



Wooden Ornamentation Conservation In Traditional Buildings Of Peshawar: An Approach Through The Guidelines Of Venice Charter 1964 (Icomos)

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Abstract

Wooden decoration in traditional buildings has remained a key component of Peshawar's architecture. This traditional art developed mostly in Peshawar's interior city areas, where it became ingrained in the people's culture and heritage. There was also a group of expert woodworkers who may be considered a prominent representative of their society's cultural expression and history. This article proposes a novel and long-term preservation strategy for Peshawar's old wood embellished buildings. It's aimed at providing a global perspective on preservation issues involving wood constructions from a cultural standpoint. The author's goal is to provide ideas and approaches that are potentially universal in scope while being respectful of diversity of cultures.

Keywords: Wooden decoration, Peshawar, global perspective, preservation

Introduction

The technique of wooden ornamentation is visible in the exquisite constructions of Peshawar's traditional buildings. It may be found as ornamental components on windows, shutters, doors, ceiling decorations, and balcony railings, as well as on columns and pillars in architecture. The doors, windows, and ventilators, for example, are decorated with a mix of floral motifs and geometric designs adapted from Islamic patterns. However, we may find solid proof of this adornment in Buddhist architecture, as shown in the panel reliefs,

which also specify the building structural components and decorations applied to them (Coomaraswamy 1938:14ff;cf.Shah 2005:19ff) (Fig.1). They were familiar with mouldings, cornices, dentil lines, Corinthian pilasters, Persepolis columns, trefoil arches, pediments, torana, and ogee arches in those days (Meister 1996:41f). Buddhist artworks and architectural ornamentation, for example, use carving techniques. Though the decoration of Peshawar's ancient buildings has deteriorated, it nevertheless has the heritage of idealised architecture from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Wood has long been utilized as a structural element in the construction of traditional buildings at Peshawar. The creative use of wood in the construction of these historic buildings is really stunning. Chaka gali, Sethimuhallah, Bazar-i-Kalan, Karim-pura, Kali Bari, and the Saddar (or Cantonment) area are the muhallah (or neighbourhoods) where the most amazing decoration may be viewed and still be found intact. These residences are magnificent pieces of art. Wood is used in the construction of various architectural elements of these structures, including building envelopes, their designs, and components, embellishments and their decoration, as well as ceilings and their designs. It has also been applied in the decorating of wooden facades, such as tri-arcades, posts and pilasters, ornamental components on wooden projections, balustrades, handrails, and eaves, as well as their adornment (Fig.2).

Because of its location on the old trade route between India and Central Asia, Peshawar has remained a crossroads for diverse cultures and civilizations (Das 1874:144, 154f; Gazetteer of the Peshawar District 1897-98:371; Shah 2000:27f). Other civilizations' impacts on the city are best portrayed in the structures of the city's inner neighbourhoods, which integrated numerous impacts on its artistry, as well as traditions conveyed via architecture and shape.

These Peshawar traditional houses have exquisite woodwork in a variety of unique styles. They were areas where timber ornamentation expressed a distinct cultural character. They're ideal for fusing various creative styles. (Durrani 1997:185; Wright 1975:92; Jaffer 1945:90).

Traders doing business with Central Asia through Peshawar were influenced by the shifting socio-political situation in the region. The consequence of this transformation may be seen in Peshawar, where there is a noticeable drop in ornamental woodwork and painting, possibly due to merchants losing their corporations.

Carving, lattice work (or pinjra, panjali, jali) (Fig.3), fret work (or overlay work), mirror work (aina-kari), stain glass work, diaper work, and parquetry work have all been utilised to decorate wood in some way. Wood was handled to make inspirational ornamental patterns with the advent of novel styles and techniques. This traditional art developed mostly in Peshawar's metropolitan centre, where it became an integral part of the local culture.

Some of the designs present in the woodwork decoration of these Peshawar city's old houses are floral motifs, while others are geometrical patterns. The artists of these buildings were influenced not just by Indian style of design, but also by Gandharan art themes, methods, and style of ornamentation, but with certain modifications (Fig.4)(Coomaraswamy 1985:1ff; Shah I:2005:19ff). The quality of wooden decoration is what makes it possible to decorate the surface with a range of designs. The repetition of the same shapes in various styles results in fresh and incredibly striking creations.

