet. The larger size is probably due to the use of *pinjra* panels as replacement of façade. For instance, at the tomb of Jalauddin Surkh Posh in Ucch, larger panels of *pinjra* work are visible (figure 3).

The *pinjra* work is also found in the local furniture items, particularly of the British period. This has popularized the belief that probably it was a British innovation or a European import. But, a twelfth century wooden throne at Bikaner speaks otherwise. It has latticed panels that are full of *pinjra* motif. Goetz, however, argued that they were added at a later stage; after the Muslim arrival in the Subcontinent.[4] Kipling also mentions the use of *pinjra* work in local furniture before the arrival of British. The British emphasis was an attempt to introduce the craft at an industrial scale. It becomes clear from Abul Fazal's account that *pinjra* work was highly developed craft in Akbar's period, however, it is difficult to ascertain the exact origins in the Subcontinent.

*Decorative Elements in Mughal Architecture* by R. Nath is an interesting study in this regard as the author traces the inspiration available to the Mughal architects. He traces

[4] Akhtar Riazuddin, *History of Handicrafts: Pakistan-India* (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Hijra Council, 1988), 45.

the motifs, floral patterns and geometric shapes to Indian sources. Rustam Mehta in *Masterpieces in Sandstone* establishes that jali work was a Muslim contribution but he states with reference to marble only.[5] An interesting finding is made by Percy Brown in his book *Architecture of India, Buddhist and Hindu Period*. He argues that the *pinjra* work can be traced back to the Buddhist architecture where wooden screens can be noticed.[6] The position seems farfetched since there is no continuity of such tradition as far as the material evidence is concerned. The wooden screens that were probably made for ventilation purposes in the humid environment lack precision and complexity. It is only in the Sultanate period that we find clear evidence of *pinjra* work with above mentioned geometrical patterns.

The earliest use of *pinjra* work in Punjab can be observed at the tomb of Sheikh Baha al-Dīn Zikrīya (died 1262 CE) located in Multan. He was a Sufi of the Suharwardi order who established a khanqah in Multan. The tomb displays carved wooden structures at the doorways with *jālis* on the northern and eastern facades. There are geometrical patterns and vegetal carvings at the doorway but they cannot be qualified as *pinjra* work. The wooden screen adoring the eastern façade is an exception. It consists of panels where *pinjra* work can be clearly noticed. The geometric and arabesque patterns are meticulously carved with an exceptional sensitivity to detail (fig 4). The geometric patterns, especially on the crown above the screen display six-pointed star, a signature motif from Persian Islamic tradition. It is interesting to note that ornamental use of geometry with six-pointed star can be observed at Al-Hakim Mosque in Cairo, Egypt and the same motif is used on the Gates of Somnath that were

[5] Rustam Jehangir Mehta, *Masterpieces of Indian Craftsmanship in Marble and Sandstone* (Taraporevala, 1980), 19.

[6] Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Period)* (Read Books Limited, 2013).

brought to India from the tomb of Mahmud Ghaznavi located in Afghanistan.[7] The use of eight-point star and ten-point star was also prevalent in the twelfth century as it can be witnessed on the pulpit of Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem, built in 1168 C.E.

The present screen at the tomb of Sheikh Baha al-Dīn Zikrīya is a replica of the original and the design pattern can be related to girih-sarr mentioned in the above table. In this variation the geometric patterns are built upon twelve-pointed star and hexagons.[8] A further evidence of *pinjra* work can be seen in the burial chamber. The cenotaph placed on a platform is encircled by panels that display *pinjra* work, however one cannot observe the joinery since many layers of paint over the year have concealed it. The geometric patterns however, give a clear evidence of this being *pinjra* work. The *jālis* on the railing display the use of six-pointed and twelve-pointed star (figure 5). Moreover, hexagonal patterns which are called *shash ţuţa* can be easily observed on the *jālis* of railing in the south (figure 6). The panels located below the ceiling also exhibit *pinjra* work with the use of eight-pointed star and twelve-pointed star, called *girih aťh* and *sarr*, respectively (figure 7). The *pinjra* work at the tomb clearly portrays that it was prevalent during the Slave dynasty in the thirteenth century and Punjab was probably its greatest center.

Another important example of early *pinjra* work in the region of Punjab can be observed at the tomb of Shah Rukn-e Alam, which was built in 1320-24 CE. The *pinjra* work is visible at the doorway where the leaves of the door display *jharnā*pattern. Moreover, blind *pinjra* work is also visible at the entrance door just

[7] E. H. Hankin, "On Some Discoveries of the Method of Design Employed in Mohammedan Art." Journal of the Society of Arts (March:1807 doi: London), 2.

