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**PRESERVING THE HERITAGE: A CASE STUDY OF  
HANDICRAFTS OF SINDH (PAKISTAN)**

**TESI DI DOTTORATO DI FARAH DEEBA KHAN**

**Numero di matricola : 955339**

**Coordinatore del Dottorato**

**Ch.mo Prof. Rosella Mamoli Zorzi**

**Tutore del Dottorando**

**Ch.mo Prof. Gian Giuseppe Fillippi**



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Dedicated to my Parents

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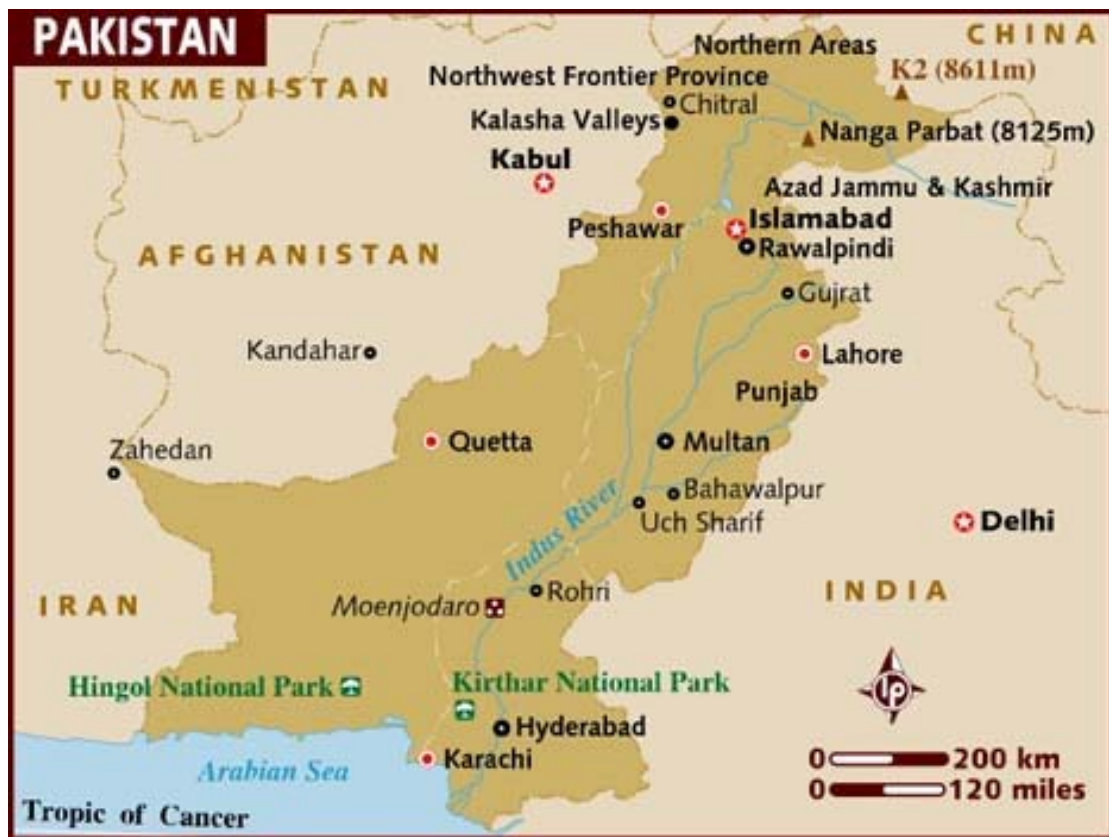
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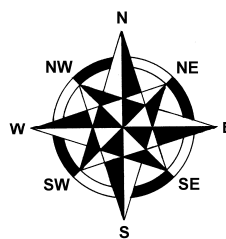
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Map of Pakistan. Estimated population 180 Million.



# Sindh



Map of Province of Sindh.

## ABSTRACT

Sindh is known the world over for its various handicrafts and arts. Sindh has a rich heritage of traditional handicraft that has evolved over the centuries. The work of Sindhi artisans was sold in ancient markets of Armenia, Baghdad, Basra, Istanbul, Cairo and Samarkand. The diverse Sindhi cultures, lifestyles, traditions as well as geographical conditions have influenced Sindhi art, and for over a century handicrafts have been a source of pride and a livelihood for the people of Sindh. ‘What we know of customs, beliefs and culture of man throughout centuries, has come to us from surviving works of arts and crafts which lie scattered like a crystal bowl thrown on marble. One has to collect particularly these stray pieces to study and to know how arts and crafts developed in a particular era.

Sindh has a rich heritage of traditional handicraft that has evolved over the centuries. Perhaps the most professed exposition of Sindhi culture is in the handicrafts of Hala, a town some 30 kilometres from Hyderabad. Hala’s artisans are manufacturing high quality and impressively priced wooden handicrafts, textiles, paintings, handmade paper products, blue pottery, etc. Lacquered wood works known as *Jandi*, painting on wood, tiles, and pottery known as *Kashi*, hand woven textiles including *Khadi*, *Susi*, and *Ajrak* are synonymous with Sindhi culture preserved in Hala’s handicraft. However, with the passage of time the quality of craftsmanship has been diminishing. The value chain has been infringed and the traditional sense of handicrafts has disappeared. This sector is in dire need of development and promotion in order to revive the culture and art of the Pakistani heritage.

Lack of patronage, impact of modern manufactures, change in tastes, paucity of raw materials, and failure to channel the traditional forms and designs into modern tastes have been the main factors contributing to the set back suffered by the



traditional arts and crafts. Conservatism of the artisan and craftsman to stick to the traditional forms and designs, however, need not be disparaged. It has been as much an asset as a liability. But for his tenacity, the traditional designs might have been entirely lost. While new designs and forms conforming to modern taste need to be introduced, the traditional design motif must be preserved. It is more important to improve the technique and method of production, rather than replace the traditional designs with the modern one.

Traditional crafts are endangered. The attention focused on craft today attests that we recognize this fact. Artisans struggle to earn wages that may not even equal those of manual labour. The social status of the artisan is still sadly low. Moreover, the social mobility of artisans is limited by chronically low levels of education; and the perceived irrelevance of the education available perpetuates the status quo. A spectrum of Government offices programmes and schemes, as well as non-government organizations are trying many ways to save traditional crafts. There are various forms of subsidy, bazaars and fairs organized for marketing, awards, and seminars to raise awareness and respect. But something is not working. To foster genuine sustainability, to restore the vitality of traditional craft, these issues must be addressed by artisans themselves.

Realising these needs of the cottage industry, *Aik Hunar, Aik Nagar (AHAN)* [**One Village, One Product**], a non-profit organization, is working towards removing barriers faced by poor artisans and craftsman in rural areas. Primary objective of this project is to alleviate poverty in rural and semi-urban areas of Pakistan by supporting rural micro and small enterprises engaged in non-farm products. Thus, AHAN aims at providing the much needed non traditional work opportunities in rural areas by adopting and indigenizing the One Village One Product concept. AHAN Project was formally initiated in July 2006 after its approval by the Planning Commission. During a short period of one year it has actively started work in all four provinces in

collaboration with Provincial / District Governments, RSPs, Microfinance Institutions and other stakeholders. The project has adopted two pronged approach. On the one hand it has started pilot projects in different clusters of artisans and poor producer groups while on the other hand it has also started research and analysis exercise to discover the potential in this area and to see how a long term strategy can be developed for creating sustainable income generation opportunities to a large segment of our society living in rural, semi urban and small cities and towns of Pakistan.

Artisans are surely a country's valuable asset. They work with devotion, and they must not be forced to walk away in search of greener pastures. The government must provide their craft a flourishing market, national as well as international. Bangladesh has made a village for the artisans where 4000 of them are living, working and exporting handicrafts, and prospering. I suggest that, we need a model like **Art and Craft Village** or *Dilli Haat* (see in last chapter) in Karachi also, which can boost up the economy of the artisans and respectively for country. Fairs and exhibition on yearly basis are good for the encouragement but not enough for the artisan's better financial condition. By having a model like *Dilli Haat* in a cosmopolitan city of Karachi, will provide a permanent place for the crafts persons to exhibit their masterpieces. It would be easier for the Sindhi artisans to come to Karachi to exhibit and gain profit, it may take time to establish , but sooner the better because already we are losing international market , so to revive and handicraft culture and promote our artisans locally and abroad government have to start working on this very project. The flood in 2010 has caused huge destruction to the houses and workshops of people, they are left with no money and no place to live, the only thing they have with them is there craft and with it they sure can live and built everything that, they have lost, but only if they get appropriate support and mostly financial help by the government and other organizations, which has been given at some levels but it is very small, it needed to be on big scale in order to save this intangible heritage.