Flowers used as patterns for wood embellishment by artists include chrysanthemum, sunflower, lotus, and others. The climbing creepers' patterns included an acanthus leaf, a creeper, or an ivy branch with foliage. The vines have distinct natural characteristics and are frequently nearly identical to each other. Furthermore, the carving of leaves usually resulted in palmettes (fig.5).

Geometrical patterns are the most often used ornamental elements. They may be built in a number of spectacular patterns, including zig - zag lines, spirals, and dots, stars etc. The importance of embellishing two-dimensional surfaces with geometric motifs in establishing a creative approach cannot be emphasised (fig.6). The vacant areas of the geometric structure were filled with interlaced and stylized vegetation.

In Peshawar's historic architecture, geometric patterns are fused with flora in a variety of techniques and materials like as wood, stone, brick, marble, iron, and so on, resulting in an astonishing and well-organized garden-like environment that adds to the splendour of the structures. At various instances, gaps in geometric frameworks or lines are artistically filled with interwoven and stylised flower motifs (fig.7).

Venice Charter 1964 Preservation Principles for Traditional Buildings of Peshawar

Wood is a marvellous material; wooden components add an ethnic and sophisticated touch to traditional buildings of Peshawar. These unique structures were built by members of an old guild of expert architects, masons, and artisans that is no longer in existence. Indigenous architecture of significant cultural and historical value in Peshawar is fast vanishing owing to a lack of appreciation for its worth. Furthermore, there is a shortage of resources that would allow the government and those concerned to take action in order to preserve this valuable asset (Fig.8).

Some approaches are suggested for traditional architectural understudy, both for using robust, climate-appropriate design of our traditional structures and for preserving cultural identity and customs. Given the decline of traditional building skills and expertise, an integrated strategy to the preservation of these structures is proposed adopted from ICOMOS 2017.

The purpose of this paper is to describe fundamental and generally applicable principles and techniques for the conservation and preservation of ancient traditional buildings of Peshawar while keeping cultural relevance in mind.

1. Recognise the significance of traditional buildings of Peshawar their wooden constructions (Fig.9) and their ornamentations from all eras as part of the world's cultural heritage.
2. take into consideration the wide range of ancient wood constructions as well as ornamentation on various elements.
3. Recognize the susceptibility of the traditional buildings of Peshawar designed entirely or partially of wood owing to material deterioration and degradation in varied environmental conditions and environmental conditions brought on by humidity changes in light, fungal and insect assaults, wear and tear, as well as fire and other natural catastrophes.
4. wood constructions as well as ornamentation because of fragility, mistreatment, and the loss of historical design and construction technical skills and expertise.
5. consider the wide range of activities and treatments needed for the protection and conservation of these cultural treasures.
6. and associated UNESCO and ICOMOS ideology, with the goal of applying these broad principles to the conservation and preservation of Peshawar's traditional buildings.

Recommendations

1. Investigation, documenting, and recording

Before any operation, the status of the traditional building of Peshawar and their elements, as well as any materials used in restoration, should be meticulously documented in compliance with Article 16 of the Venice Charter 1964 and the ICOMOS 1995 standards for the Documentation of Monuments, Groups of Buildings, and Sites. All relevant paperwork, including representative samples of obsolete components or elements withdrawn from the building, and also knowledge regarding related traditional skills and technologies, should be gathered, documented, safely preserved, and made available as needed. The report should also contain precise reasoning for the materials and procedures used in the preservation process.

Any restoration should be preceded by a comprehensive and accurate analysis of the status and the causes of deterioration and structural collapse of the wooden construction and elements. Documented evidence, examination findings and evaluation, and, whenever needed, examinations of physical conditions and non-destructive testing methods can be used to diagnose the condition. Minor repair and emergency actions should not be hampered as a result of this.

2. **Supervision and repair**

A consistent monitoring and maintenance approach is critical for the preservation of old traditional buildings of Peshawar and their cultural relevance.

3. **Repair**

The major goal of conservation and preservation is to keep the cultural heritage's historical authenticity and integrity. As a result, any approach should be based on thorough research and evaluation. Issues should be handled in accordance with the appropriate conditions and demands, while also taking into account the aesthetic and historical significance, as well as the physical integrity of the heritage place or site (UNESCO 1988: article 24).