[8] E. H. Hankin, "The Drawing of Geometric Patterns in Saracenic Art," *Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India.*, Calcutta : Govt. of India Publication, (1925) 2.

beneath the lintel. The six-pointed star motif can be noticed, which according to above table is titled as *girihchhe kaliyan teehray gaz*. On the eastern façade, a wooden screen can be observed which consists of panels that exhibit both geometric and floral patterns and on the top of the screen (figure 8), there are three panels of exquisite *pinjra* work. The design pattern used in these panels is titled *lulidār* that displays a square-within-square scheme.The wooden screen also contains six-pointed star pattern or *girih shash tara* (figure 9). Although, the nature of craftsmanship cannot be related to that of *pinjra* work, but this screen provides an important evidence concerning the transfer of design from Central Asia to Punjab. The same pattern is observable at Alai Darwaza of the Qutub Complex, Delhi, which was built at the beginning of thirteenth century and at the tomb of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq (1324-1330 CE) (figure 10). The patterns are not carved in wood but in marble. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the design pattern repertoire, regardless of the materials used and techniques deployed existed as a shared vocabulary amongst craftsmen.

The Western region of Punjab also shows the transference of design repertoire. The tomb of Syed Ahmad Sultan also known as Sakhi Sarwar, located in Dera Ghazai Khan and built in the thirteenth century also shows *pinjra* work of same excellence (figure 11). The ventilator screen shows a *pinjra* jali with Akbari pattern, which used *kunj rati* patterns in rotation.

The mausoleum of Sheikh Ala'ud-din at Pakpattan, built in 1330 CE in the Tughlaq dynasty also exhibits a variety of *pinjra* work particularly in the decorated doorway.[9] On the three panels below the lintel and above the doorway, a radiating 24-pointed star geometry can be observed. It is a unique example as this pattern is uncommon in the

[9] *Tughlaq Shahi Kings of Delhi: ChartThe Imperial Gazetteer of India*, v. 2, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1909), 369.

region (figure 12). In addition to 24-pointed star pattern we observe *lulidār* and *at'h-murabbi girih (*figure 13, 14*)*. Interestingly, the *pinjra* work is only found on the doorway, the rest of the building does not have any such embellishment. Probably, the doorway was considered the most important part of the structure, therefore, it was adorned with greater sensitivity.

From thirteenth century onwards, we find a continuity of *pinjra* work tradition in Punjab. In historical centres such as Uchh, known for the Sufi culture, the tomb of Rajan Qattal which was built in 1433 CE, large sized panels of *pinjra* work are observable. The design pattern is based on six-pointed star that seems to be the preferred choice of craftsmen. A rather exceptional display of *pinjra* work can be noticed at the tomb of Syed Jalaluddin Surkh Posh. Located in Uchh, it was built at the beginning of seventeenth century. The tomb represents a remarkable example for understanding Muslim funerary architecture. Following the tradition of the region and architectural practice, inside the burial chamber, the cenotaph is placed in the left corner. The ceiling of the hall is supported by monolithic wooden pillars with heavily carved doorway exhibiting geometric and arabesque patterns on wood. The *pinjra* work is observable on the north façade showing *chhe kalia* pattern (figure 15). This six by four feet panel is the largest of the *pinjra* specimens of this region. The design pattern resembles to that of *jālis* at Gur-e Amir in Samarqand and Tilyakari mosque but the finesse is of a lesser quality. The *pinjra* panels can be noticed on the arched openings of entrance, below the lintel of the canopy. The design pattern can be identified with lulidār which is used in a repeating way (figure 16). The cenotaphs of the family members placed in the same burial chambers are encircled by railings which exhibit *pinjra* panels. The design patterns retain their originality and are well preserved

probably due to the fact that they were indoor. The *pinjra* work tradition is still prevalent in the region and there are living expert craftsmen.[10]

**Discussion**

The *pinjra* work found in the region of Punjab can be traced back to the Sultanate period and shows elements of continuity in the architectural tradition that seeped into Subcontinent with the arrival of Muslims. Although an impression can be made that the inspiration came from Cairene mashrabbiye of Egypt but the distinct geometric preference that is noticed in the patterns seems to be Muslim input. In the lattice work of Egypt, the screens were constituted by wooden pegs combined with carved piece, whereas, the *pinjra* work of the Subcontinent has flat wooden pieces as building blocks, which were grooved or indented in order to fit into each other. Moreover, in the former the wooden pieces used were of the same length while in the latter, the pieces varied in length. From physical evidence, it seems that *pinjra* work begun under rulers of the Slave dynasty.[11] We may argue that the *pinjra* work found in the funerary architecture of Punjab, from the thirteenth to seventeenth century, is a variation of the mashrabbiye technique but the design patterns cannot be associated to Egypt.