# INTRODUCTION

The term handicraft means a useful or decorative object made by a workman who has direct control over the product during all stages of production. In the past handicrafts were also called minor arts perhaps for this very reason. The diversity of handicraft techniques and their products bring to our notice the variety of materials, trading practices and production organizations that have existed in various civilizations. Several aspects of specie handicrafts may be studied under the categories of ceramics, enamels, furniture, embroidery, glass ware, gold and silver work, inlay, lacquer, mosaics, stucco, carpets, textiles, etc. Though these products are basically the work of human hand, developments in science and technology have thrown considerable light on mechanical aids that are capable of being adopted for the production of such articles. The end product of any handicraft ought to reflect a combination of beauty and utility conjured by the telling expression "beautility".<sup>1</sup>

Sindh is known the world over for its various handicrafts and arts. Sindh has a rich heritage of traditional handicraft that has evolved over the centuries. The work of Sindhi artisans was sold in ancient markets of Armenia, Baghdad, Basra, Istanbul, Cairo and Samarkand.<sup>2</sup> The diverse Sindhi cultures, lifestyles, traditions as well as geographical conditions have influenced Sindhi art, and for over a century handicrafts have been a source of pride and a livelihood for the people of Sindh. 'What we know of customs, beliefs and culture of man throughout centuries, has come to us from surviving works of arts and crafts which lie scattered like a crystal bowl thrown on marble. One has to collect particularly these stray pieces to study and to know how arts and crafts developed in a particular era'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foreword by A.K. Brohi, Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts of Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, P.1

<sup>2</sup> Abraham, T.M, Handicrafts in India, Ranader Graphics Coloumbia, New Delhi, 1968, p.2

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.3

Before the advent of Islam, in the beginning of the 8th century A.C., Pakistan had been the meeting place of the Aryans, Achaemenians, Greeks, Shakas, Parthians and the Kushans each with their distinctive cultural outlook. And thus it became a centre of varied cultural diffusions.<sup>4</sup> It is, indeed, in Pakistan that the West met the East. Striking its roots deep into pre-Islamic traditions, the rich cultural possessions of Pakistan can easily be compared with those of the ancient Middle East.

In Islam from the very beginning handicrafts as well as arts have occupied a central place in the scheme of things. From the very start, greater significance was attached to two specifically powerful modes of aesthetic creation architecture and calligraphy, architecture for its usefulness and calligraphy for getting close to the spirit of the word of God contained in the Holy Quran. While architecture has been the most powerful visual symbol of Islamic culture, calligraphy has been a universal statement running across most of the objects of both arts and crafts and unifying their diverse expressions with a singular stamp of the faith.<sup>5</sup> Handicrafts had always served higher arts. In Islamic countries architects for instance hired the best craftsmen to build mosques, palaces, shrines and forts. God was the supreme creator and all artistic endeavours to create were touched with humility and a sense of the ephemeral. Life on this planet was transient but what survived were good deeds and beautiful works. The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said "so live this life as if you are going to live here forever, but think of death as if you are going to die tonight". Artists and craftsmen spent months in creating one little object of beauty and durability. The master-piece when born was not a replication of God's effort but a modest offering to His love of beauty. Some of the

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<sup>4</sup> Khan, Dr F.A, Architecture and Art Treasures in Pakistan, Elite Publishers Limited, Karachi, 1969, p.9

<sup>5</sup> Riazuddin Akther, History of Handicrafts :Pakistan and India, Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1988, P.3

finest objects in the realm of arts and crafts were dedicated to the service of religion and its Guardian.<sup>6</sup>

In Pakistan, handicrafts are rich and diverse. Every city, even village has its own handicrafts specialty ranging from fabric, material, embroidery, to jewellery, carving, mirror work and other handicraft items. Each colour, style, design and motif carries with it a unique symbol portraying the culture of that particular area and builds on people's indigenous skills. Handicrafts are characterized as products depicting a cultural trait of a specific region and time, produced by hand. It can also be defined as The product made with or without the use of tool, simple implements or implements operated directly by the craftsman, hand or foot, having traditional or artistic features driven from the geographical cultural peculiarities of craftsman, and generally on a small or cottage industry and not on mass production basis.<sup>7</sup>

Handicrafts of Pakistan are famous for their uniqueness, assortment and quality standards and therefore have established a mark within and outside the country. In more recent history, crafts in Pakistan were influenced by the arrival of Islam. They accentuate designs and styles dating from 5000 B.C. There are about eighty different kinds of handicrafts produced in Pakistan, the main ones are : leather goods, brass, copperware, marble products, wood crafts , textile and block printing fabrics, embroideries , traditional and contemporary jewellery, camel and snake skin products, pottery, hand knotted carpets and rugs, shell and bone products, costume dolls, cane products etc.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Karachi, 1978, p 12.

Handicrafts are now considered useful material which is suitable for the reconstruction of the aesthetic history of a civilisation.<sup>8</sup> Further, the utility of these products of human effort is a recognizable feature as different from fine arts such as painting, sculpture and music which are pursued for their own sake generally without any direct reference to utility.<sup>9</sup> In the post modern era, the modernist paradigm was challenged in the industrially advanced countries. Intellectuals, artists and professionals, re-examined and rediscovered the value of traditional modes in various fields. In the sub-continent craft traditions form a valuable material heritage, the history of arts and crafts goes back five thousand years to the Indus Valley civilization. Many craft traditions have survived to the present times, but many have vanished. Unfortunately, the study and research of traditional crafts like, pottery, handloom weaving etc., were not incorporated into the formal education on art and architecture, in professional colleges, and Art and Design Institutes. The historic divide between the formal art education and the traditional arts has created a hiatus between the two which needs to be examined. To be able to 'reclaim' the 'rich cultural heritage of the region', requires a familiarity with the profound meta physical, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic bases, which underlie this heritage. And the act of trying to understand a culture on its own grounds constitutes a re-examination of 'pre-established notions of western hegemony within art practice and discourse' refuses to understand artistic worlds other than it on their own grounds.<sup>10</sup>

However, with the passage of time the quality of craftsmanship has been diminishing. The value chain has been infringed and the traditional sense of handicrafts has disappeared. This sector is in dire need of development and promotion in order to revive the culture and art of the Pakistani heritage. Especially as the promotion of handicrafts addresses several needs of the society: to preserve culture, act as a source of income, upgrade the social status of women and help eliminate child labour by the participation of women in the different productive sectors.

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<sup>8</sup> Foreword by A.K. Brohi, Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts of Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, P.1

<sup>9</sup> Ibid , P. 1

<sup>10</sup> Riazuddin Akther, History of Handicrafts :Pakistan and India, Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1988, P.3

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The antiquity of the cultural heritage of Pakistan is as old as humanity itself.<sup>11</sup> The concept of intangible cultural heritage (**ICH**) emerged in the 1990s, as a counterpart to the World Heritage that focuses mainly on tangible aspects of culture. In 2001, UNSECO made a survey among States and NGOs to try to agree on a definition, and a Convention was adopted in 2003 for its protection.<sup>12</sup> Intangible culture is the counterpart of culture which is tangible or touchable, whereas intangible culture includes songs, music, drama and crafts, the other parts of culture that can be recorded but cannot be touched and interacted with, without a vehicle for the culture. These cultural vehicles are called "Human Treasures" by the UN.<sup>13</sup> According to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) – or living heritage – is the mainspring of humanity's cultural diversity and its maintenance a guarantee for continuing creativity. It is defined as follows:

Intangible Cultural Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated there with – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity,<sup>14</sup> thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The convention emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage is both traditional and living at the same time. That's one challenge regarding what should be preserved, and how that can best be done. The convention further emphasizes that intangible cultural heritage is

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<sup>11</sup> Khan, Dr F.A, Architecture and Art Treasures in Pakistan, Elite Publishers Limited, Karachi, 1969, p.9

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/culture>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid



often transmitted orally; and the primary depository of this heritage is the human mind, and collective groups, or the community, are central to the manifestation and sharing of this heritage. The importance of preservation efforts is seen in the fact that many elements of intangible cultural heritage are endangered due to the effects of globalization, poverty, and lack of appreciation for traditional ways and values.

There are five major domains into which the convention categorizes intangible heritage. One of these incorporates the traditional craftsmanship. Although strongly related to tangible heritage, the intention is to focus not just on the craft products, but also on the skills and knowledge that are crucial for their ongoing production. Preserving and saving objects, then, is not enough; the skills and knowledge needed to make them, and the conditions that encourage artisans to continue, are critical.<sup>15</sup>

The challenges to preservation of traditional craftsmanship are found in the modern world of mass production which can often provide goods at a lower cost than hand production, with craftspeople often unable to compete with more efficient industrial factories. Natural resources needed for a craft may become difficult to acquire. Changing social conditions or cultural practices may eliminate the need or desire for some types of crafts. Long apprenticeship periods may no longer be practical for young people who need to go to school.<sup>16</sup> Family trade secrets may disappear if there's no one in the family to continue a craft and sharing the knowledge with outsiders violates tradition. Preserving intangible heritage in this domain, then, includes not just preserving relevant objects, and the associated knowledge, but also supporting the continuing transmission of knowledge and skills of traditional crafts, with adaptation and creativity, as a living heritage.