Any proposed conservation should, if possible, include the following elements:

- a. use traditional methods
- b. if technically viable, be reversible or
- c. At the very least, future preservation efforts should not be jeopardised or delayed if it becomes required and
- d. not obstruct future access to evidence included into the structure.

The traditional buildings of Peshawar's fabric should be manipulated as little as possible. In some cases, minimal intervention may need the total or partial deconstruction and eventual reassembly of decorative elements and components in order to enable for the repair of these significant structures.

In the process of renovations, the historic building as a whole can be evaluated; all materials, including structural parts, in-fill panels, climate, roofs, floors, doors and windows, and so on, should be given equal consideration. In general, much of the existing features as feasible should be conserved. Surface finishes such as stucco paint, fresco paint, plaster, wooden ornamentation and so on should also be protected. If surface finishes must be renewed or replaced, the original materials, processes, and textures should be replicated as closely as feasible.

The goal of regeneration is to safeguard these historic structures and their loadbearing function while also displaying its cultural values by enhancing the legibility of its cultural integrity, previous state, and style within the confines of existing heritage component findings, as stated in articles 9 through 13 of the Venice Charter. Removed components and other historic structure components should be documented, and distinctive specimens must be retained in archiving as part of the documentation.

4. **Replacement and refurbishment**

Replaced wood can be utilised in the repair of another historic structure with proper regard for significant historical and artistic features, and when it is an acceptable response to the need to replace decaying or damaged elements or their elements, or to the needs of

restoration. New elements or sections of components must be manufactured from the same types of wood as the elements being repaired, of the same or, if necessary, superior grading. If feasible, matching natural features should be included. The replaced timber's moisture content and some other physical qualities should be consistent with the current structure.

Where feasible, craftsmanship and building technique, including the use of dressing tools or machines, should match to those utilised initially. Where possible, nails and other secondary materials should be used to replicate the originals. If a part of an element is repaired, customary wooden joints should be used to join the new and old parts if acceptable and compatible with design specifications.

It must be acknowledged that new piece or portions of components will be recognisable from current ones. It is not desired to replicate the natural deterioration or deformation of the substituted elements or pieces. Suitable historical or well-tested contemporary procedures could be used to harmonize the coloration of the new and the old, with care taken to ensure that the surface of the wooden part is not harmed or degraded. New parts or components of sections must be carefully indicated, either by carving, burned markings into the wood, or other means, so that they'll be detected afterwards.

5. Historic Wood Reserves'

It should be encouraged to develop and conserve forest or woodland resources where adequate wood may be acquired for the conservation and restoration of historic timber constructions. Organizations in charge of the preservation and management of historic structures and places should create or support the creation of wood storage facilities suitable for such task.

6. Modern technologies and materials

Modern products and processes, such as epoxy resins and structural steel strengthening, should be selected and utilised with extreme precaution, unless in circumstances where the materials' durability and structural behaviour have also been effectively proven over a relatively extended period of time. Facilities including heating and fire detection and protection equipment should be placed with due consideration for the structure's or site's historic and architectural importance.

Chemical preservatives should be meticulously monitored, managed and must be used just when there is a significant advantage, at which public health and environmental protection will not be compromised, and when there is a high possibility of lengthy effectiveness.

7. Training and Education

A sustainable conservation and restoration policy must include the revival of values connected to the cultural importance of old traditional buildings of Peshawar by academic activities. Training programmes on the conservation, restoration, and preservation of old traditional buildings of Peshawar should be established and developed progressively. This training must be based on a systematic strategy that includes courses at the local, nationwide, regional, and worldwide levels, and should be integrated into the objectives of achieving sustainability. All relevant professions and trades involved in such projects, including architects, conservators, engineers, artisans, and site managers, should be addressed in the curriculum.

Figures



Figure.1. British Museum: Carved Corinthian pillars with rosette on spandrels, tablet of Buddhist architecture



Figure.2. Tri-arcades facades of the traditional buildings of Peshawar.



Figure.3. an Indian style of urn-shaped base ornamented with Acanthus leaf on the base of a pilaster



Figure.4. lattice work showing circle-shaped patterns containing stars in traditional building of Peshawar



Figure.5. Dahlia flower as a full-blown flower on the spandrel of an arch



Figure.6. David star and 8-point star shape ventilators



Figure. 7. Wooden ornamented haveli deteriorated due to neglect of the owner.



Figure.8. Rosettes on both sides of the spandrel floral scrolls spreading out towards both ends

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