A close companion to *pinjra* work is the perforated screen or jali work. Both of them serve the same architectural function, which is ventilation and lighting, however, the difference lies in the way joinery is executed and the design patterns are used. Various Islamic monuments of the Subcontinent frequently exhibit jali work with geometrical and arabesque patterns. The use of these *jālis* as well as of *pinjra* work in funerary architecture can be associated to sensibilities encouraged by Islamic aesthetics

[10] Talib Hussain, *Traditional Architectural Crafts of Pakistan: History and Techniques* (Lok Virsa, 2011), 172.

[11] Riazuddin, *History of Handicrafts*, 356.

in which illumination by light has a distinct value. The splendid is considered the beautiful. The subdued light filtered through the stained glass windows of European churches was also a feature of religious architecture on same grounds.

The line of inquiry tracing any influences from the Indian architecture does not yield much fruit. Undoubtedly, the Hindu and Jain architecture had its own repertoire of motifs and complex design patterns but the local aesthetic taste did not develop in terms of geometry. The windows and richly decorated panels found on sites like Nasik and Ajanta show the use of wood but we do not find geometric designs as such. It is very rare that we come across basic geometric configurations in design patterns in Jain architecture. The Manikesvara Temple in Lukandi was built in twelfth century but the use of geometric patterns is only marginal and it is impossible to assume that this would have led to the exquisite geometric work of the thirteenth century. Indian historian R. Nath stated, "geometricals in ancient Hindu architecture is an exception and not a rule."[12] There are, however, some examples of lattice work used in windows at Hindu temples in Mysore and Deccan, and some more elaborate works at Pattadakal and Kailas at Ellora. Vincent Smith has recorded around twenty-eight lattice work examples at Belur.[13] The Indian culture did not contribute to geometrical patterns used in *pinjra* work, however, it had a strong influence on the use of *pinjra* panels in terms of their function and significance.

In fact, the tradition of woodcarving had a sacred place in ancient Indian society. The Rig Veda being the foundational text of Hinduism has an elaborate exposition on woodworking. The religious texts cover the whole process from the falling of a tree to the innovative creation of wooden articles. The carved wood was given a paramount

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[12] R. Nath, *Studies in Medieval Indian Architecture* (M.D. Publications, 1995), 109.

[13] Mehta, *Masterpieces of Indian Craftsmanship in Marble and Sandstone*, 19.

importance in the religious doctrines. For instance, *Matsya Purana* mentions that a carved wooden door frame must be displayed at every home to welcome its visitors.[14] The carved wooden frames on doors, windows and balconies in Hindu architecture evince that the woodcarving was a noble profession and the products had a sacred value. The significance of woodcarving was established in the Subcontinent before the arrival of Muslims. With Muslims an emphasis on geometry entered into the tradition of woodcarving.

Undoubtedly, the evolutionary journey of geometric patterns in Islamic architecture is the most profound and is unparalleled in history. Indian scholars have open heartedly accepted that geometric patterns and their use in the architecture of the Subcontinent has largely been the contribution of Muslim artisans. It has also been acknowledged by historians that geometry held a unique and prestigious position in the decorative vocabulary of Muslims along with arabesque patterns. The prestigious position had an intellectual basis which was furnished by Muslim philosophers, who translated Greek works and associated properties such as rhythm, order and harmony to divine laws. The following position of Ibn-al Haytham clearly postulates beauty as an expression of geometry:

> ... when a form combines the beauty of the shapes of all its parts and the beauty of their magnitudes and their composition and the proportionality of parts in regard to shape, size, position and all the other properties required by

[14] Jay Thakkar, *Naqsh: The Art of Wood Carving in Traditional Houses of Gujarat, a Focus on Ornamentation* (Research Cell, 2004), 130.

> proportionality, and moreover, when the organs are proportionate to the shape and size of the face as a whole—that is perfect beauty.[15]

The aesthetic preference for geometry became acutely visible in the Mughal architecture. The perforated panels of marble and *jālis* were considered an indispensable component of the ornamental scheme of various Mughal monuments. All the royal structures erected by Mughals bear the stamp of geometric design patterns. Humayun' tomb in Delhi (figure 17), Akbar's mausoleum and Sikandara (figure 18) and the *jālis* that adorn the architecture of Fatehpur Sikri (figure 19, 20), the tomb of Itamadud Daula (figure 21), and the mighty Taj Mahal (figure 22) display the Mughal taste and preference for the decorative use of geometric patterns. Mughals preferred sand stone and later on marble as principal material for their magnificent architecture. These materials were expensive for the common man, who used wood for decorative purposes. The design repertoire remains comparable. The *jālis* that were created using marble in the royal architecture were imitated in wood by the common man to adorn his home.