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<sup>15</sup> Reedy, Chandra, The Library of Congress, 'Recent trends in preservation of intangible cultural heritage', Washington, 2008, courtesy [www.loc.gov/preservation](http://www.loc.gov/preservation)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage took place in Nairobi, Kenya from 15 to 19 November 2010, with roughly 450 participants of 24 States Parties to UNESCO. This was the first UNESCO meeting to be held in Africa; and its participating countries and NGOs showed their utmost interest and participation to the subject matters of this meeting. In this session, 32 NGOs were recommended to the General Assembly for accreditation, including the ICCN in Korea. Additionally, the Committee appointed 13 experts and 11 accredited NGOs as members of the Consultative Body for examination of nominations to the Urgent Safeguarding List in 2011; proposals for the register of Best Practices; and requests for international assistance greater than US\$25,000 considering regional equal distribution. For Asia and the Pacific region, Ms Adi Meretui Ratanabuabua, the principal cultural development officer at the Department of Culture and Heritage in Fiji and the Craft Revival Trust in India, were selected as members of the Consultative Body. Ms Ratanabuabua played a key role in Fiji's ratification of the Convention as well as the establishment and implementation of a national inventory system for Fiji's intangible cultural heritage. The Craft Revival Trust has extensive experience with textile revitalisation and promotion, and has served the Committee as an examiner of two nominations to the Urgent Safeguarding List in 2009 and 2010.

The Committee meeting was significant in relation to aspects of emphasising the role of NGOs for the safeguarding of ICH and making concrete decisions pertaining to financial support as a means to enhance their contribution efforts. Notably, a forum on the 'Contribution of Civil Society and NGOs to the Safeguarding of ICH and to the Rapprochement of Cultures', was held just prior to the Intergovernmental Committee Meeting, it supported necessary ideals and means to build capacity and strengthen partnerships among NGOs to further contribute efforts for the safeguarding of ICH. For the Convention's tenth anniversary, a few States Parties expressed their plans such as organising intangible cultural heritage festivals, and the government of the Republic of Korea expressed

its intention to organise an international ICH expert forum in the Asia-Pacific region in consultation with UNESCO.<sup>17</sup>

The protection of intangible cultural heritage has increased in prominence in recent years. Although there is currently a limited amount of literature that discusses the protection of cultural heritage specifically in post-disaster situations, this too is an area that is gaining attention. Natural disasters (such as earthquakes in India, Pakistan and Southeast Asia) and man-made disasters (such as the wars in Afghanistan and the Balkans) have destroyed and threatened much tangible and intangible cultural heritage (e.g. building typologies and skills, handicraft traditions, communal livelihoods and traditions, social relationships and ecological balances). Much of the literature and comments from heritage experts stress the inter-relationship between tangible and intangible culture. However they note that international and national protection efforts in disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction are still largely focused on preserving built culture, for example monuments.<sup>18</sup>

### **Living National Treasure OR Living Human Treasure**

It is a title awarded in several countries, and denotes a person or a group which is regarded as a national treasure while still alive. In 1950, the Government of Japan began to designate certain individuals or groups who embodied intangible national cultural values as living human treasures, just as places or things of great cultural value are designated as national treasures, thus becoming eligible for special protection and support. Some of the ancient protected crafts are pottery, music, handmade paper, dolls, and sword making. Several countries have followed suit with their own official programmes of recognition for intangible cultural values and the people who embody them, including South Korea, France, Thailand,

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<sup>17</sup> ICH Courier, Intangible Cultural Heritage for Asia and Pacific, Vol.6, Nairobi, Kenya, Nov 2010,

<sup>18</sup> Helpdesk Research Report: Intangible Heritage and Post-Disaster Protection, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, Beijing Normal University and DFID, 2008.

Philippines, and Romania. In Korea, the term Intangible National Treasure is used. UNESCO has set some guidelines for supporting such national living human treasure programmes. Pakistan should also get involve in these types of activities which are very encouraging and financially helpful for the artisans. It will make them feel important and they work with more interest and commitment.

## ***LOK VIRSA***

*Lok Virsa* (National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage) is a specialised cultural organisation charged with the mandate for research, collection, documentation and preservation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Pakistan. Being a federal institution, it has no branches elsewhere in Pakistan, yet it works through nongovernmental organisations, regional and local cultural societies and clubs. In order to document and preserve indigenous cultural traditions, arts, crafts, folklore and other aspects of Pakistani culture and to support and encourage artisans, artists and musicians, *Lok Virsa* undertook an initiative to establish a network of community-based organisations and regional cultural bodies all over Pakistan under on-going Pak-Norway cultural cooperation programme. Preference was given to the people belonging to poor and marginalized classes of our society.

*Lok Virsa* has established the first ever Pakistan National Museum of Ethnology, popularly known as the Heritage Museum, in Islamabad depicting and presenting the living cultural traditions and lifestyles of the people of Pakistan. The museum weaves together strands of the entire nation's distinctive culture, integrating images, sound and cultural landscapes from the most remote corners of the nation. It is the cornerstone of Pakistan's philosophy of unity in diversity. The museum traces the historical links and integrates the

cultural influences of Pakistan through different halls and passages. It has a covered area of 60,000ft<sup>2</sup> featuring exhibition halls making it the largest museum in Pakistan.

*Lok Virsa* has also established a Pakistan Monument Museum at Shakarparian hills, Islamabad, which depicts the birth, the socio-political history of Pakistan from 1937 to 1948 and the rationale for Pakistan. The purpose of the museum is to pay homage to all those who sacrificed their today for a better tomorrow and to project the cultural face of Pakistan to the world. This museum explains Pakistan in a historical perspective, not only to visiting foreigners, but also to Pakistanis and the future generations of Pakistanis as well. A Heritage Library is the most original creation in Pakistan which has been set up in the vicinity of the *Lok Virsa* complex. Housing more than 20,000 books, manuscripts, rare materials, etc. On Islamic heritage, Sufi writings, Pakistan's cultural heritage, and oral traditions, it is the only library in the country with this high of a concentration of books and journals pertaining to Pakistani folklore, ethnology, cultural anthropology, art history and folk arts & crafts.

The Research Centre of *Lok Virsa* encourages research in regional languages, folk literature, cultural history, arts, crafts and various aspects of folklore such as folk songs, seasonal songs, work songs, folk romances, folk tales, children games, legends, nursery rhymes, children tales, animal fables and legends attached to mountains, lakes, rivers, ruined castled, traditional festivals, superstitions & beliefs, customs & rituals, celebrations at birth, weddings & funerals, etc. *Lok Virsa* calls upon all master artisans, folk musicians, folk dancers & performers from the rural areas and remote regions of the country at the Artisans-at-work festival, popularly known as *Lok Mela*, each year. Over 100,000 eager participants come to visit this festival. *Lok Virsa* supports craftsmen and musicians by giving cash awards and proud recognition to them as **living national treasures**.

The major activities organised 2009, by *Lok Virsa* under this programme included a benefit show for master artisans from war affected areas of Swat valley; a benefit show to support an

outstanding folk singer from the tribal areas, *Zarsanga* and a benefit show to document and preserve the magnificent centuries old art of needle work (*Sui Dhaga*). In order to further strengthen the network that was set up by *Lok Virsa* two years ago, a meeting was held at Islamabad under the chairmanship of ex Executive Director, Mazhar-ul-Islam and attended by senior representatives from *Abbasin Arts Council*, Peshawar, *Idara-e-Saqafat-e-Balochistan* Quetta; *Saraiki Research Centre*, Multan; *Sindhi Adabi Sangat*, Thatta; Multan Arts Council, Multan; *Anjuman Taraq-e-Khowar*; Punjab Culture Centre; Institute of Balochistan Studies, Pashto Academy, Peshawar and Pakistan *Markazi Hindku* Board, Peshawar. The participants assured their full cooperation and assistance to *Lok Virsa* in executing the programme in a more affective and professional manner. Major projects being undertaken by *Lok Virsa* through this network include joint research on cultural heritage, holding folk and artisans-at-work festivals; art and craft exhibitions; joint publications; assistance for publishing an encyclopaedia on folklore; establishing children's folklore societies in remote regions, etc.