Since, it is a documented fact that the arrival of Muslims from Central Asia had its greatest cultural influence in northern Punjab, therefore, the cities on the route would have received a greater impact. It is certainly through the traders and artisans that the design repertoire travelled to this region. A blend of indigenous and Persian aesthetic vocabulary would have been achieved due to the fact that the Muslim conquerors such as Taimur took with him local artisans as well along with the wealth. Those artists were patronized by aestheticians who were developed in the Muslim tradition and they deployed the artisans in building monuments. So, there was a two-way route of

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[15] Valérie Gonzalez and Institute of Ismaili Studies, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture* (I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 2001), 24.

craftsmen and therefore an amalgamation of design patterns was the result. We find indigenous Indian motifs coupled with geometric patterns then onwards. The northern Punjab remained the most absorbing land and adapted various values and trends coming from the local culture of its rulers. The *pinjra* work would have been a similar transaction. It seems probable that it took roots in the Subcontinent under the influence of Muslin aesthetics and then travelled to Central Asia. This position is validated by the fact that the *pinjra* work found in the architecture of Multan and Ucch precedes the earliest examples of Central Asia. For instance, the large *pinjra* work panels that are observable at the tomb of Gur-e Amir, which was completed in 1405 CE, reflect the same technique and design patterns. One can observe a *jālichhay kalīyan* pattern and a variation of the *shash ţuţa* pattern in the *pinjra* panel (figure 23, 24).

Similarly, the *pinjra* work is also visible in the screen used at the Tilya Kari Madrassa which was constructed in the middle of seventeenth century. The wooden screens display the use of six-pointed star (figure 25). We, however, do not find a continuity of *pinjra* work in Central Asia and the Subcontinent. This is due to the fact that wood has been a perishable material as compared to sand stone and marble. It can be assumed that *pinjra* work remained a continuous tradition. This argument rests upon the fact that as we move forward in history, an evolution in design patterns and attention to detail increases. For instance, Mazar-e Shah Madrassa in the city of Isfahan was completed at the beginning of the eighteenth century and exhibits examples of *pinjra* work with a considerable complexity (figure 26).The geometrical configuration is based on eight point or *aťh-bara* and twelve point stars.

The craftsmanship of this *pinjra jāli* resembles to that of Samarkand, example found in the Masjid-e Sayyed of the Qajar Dynasty in 1804 (figure 27). The geometrical configuration is based on a radiating variant of sixteen-point star pattern. A twelve-point radiating star geometrical pattern is also exhibited in this monument.

**Conclusion**

The trade route between Punjab and Central Asia is punctuated with examples of *pinjra* work, which also supports the argument that the technical and design vocabulary of *pinjra* work travelled with artisans and influenced the architecture alongside the trade route, For instance, the old city of Peshawar exhibits many examples of *pinjra* work which are similar to those found in Punjab.[16] Dr. Saif-ur Rehman Dar noted that "the *pinjra* work was reportedly found in Peshawar in abundance and exported to Afghanistan".[17] The export to Peshawar can be traced back to Bhera and Chiniot. Ahmad Hassan Dani informs that around 1730 CE a renowned trader family from Bhera moved to Peshawar. It was the Sethi family who was into trade with Central Asia.[18] The evidence that this family was a contributor to the export of *pinjra* work as well is found in the Sethi House in Peshawar, which was built in 1834. The house holds numerous examples of *pinjra* work.The panels used for ventilation in the courtyard and those adorning the railing show distinct examples of *pinjra* work (figure 28-30). In the upper storey a highly delicate expression of *pinjra* work is noticeable in the space above the arched windows (figure 31).

The literature does not help much when it comes to tracing that whether *pinjra* work came to the Subcontinent from Central Asia or vice-versa. The names of the design patterns show a greater Persian influence but this does not help in tracing the origin since the names can be assigned later or an alteration of local names might have been the case as some words are from local dialect. The material evidence however supports

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[16] Sir George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi 1903: Being the Official Catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition 1902-1903* (Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1903), 104.

[17] Saif-ur Rehman Dar, *Monograph on Woodwork,* 1976.

[18] Ahmed Hassan Dani as quoted by Dar, *Monograph on Woodwork,* 1976.

the conjecture that *pinjra* work originated in Punjab and then travelled to Central Asia, however, it does not mean that the origination of *pinjra* work was solely an indigenous innovation. The arrival of Muslims in the Subcontinent was also the arrival of geometric patterns which strongly influenced *pinjra* work. The use of lattice work in screens is found both in Egypt and India and it precedes *pinjra* work. It is more probable that the lattice work explored in the Subcontinent multiplied with Muslim aesthetics that preferred geometry and as a result the exquisite *pinjra* work originated. We may conclude that it was the result of an amalgamation in which the aesthetic component came from Central Asia while the cultural component, which gave significance to woodcarving came from the indigenous soil.

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