In the art education institutions in recent years, in order to create awareness, appreciation and a deeper understanding of the traditional arts and crafts, a series of workshops, lectures and seminars, were conducted. So that whatever direction the subsequent engagement with tradition may take, it would perhaps be a more informed one. The Fine Arts Department of the National college of Arts, in 2000 established an Masters degree of visual Art programme. It was a pioneering endeavor. Since it not only emphasized the development of intellectual growth and critical discourse, but also continuous links not only between art theory and art practice but also between the historical and the contemporary. The programme encourages students to interact with the wider environment of the city and specifically to forge links with traditional practitioners and artists who may fall outside of institutionalized art practice. Consequently the course examined pre-established notions of western hegemony within art practice and discourse. Thereby reclaiming and validating the rich cultural heritage of this region and its contribution to art practice the world over.

In my research, I have tried to explore the history of Handicrafts of Sindh, tracing from the Indus Valley Civilization period to recent times, in my research my emphasis would be on the preservation of this intangible heritage of Sindh, and also towards highlighting the conditions and problems of the artisans, who lack the support from the government, although there are many governmental and private organizations and NGOs that are working for the betterment and development of the handicrafts and crafts persons, still there is a huge need of financial support and international projection. Our NWFP women excelling in *Justi (Phulkari)* work while the men make brass utensils and silverware, the Baloch and Sindhi natives have their *Rallies* and *Ajraks*, pottery, wood craft and marble/onyx carvings, the Kashmiris specialise in shawls; Punjab boasts of blue pottery, items made from ivory and buffalo horn carvings, Khaddi, hand-knotted carpets and so on.<sup>19</sup> The list is endless. In the world of fashion, every handmade piece is called a masterpiece because it cannot be replicated.<sup>20</sup>

The *Lok Virsa* in Islamabad as, I have mentioned above is the most influential Government organization and since a decade, it has been giving a lot of attention to the different cultures and crafts of our country. Recently last year, it holds a **Sindh Festival**, which was immensely appreciated by the locals as well as the foreigners. About its detail I have discussed it in my thesis last chapter. Export Promotion Bureau is another organization which is working for the projection of Pakistan's handicrafts in the international market. But since last few years the projection of Pakistan in the outer world has damaged a lot, due to several devastating conditions, the whole attention is now diverted to other problems, which are one of the major reasons for the bad economy of the country and so is affecting the artisan class. The government remains largely indifferent to the promotion and upgradation of handicrafts and the craftsmen and the artisan community.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Editorial on NOS weekly, The News Daily, Pakistan, 2009 , courtesy [www.jang.com.pk/thenews/aug2009-weekly/nos-16-08-2009](http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/aug2009-weekly/nos-16-08-2009)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

Recently, the government of Pakistan has recognized the potential of this sector and has encouraged a public-private partnership with the Ministry of Industries and Production. It has led to the formation of a non-profit company, Aik Hunar Aik Nagar (AHAN) (loosely translated to mean 'one village one product' to facilitate rural small enterprises and help in the formation of artisan-producer cooperatives which will help in product development, quality control, marketing and technology up-grades. The mission of this venture is to create an enabling environment for poor producer groups, particularly targeting women and landless peasants, in order to make them self-sufficient wage earners.

## **SINDH FESTIVAL KARACHI**

Export promotion bureau (EPB) had organized the crafts fairs and exhibitions earlier for the projection and promotion of the culture and handicrafts of Pakistan. EPB has organized handicrafts exhibition separately for the provinces in order to be more precise and detail. Since last six years Sindh Festival is being held in Karachi by the Sindh Government with support of EPB. In 2007, I have the experience to attend this festival in Karachi; it was a very interesting and exploring opportunity for me, which also helped me a lot in my research. The main objective of the Sindh Festival is to give a chance to small entrepreneurs to generate income, and to bring the manufacturers and customers directly in contact with each other **'Rising to greater heights'** was the theme of the Sindh Festival, held at the Clifton Beach Park, Karachi. A large area around the Beach Park was reserved for the festival, which has become a regular annual feature. The sub-themes of the event were 'human trafficking,' 'women empowerment' and 'national interest over self-interest'.



Zoheb Hassan, Chief Coordinator of the Sindh Festival in collaboration with the government of Sindh, who is also a advisor to Sindh Government said while speaking to the press,` Sindh Festival has completed four years but it still needs time to mature. What is important is that despite all the hurdles and obstacles, I'm continuing with it due to the support of the government and other sponsors`. He further added,` The concept of the Sindh Festival would work anywhere in the world because the Indus Valley civilisation is one of the oldest and is studied at universities worldwide. But some ideas related to Sindhi culture such as *Sufism* are not promoted the way they should be and the Sindh Festival can help fill this gap. The idea of encouraging small industrialists of interior Sindh and helping them promoting their businesses can be instrumental in attracting foreign interest, but it will take some time. To create a better image of our province not only in Pakistan but worldwide. Some of my future plans in this regard are Health Expo and Discover Sindh., he said.

Rabiya Javeri, Managing Director, Sindh Tourism Development Corporation, supervised the '**cultural section**' of the festival, where Sindhi handicrafts including clay pots, *ajraks*, *rillis* and hand-embroidered Sindhi caps were on display. "Our culture is unique and it's our responsibility to preserve our ancestor's precious heritage and this event is an effort to make people realise the importance of our traditions and urge them to play their role in protecting our civilisation," said Javeri. "The main objective of Sindh Festival is to give a chance to small industries to generate income and this event is the best way to bring the manufacturers and customers directly in contact with each other so that the artists who spend their time and energy in making different goods can get their due profit, which is often lost when they sell their products through distributors," she added.

Notable personalities who have spent their time in the research regarding the arts and crafts of Pakistan and have become my source of inspiration towards this research are as follows;

- Begum Riazuddin Akhtar, who has written a detail on the history of handicrafts in her book, `History of Handicrafts of Pakistan and India.

- Ms Noorjehan Bilgrami, who is an artist, a textile designer, hold an art gallery named KOEL, in Karachi, she is also a author and her work are famous book on Ajrak called *Sindh-joAjrak*, Tana Bana; The woven Soul of Pakistan and most recently Handicrafts of Pakistan.
- Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana who is also written a profound material on Sindh, called *Sindhi Culture* and many more books related to the Sindhi Culture.
- Dr N.A. Baloch is also an authority over Sindh.

And many more historians, writers and journalists have written much about the handicrafts, artisans, conditions, and given suggestions. Many books have been written on this intangible heritage but still there was a need for an in depth study about Sindh handicraft industry and artisans.

I have carried my research in historical perspective, and also highlighting the problems of the artisans. My thesis deals in different chapters, in the first chapter, I have tried to explore the very first craft of people of Sindh, and tracing this craft from the time of the great civilization of the Indus to the recent times. In second chapter I have discussed the most living and used craft of our lives i.e the fabrics and textiles and trace its history from the Mohenjo-Daro period and the tremendous evolution of this craft in our times. In the third chapter, I have dealt with the most intricate and world known craft of the Indus, which is the Embroidery. In the following chapters , I have explore the beauty of the jewellery of Sindh, its making , and the different forms of it used by the Sindhi women since ages in their daily lives. Than later on I have discussed the craft of carpet weaving and wood craft of Sindh and their designs and work process respectively.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives of this research are

- To trace the history of the handicrafts of Sindh till recent times
- To explore the types of crafts and the artisans techniques
- To find out the problems faced by the artisans, and their financial worries
- To identify how both the quality and quantity of work are being affected by the economic slowdown in the country.
- To search that how much the government is paying attention to this intangible heritage
- To search about the private organizations and their work
- To suggest some ideas regarding the revival and promoting the crafts and more importantly drive their attention towards the critical conditions of the crafts persons.

# Chapter 1

## POTTERY MAKING

### HISTORICAL PRESPECTIVE

The tradition of ceramics and pottery in Pakistan incorporates two distinct trends pre-Islamic and Islamic. The pre-Islamic would roughly begin around 5000 B.C., and the Islamic influence commences about the 8th Century AD. The discovery of the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa civilizations of the Indus Valley is of significance, because it clearly indicates that the art of ceramics and painted pottery had attained a high degree of perfection about 2500 B.C. But later excavations at Kot Diji, a location in the same area, suggests that Pakistan's pottery-craft perhaps was even older, going further into 3000 B.C. The Kot Dijians wheeled light and thin pottery ware, and upon its pale surface painted peacocks and stylized fish-scale patterns. The Indus Valley people in contrast revelled in vibrant heavy pottery, black-on-red, with sophisticated patterns of intersecting circles, *pipal* leaves and antelopes.<sup>22</sup>

The earliest specimens of Islamic pottery can be traced to Bhambore, (772 A. D.) situated about 40 miles from Karachi. Unglazed pottery found in the first levels of this early Arab settlement is made of white fine textured clay, with reliefs of floral, geometric and *Kufic* inscriptions. The treatment of form and design is similar to the Syrian pottery of the Ummayed rulers (724-743 A. D.). In the later levels of the Bhambore excavations, the Persian (10<sup>th</sup>\_13th Century) influence is predominant, especially in the glazed blue and green

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<sup>22</sup> Mirza, Anis. Handicrafts of West Pakistan, published by west Pakistan Industrial Corporation, PIDC House, Karachi, 1964, p 16

storage jars, and the black, red and cream unglazed polychrome depicting bird and animal figures.<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to observe the prototypes in form and texture of these ancient wares, in the present day terracotta and stained folk pottery of Sind, Baluchistan and parts of the North-West. The present day village potter may appear to have walked straight out of the ages of ancient history, his tools – the wheel and the rod - may not have changed for ages, and some of the things produced by him may closely resemble thousands of years old prototypes.<sup>24</sup> The potter's craft grew out of the need to meet the communities demand for utensils for cooking and service, or for storing water and food grain.

The history of pottery making in the lower Indus Valley of Sind goes back to 2500 years B.C. and even beyond, as confirmed by the finds at Mohenjo-Daro, Amri and Bhanbhore.<sup>25</sup> The crafts of moulding clay into articles of utility and objects of art has a tradition in Sind spread over thousands of years. The art of pottery has an unchanged tradition. Pottery is one of the most diversified branches of Sindhi decorative art ordinary domestic vessels; ninety nine per cent were earthen ware. It was wheel made.<sup>26</sup> The use of foot-wheel or quick wheel has continued to the present day. The most important factor contributing to the survival and growth of the potter's craft is the variety of raw material available in Pakistan. The clay found around Hala, Sehwan, Multan, Gujarat, Sambrial and several other pottery centres possesses elasticity to a high degree. In Bahawalpur region the soil contains an appreciable quantity of glass-like sand. At all these places communities of potters have been developing their skills. As pieces of pottery found at Kulli, Zhob, Nal, Mohen-Jo-Daro, Harappa, Kot-Diji, Amri, Mardan, Charsadda and Taxila show the potter's craft grew out of need to meet the community's demand for utensils for cooking and services, or for storing water, food and grain.

The huge collection of relics from these sites preserved in the country's museums includes a wide variety of bowls and cups, pots and plates, pitchers and jars. Their different

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p 25

<sup>24</sup> . Rehman, I.A. Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Press Trust House, Karachi, 1980, P. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Baloch, Ghulam Rasool, Pottery making in Sind, The Traditional Arts and Crafts of Hyderabad Region, Mehran Arts Council, Hyderabad, 1966, P 23.

<sup>26</sup> . Marshall John, Excavation of MohenjoDaro, P. 287

sizes and extremely thin walls are a tribute to the skill of their creators. Not all of them were turned on the wheel. A number of potsherds found in northern Baluchistan and Amri, about 166 kilometres south of Mohenjo-Daro, were hand-made. The discovery of wheel-turned pottery in large quantities at the same sites, however, indicates that mass production of commonly used wares quickly followed the commissioning of the potter's wheel. Most of these potsherds are in buff, cream and pink colours with plain bands, parallel lines and geometric designs painted on them. The latter-day pieces also bear animal figures. About the same time the potter learnt to bake in his kiln toys for children animals, bullock carts, playthings in different shapes-and many objects of use by women as beauty aids-hairpins, boxes for keeping valuables, long needles for applying antimony powder to the eyes, etc.



Fig 1. The water vessels from Indus Valley Civilization, at the Sindhology Museum, Department of Sindhology, Sindh University, Jamshoro, Pakistan.



Fig 2. The red and black colours and geometrical and pipal leaves designs on the pottery from Indus Valley Civilization, at the Sindhology Museum, Department of Sindhology, Sindh University, Jamshoro, Pakistan.



Fig 3. In this figure the glazed pottery of Harrappa is shown at the Harappa Museum, Harappa, Pakistan.



Fig 4. The Harappa pottery from Harappa Museum, Pakistan.

The craftsmen in the ancient cities of the Indus Valley - Mohenjo-Daro and Harrapa had discovered the use of the wheel and control of fire. Man had discovered geometry and the sacred nature of abstract designing, and had evolved simple tools for the measurement of angles. Pottery vessels exhibit a great variety of shapes. Among them stands, beakers, bowls, goblets, dishes, basins, pans, saucers, pipkins, cups, ladles, jar stands, heaters and storage jars. Most of these were wheel-made, well-fired and plain. The earthenware dishes of Sind vary in form, technique and decoration alike. Glazed pottery was one of the arts of the people of Mohenjo-Daro. A vitreous glaze was used in a remarkable fashion upon a certain category of pottery found at Mohenjo-Daro at some of the earliest known levels. These were of a light grey ware covered with a dark purplish slip which had then been carefully burnished. To this glaze was applied before firing. A portion of both glaze and slip was removed with a comb to form straight or wavy lines as a decorative pattern. In the view of Wheeler: "Nothing like this



wave has yet been found in Mesopotamia, and it would appear to be a local and relatively short-lived invention, dating perhaps from the middle of the third millennium.<sup>27</sup>



Fig 5. The coloured bowls from Indus, at the Sindhology Museum, Department of Sindhology, Sindh University, Jamshoro, Pakistan.

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<sup>27</sup> Wheeler, Mortimer, *The Indus Civilization*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972, PP. 94 & 95.



Fig 6. Glazed pottery from the Indus Valley Civilization, Sindhology Museum, Department of Sindhology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.



Fig 7. Another shape of vessel for storing food or water, with red and black colour designs.

In the view of John Marshall: The multiplicity and variety of shapes of Indus pottery were peculiar to the Indus Valley and quite distinct from those of Persia and Mesopotamia. There is evidence enough that the craft of the potter had been practiced here since time immemorial.<sup>28</sup> Wheeler remarks: Most of the pottery is of pinkish ware with a bright red slip and decoration, where present, in black. Occasionally three colours – buff or pink, red and black appear, and, more rarely, white and green are used, apparently after firing.<sup>29</sup> The basic colour of Amri pottery was yellowish or pinkish-red and was decorated with colourful vegetable motifs. The potters ornamented their dishes with green and brown stylised floral designs and lines. The decoration of Amri pottery is geometrical and of a rough type, and

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<sup>28</sup> Marshall John, Excavation of MohenjoDaro and Harappa, Annual report of the Archaeological survey of India, 1923-24, p 38.

<sup>7</sup> Wheeler, Mortimer, The Indus Civilization, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972, PP. 94 & 95.

there are a few specimens of bichrome in which painting in black, red<sup>30</sup> and green are used, apparently after firing. More pictorial motifs included intersecting circles or derivative leaf-patterns, scales, chequers, lattice-work, kidney shaped designs, comb-patterns, wave patterns variegated by cross hatching, semi naturalistic forms, notably palms, pipal trees and rosette like floral units. Peacocks, sometimes, appear singly or in superimposed series, and fish are represented often with cross-hatched bodies.<sup>31</sup>



Fig 8. This piece of pottery from Indus Valley Civilization shows the depiction of fish.

Besides the red and black ware, which is peculiar to the Indus culture, the pottery of Mohenjo-Daro comprised a few specimens of other decorated wares, polychrome and glazed. Glazed ware is included because it is not only the earliest example of its kind to us in the ancient world but a singularly fine fabric with the appearance almost of an opaque cream coloured glass with purplish black markings inscribed in relief on marble carved with human and animal figures.<sup>32</sup> Although, this art, too, has been traced back to the Mohenjo-Daro civilization, it flowered between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries under the patronage of Muslim rulers and saints. The buildings of Thatta are conspicuous for the

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<sup>30</sup> . Ibid, P.45

<sup>31</sup> . Marshall John, Excavation of MohenjoDaro and Harappa, Annual report of the Archaeological survey of India, 1923-24, p 82

<sup>32</sup> . Idress, S. M. Siddiqui, Thatta, Islamabad, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Ministry of Education and scientific Research, Government of Pakistan, 1970, P. 7.

coloured enamel tiles which were lavishly used in the form of dados, panels and spandrels etc.<sup>33</sup>



Fig 9. Pottery from Bhambore excavations, image taken from newspaper daily Dawn, Karachi, Pakistan.

A large number of complete and semi complete pots of various shapes and sizes of unglazed plain pottery have been recovered from the Bhambore excavations. The unglazed painted pottery, particularly the thin-textured polychrome pottery, indicates a continuation of pre Islamic artistic tradition.<sup>34</sup> This art has continued to the present day, the Hala craftsmen break away from the monotonous colour of their environment by painting bright blue, yellow and golden flowers. In several parts of the country, especially around Hyderabad in Sind and in the Cholistan Bahawalpur region of Punjab, exceptionally thin and delicate pieces of unglazed pottery are produced on a large scale. The clay available near Ahmadpur Sharqia has the quality of turning, when fired, light brown or grey, and of acquiring a soft texture and an attractive gloss. At the same time, firing consolidates the clay to such an extent as to permit the baking of paper-thin (and this is what the local population calls this pottery- '*kaghazi*') pieces without their cracking. The long list of articles thus produced includes goblets, tumblers, dishes, boxes, covered cups, tea sets, long-necked decanters, ash trays, vases, lamp-stands, etc. They may be plain or decorated with drawings in white, red and

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<sup>33</sup>. Ibid, P .7

<sup>34</sup> . Khan.F.A, Bhambore Excavations, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Karachi, Govt of Pakistan, P. 41.

black or with fine lattice-work. Sometimes the handles fixed to cups and teapots are shaped like birds. The surface retains its shine and colours for long years.

The range of glazed earthenware has been growing under the pressure of demand for new and different types of vessels. In the northern areas '*qahwa*' and tea have been popular drinks for centuries. This has sustained a large-scale production of teapots and small cups without handles, similar to the traditional '*qahwa*' (tea) cups of the Central Asians. The addition of a latticed outer wall to bigger cups and tumblers was obviously necessitated by their use for drinking steaming hot '*qahwa*' (tea). The cold climate of the region enables the smokers to use their '*hookah*' vessels for much longer periods than is the case with unglazed earthen pots used in the Punjab and Sind. As a result the craft of producing glazed water-containers for '*hookahs*' has flourished in these parts. In the warmer climate of the Punjab plains and Sind, Wide-mouthed bowls are commonly liked because here people enjoy cold drinks throughout the long summers. A growing use of glazed earthenware as decoration pieces has also encouraged the potters to turn out wall-plates, flower vases, ash trays, lamp-stands, etc.



Fig 10. Tea or *qahwa* set with cups without handle influenced by the Central Asian pottery style, displayed at the Sindhology Museum, Sindh University, Jamshoro.

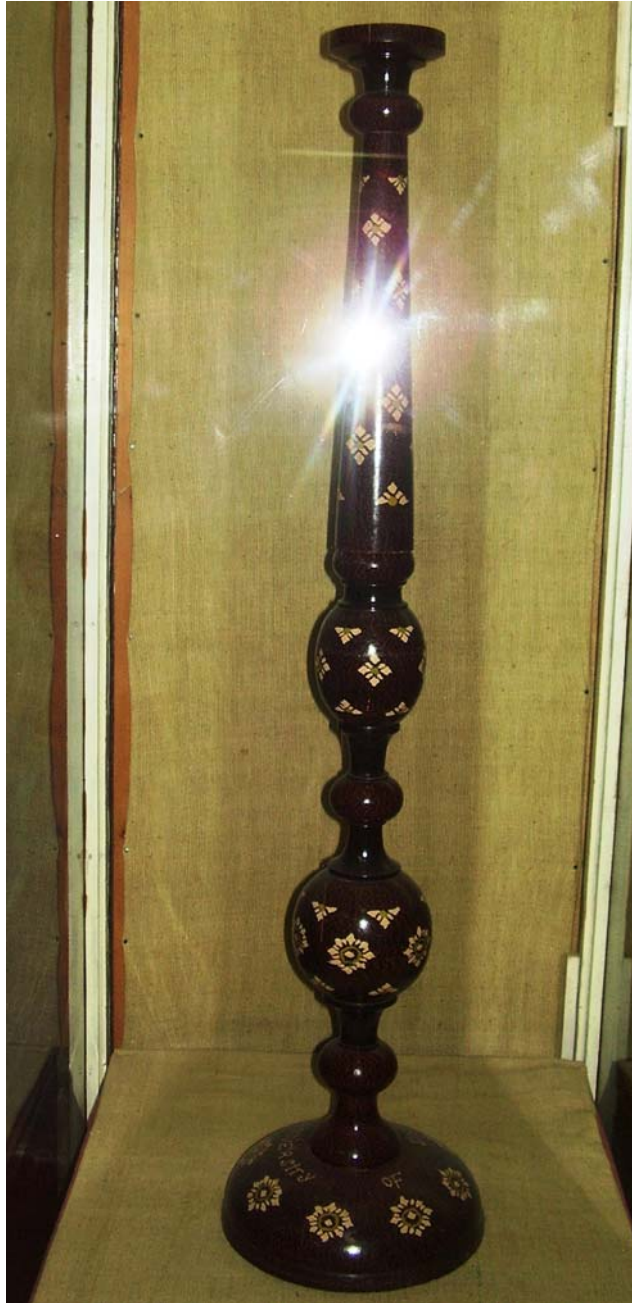


Fig 11. The famous *huqqa* or the smoking equipment of Sindh , at the Sindhology Museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.





Fig 12. Glazed pottery of Hala, Sindh, at a handicraft shop in Hyderabad, Pakistan.



Fig 13. Yellowish golden coloured pottery of Hala, Sindh, at a Handicraft shop in Hyderabad, Pakistan.

The variety of colours in which glazed pottery is available reflects the divergence in landscape presented by the different regions of Pakistan. The two most famous centres of glazed pottery, Hala and Multan, lie in sandy plains. At both places the favourite colours for glazing are blue and white-one liked for a soothing effect on people exposed to a burning sun, and the other favoured for its heat-repelling property. White-on-blue and blue-on-white, the painter draws floral patterns in endless variations a reminder of what he misses in the desert expanses around him.<sup>35</sup> The Hala craftsman also demonstrates an urge to break away from the monotonous colour of his environment by painting bright yellow and golden flowers. But as one travels northwards the colours of the glaze change. In the Gujarat area, with richly green fields all around, brown is extensively used for contrast and the craftsman provides relief through embossing. Further north, in the Peshawar Valley and Swat- Chitral region, craftsmen surrounded by majestic pines and vast flower fields decorate their earthenware with bold geometric patterns.



Fig 14. Glazed blue pottery of Hala, at a handicraft shop at Hala district of Sindh.

<sup>35</sup> . Rehman, I.A. Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Karachi, Export Promotion Bureau, Press Trust House, II Chundrigar Road, 1980,P 28.



fig 15. Another piece of beautiful floral designs with addition of green colour in Hala pottery, at Sindhology Museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

## METHOD AND TECHNIQUE

It is not known that, how and when the ways and means employed by the primitive people to give shapes to their vessels and the advanced technique known as the 'potter's wheel' called *chakku* in Sindhi language was invented. It is, however, certain that the tools and methods used by the primitive people were simple. "Fingers were used for shaping or building up vessels and a piece of mat or basket for giving initial support to a larger vase".<sup>36</sup> The advance came when the potter's wheel was invented by some great genius of his times. In Sind, the later revival in pottery making started with the advent of the Muslims in the 8th century A.C., as the two words for the kiln preserved by the Sindhi language are of Arabic and Persian origin: *A vi* is from Arabic *havi*, and *nihaeen* is from Persian *nihan* (the covered or concealed fire).

There are six stages involved in pottery making: (i) preparing the clay, (ii) moulding the articles on the wheel into basic forms, (iii) shaping the basic forms into complete forms by thumping, (iv) drying the pottery in the sun, (v) colouring and decorating, and (vi) baking in the kiln.

### Preparing the Clay

The potter first obtains alluvial clay of good quality from the beds of old channels, canal banks and selected field pits, and then powders it by beating it with stone pieces or wooden hammers. This powdered dust is called *būro*. After sifting and separating hard particles, it is mixed proportionately with sand, baked pottery powder called *kutt* or *rāo*, powdered dung of donkey or *lidde*, and powdered plant leaves called *satto* or *pannu*. The mixture of these raw materials is then tempered with water into *dharru* which is basic to moulding the vessels.

### Moulding the Vessels

From the prepared *dharru*, the potter takes out a lump called *teri* or *mara* and settles it on the *pirri* (centre) of the *chakku* or the wheel, which in its simplest form is a heavy disk pivoted on a central point called *addi* and is set rotating by the stick called *chakka-latthu*. As the wheel rotates, the potter starts building and shaping up the vessel into its basic form with the help of water, the process is called *muritu*.

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<sup>36</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol 18, p 328

## **Thumping**

After the vessel takes its basic form on the wheel, it is removed and set aside to dry a bit, which is called *vitaijannu*. When it is leather-hard, it is thumped with a wooden racket, called *pharahi*, and shaped into the final complete form. In case of some articles, the clay lump is simply pressed into a specific mould, and the potter's wheel is not used.

## **Drying**

After the objects are given the final shape, they are set in rows to dry in the sun for a necessary period.

## **Baking**

Arranging the wares in the kiln and burning the kiln is a technical process. If it is fired perfectly, the ware takes buff, drab, brown or red colours, while with imperfect firing the wares become smoked, gray or black spotted.

## **Colouring, Polishing and Decorating**

The colouring and decoration is usually done by the women folk. The Sindhi potter uses two colours, the reddish called *dhau* which is obtained from soft rock and the black which is called *rangu*. The surface of the vessel is first carefully polished. This process is called *gahtanu* then colouring is done employing varied decorative designs, both geometric and floral.

## THE VARIETY OF WARE

The wares made by the Sindhi potters fall into the following six main categories:

### (i) The Household Work

More than three dozen varieties, such as *dilo* or *gharro*; *mattu*, *ghughee* (drinking water vessels); *jandri* (for grinding); *ukhri* (for husking); *tar* or *meat* (for holding flour while grinding); *tassu* or *parirro* (flour jar); *tao* and *dangi* (baking pans); *kunno* (cooking pan); *paat*, *phelhi* or *patorri*, *tabakh*, *patorro*, *dhakoon* (plates, big and small); *piyali* or *jamni*, *challa*, *dalrro* (serving as cups or glasses); *dakhi* & *maati* or *chadi* (churning jar); *doho* (milking jar); *koonari* (a small shallow tub); *karo* (jar for washing hands); *'koondo* or *koondi* (bowls for grinding spices etc).

### (ii) Farm and Garden Ware.

*Kingaru* or *lata* and *kingiri* or *loti* (vessels of the wheel which lifts water); *naad* or *nadi* (a big vessel for storing water); *koonaru* (a large fodder bowl for the cattle).

### (iii) Building Ware

*Naro* or *nesaro* (rain drains on the roof top); *nali* (drainage pipes); hexagonal hollow bricks (for roof structure, an indigenous device for air conditioning which has gone out of use now).

### (iv) Smoking devices

*Chilm*, *huqqo*, *sulfi* and *bhungri*.

### (v) Music Wares.

*Nagaro* *Nagaro* consist of sizeable hemispherical baked earthen bowls.<sup>37</sup>

*ghaghar ghaghar* is simply a bigger jar, bulging at its sides having a short neck. *Ghaghar* are rhythm producing instruments, this instrument is almost played in every village.<sup>38</sup>

### *borrindo*

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<sup>37</sup> Information taken from SINDHOLOGY museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*



Fig 16. The musical drums called *nagaro*, at the Sindhology museum, University of Sindh,



Fig 17. The musical vessel called *ghaghar*, at the Sindhology Museum, University of Sindh.

**(vi) Toys**

A large variety of toys like animals, birds, bullock carts etc.



Fig 18. Toy cart terracotta for children in Indus Valley Civilization.

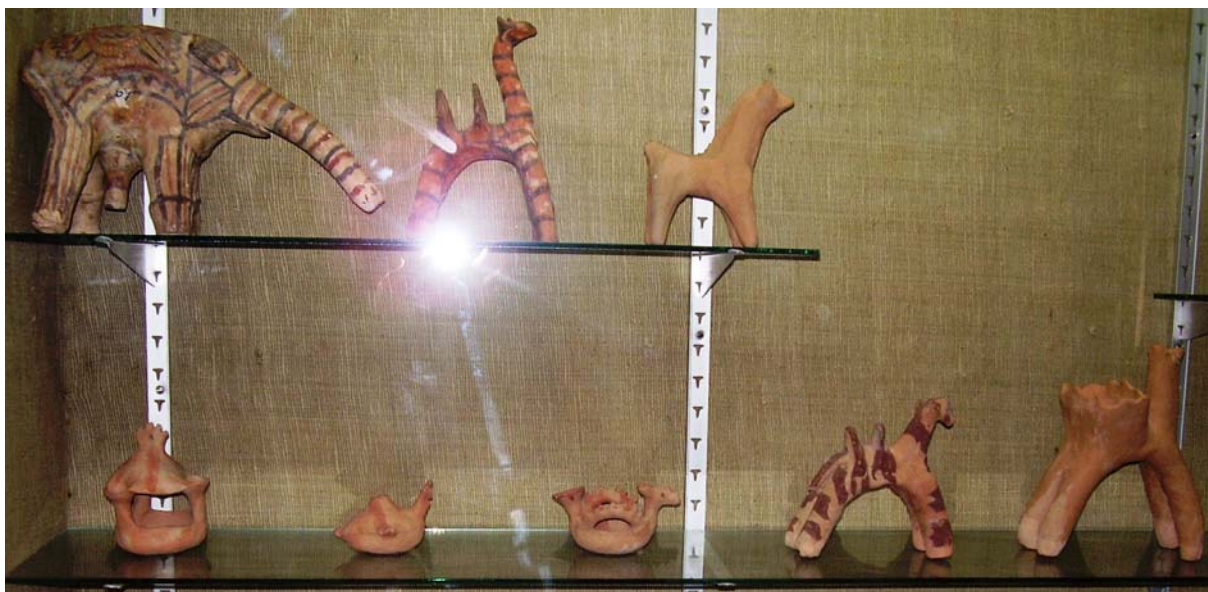


Fig 19. Terracotta toys for children from the Indus Valley Civilization, at the museum of Sindhology , Department of Sindhology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.





Fig 20. Portrait of a potter at Hala in Sindh, taken by Henry Cousens in 1896.

Portrait of potter, standing with Hala pottery work, at Hala near Matiari in Sind, Pakistan, taken by Henry Cousens in 1896, from the Archaeological Survey of India Collections: Western India 1894-96. This portrait shows the potter with examples of Hala pottery. Hala, thirty-five miles north of Haidarabad, was the main centre of pottery manufacture in Sind. Both tiles and ornamental pottery are produced at Hala. Due to their reputation some of the potters from Sind and Multan were brought to the Bombay School of Art to superintend. Cousens wrote in 'The Antiquities of Sind' of 1929, "The brickwork...is very superior, the bricks, or, at least, those on the surface, being made of the best pottery clay, perfectly formed and dense, having cleanly-cut sharp edges, and of a rich dark red. The enameled bricks are glazed, upon their outer surfaces, in light and dark blue and white...The coloured dadoes are an especially fine feature...A single design, without duplication, will sometimes cover several

square yards of surface, then, again, some tiles are as small as half an inch square, and over a hundred are used in a square foot, of mixed sizes, forming a perfect mosaic..."<sup>39</sup>

Hala's pottery is famous for its exquisite designs and motifs. It is a major art form that has survived centuries and is rooted in the cultural ethos of the 5000 years old Indus Valley civilization. During my visit to Hala in Sindh, I managed to take some pictures of the potters, during their process of pottery making, it was worth experience for me to see the potters, who have every right to be called artists, I also talked and took some information about their art and financial conditions, and if they get enough wages out of it and most importantly if they receive any kind of support from the government or any other national or international organizations.



Fig 21. The potter was preparing the mix.

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<sup>39</sup> . Cousens, Henry, The Antiquities of Sind, 1929.



Fig 22. The creativity and skills of the potters.



Fig 23. Another glimpse of the potter's skill.



Fig 24. The beautiful vases are now ready to put in oven.



Fig 25. The furnace for baking the pottery at a workshop in Hala.



Fig 26. A small pottery shop at Hala, with utensils of daily use.



Fig 27. A craftsman decorating the pottery with beads and stars, this is mainly for decorative purpose.



Fig 28. Glazed plates of Hala, at Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jmashoro



Fig 29. Another glazed pottery flask, with brown and yellow shades, at Sindhology museum.



Fig 30. Glazed tile work of Hala, shown in the Sindh Museum at Hyderabad.



## GLAZED POTTERY AND TILE DECORATION

At present, Hala is the principal home of the glazed tile industry. Locally, the tile work is called '*kashi*' which is originally a Persian word. Ibn Battuta has called it '*kashani*' which took its name from the glazed pottery work of Kashan in Persia. Kashan was 'a well known Pottery town and the products of its kilns reveal a distinctive style handed down through several generations of potters whose names are known.'<sup>40</sup>

The origin of tile decoration is attributed either to Iran or to Central Asia. The magnificent tile work of hundreds of mosques, shrines, fortresses and tombs during the Muslim period has placed this region (Sind) among those possessing the richest treasure in this field. The glazed tiles of Sind were largely influenced by the traditions surviving in Persia from the ancient civilizations of Babylon and Nineveh. The local traditions ascribing them to Chinese workmen reported to have migrated to Sind at a very early period can hardly be taken seriously, since the workmanship has more Persian than Chinese character."<sup>41</sup> The influence of Iranian craftsmen, however, does not show an overwhelming effect, and the tiles of Thatta have their own individual characteristics. The varied ways, in which they have been used, the patterns of decoration, the textile and the colour schemes are distinctively original and differ from the tile-work of Multan, Uch, Lahore, Bedar and Delhi.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps the most striking transformation of clay into objects of undying beauty is due to the tile-maker's craft. Although this art, too, has been traced back to the Mohenjo Daro period, it flowered between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries under the patronage of Muslim rulers and saints. The magnificent tile work done on hundreds of mosques, shrines, fortresses and tombs during this period has placed Pakistan among the countries possessing the richest treasures in this field. Although glazed tiles were used in Multan in the twelfth (the tomb of Shah Yusuf Gardezi) and the thirteenth (tombs of Shamsuddin Tabrizi and Bahaul Haq) centuries, those created for the mausoleum of Rukn-i-Alam in the fourteenth century furnish the best examples of Multan tiles.<sup>43</sup> Sir John Marshall described this tomb as

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<sup>40</sup> Arberrry, Arthur John, *The Legacy of Persia*, Oxford Clarendon Press, Iran, 1963, p

<sup>41</sup> . Siddiqui, M, Idrees, Thatta, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1970, P 8.

<sup>42</sup> . Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> . Rehman, I.A. *Arts and Crafts of Pakistan*, Karachi, Export Promotion Bureau, Press Trust House, II Chundrigar Road, 1980,P 28.

"one of the most splendid memorials ever erected in honour of the dead", he was moved no less by the beauty of its tiles, than the overall design of the building.<sup>44</sup>



Fig 31. The mausoleum of Shah-Rukne Alam at Multan, shows the creative tile work.

The craft reached its zenith in Sind (Thatta and Hala) and Punjab (Lahore) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Sind the earliest example of tile-work is found in the Dabgir Mosque (1588) at Thatta.<sup>45</sup> The floral patterns and scrolls in glazed tiles in the mausoleum of

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<sup>44</sup> . Marshall John, Excavation of MohenjoDaro and Harappa, Annual report of the Archaeological survey of India, 1923-24, P 76.

<sup>45</sup> . Siddiqui, M, Idrees, Thatta, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1970, P 7.

Jani Beg Turkhan (1601) at Makli are specimens of superb craftsmanship.<sup>46</sup> Other monuments in Sind famous for their tile work are the shrine of Shahbaz Qalandar at Sehwan, the Shahjehan Mosque at Thatta, the grand mosque at Khudabad, the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhit, the shrine of Shah Inayat at Jhok, the mausoleum of the Makhdoom at Hala, and the tombs of the Kalhora and Talpur rulers. The most impressive variety of tile work, not only in Sind but in the whole of the subcontinent, is found at the Shahjehan Mosque in Thatta, built in 1644-1647. Both the main chambers of the mosque are entirely covered with white and blue tiles. The spandrels of the main arches are decorated with floral patterns, and there are many panels of geometric designs. The domes have been covered with a mosaic of radiating blue and white tiles that give them the appearance of starry vaults.<sup>47</sup>



Fig 32. Beautiful tile work on the Shajehan Mosque at Thatta, Sindh.

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<sup>46</sup> . Ibid.  
<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Thatta tiles are generally of two colours, white and blue, the latter varying from a dark purplish to a light greenish or turquoise blue.<sup>48</sup> Both colours are transparent and acquire an effect of depth and richness by their treatment. Yellow was also used as a foil to emphasise the brilliance of blues.<sup>49</sup> This has been continued by artisans to the present day. The Persian and Central Asian influence is no doubt evident in the shape and colours of the tiles but innovations dictated by local needs and tastes have given them features that easily distinguish them from Persian tiles. Even within Pakistan different materials were used for tiles in Sind and Punjab and the surfaces of the tiles show marked variations. The Thatta tiles were made of hard-baked terracotta while the tiles used in Lahore were made of a composition of siliceous sand, lime, etc. In Thatta the tiles were applied flat to the buildings, to give an even surface, but in Multan the main tile patterns are in relief, in some places half an inch above the background. While in Sind tiles were arranged in geometric designs, in Lahore the floral patterns dominated and animal figures were not uncommon.<sup>50</sup>

## MOTIFS AND DESIGNS

The motifs and designs on all traditional pottery, glazed and unglazed, are derived from both nature and art traditions. Sunflower, pipal leaf, rose leaf, fish, duck, camels, arabesque, and geometric designs are among the most common motifs. Since a good number of tiles are used in mosques and graveyards, the art of inscribing and embossing verses from the holy Quran and other appropriate sayings has continued to flourish. In most cases the work of painting and drawing is done by specialists without the help of paper plans and until one saw them working it would be difficult to believe that precision and uniformity of design could be maintained without the use of models and measurement tools. The intricate nature of this work can be appreciated properly if one remembers that sometimes a tile design, covering several metres of surface, is made up of hundreds of tile-pieces which may be no bigger than half an inch square.

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<sup>48</sup> . Siddiqui, M, Idrees, Thatta, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, 1970, P 8.

<sup>49</sup> . Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> . Ghafur, M. A, The Calligraphers of Thatta, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, 1978, P 34.



Fig33.Glazed pottery shop at Hyderabad, Sindh,

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 the *Lok Virsa* National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, documented this art under the title of "Pottery Through the Ages" in a three dimensional diorama at Heritage Museum. The display presents pottery artefacts having traditional motifs belonging to the ancient civilizations of Mohenjo-Daro, Harrapa, Gandhara and the Islamic period of 710 AD. A comparison of excavated as well newly made pottery items has also been shown in the display. Here the visitors can also see ceramic with beautifully designed motifs having Iranian and Turkish influences. Explaining the history of pottery, *Lok Virsa* Executive Director Khalid Javaid said pottery meant any article made of clay or plastic mixture of clay and other substances hardened by the application of fire. "It is a tribute to aesthetic qualities of man. Perhaps no other item of manufactured art has played such an important role in the life of mankind on earth,"<sup>51</sup> Javaid said, adding that for its domestic and social utility, pottery was unsurpassed by any other article of human use, especially in the very early periods.<sup>52</sup>

Talking about pottery methods, he said all pottery, be it ancient or modern, was made by the simplest of methods. "The clay dug from earth is prepared by beating and kneading with the hands, feet or simple mallets of stone or wood."<sup>53</sup> In ancient pottery, the clay was well tempered with water, and invariably used without any additional material, he said. He said the potter's wheel was a comparatively late invention arrived at its present form independently by many races of men. "It was in Egypt apparently, where a disk was made that could be rotated by foot. This gave the potter an opportunity to use both hands to mould clay. In the 17th century, the wheel was spun by means of a cord working over a pulley and in the 19th century, steam-driven wheel was introduced," he said. "The pre-Islamic period began around 500 BC and Islamic influence on pottery commenced in the 8th century AD. Contemporary pottery in Pakistan is therefore a result of fusion of these two traditions," he said. The discovery of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa civilization of Indus Valley was of great significance, as it clearly indicated that the art of pottery had attained a high degree of perfection about 2500 BC.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> . Javed, Khalid, Director of Lok Virsa, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, Pottery Through Ages, Daily Times, Islamabad, 26 January, 2010.

<sup>52</sup> . Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> . Ibid

<sup>54</sup> . Ibid.

## Chapter 2

# TEXTILES AND FABRICS

The famous art of Sind is spinning and weaving textile. Very few countries have as rich and dynamic a costume tradition as does Sind. In this province, more than 50 ethnic groups maintain their traditional dresses and activities, the roots of which extend 5000 years into the past, to the Indus Valley Civilization. Today's textiles reflect the unique mixture of races and cultures that make up Sind's cultural identity. The existence of the art of cloth weaving and dyeing in the Indus Valley has been traced back to five thousand years, and has been improved by the discovery of spindle whorls, bobbins, and a dyer's workshop at Mohenjo-Daro.<sup>55</sup> Over a large part of the ancient world, cloth woven in Sind or shipped from ports on the Indus was rated as the finest.<sup>56</sup> The oldest fragment found at Mohenjo-Daro has sixty ends and twenty picks per inch and is made of thirty four count threads. It was, because of its degree of refinement that cotton cloth was described in terms derived from Sindhi, Sindhu and Sinda.<sup>57</sup> The evidence of sheep breeding and large spindle whorls indicates that wool was also spun and woven at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

According to Herodotus, Sindhian cloth was widely used in Egypt and the Mediterranean region around 500 B.C. Extremely fine muslins from Sind were worn by Roman Emperors from Augustus to Hadrian.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the seventh century ruler of Mesopotamia wore Sindhian clothes. A ninth century Arab traveller, Suleman Tajir observed: 'the cotton cloth of

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<sup>55</sup> . Marshall, John, Excavation of Mohenjo-daro, p. 44

<sup>56</sup> . Ibid

<sup>57</sup> . Threadlines Pakistan, Ministry of Industries, Karachi, Government of Pakistan, 1977, P. 9.

Also see: Nabi Buksh Qazi, "Sinda", an article published in Journal of the Institute of Sindhology, University of Sind, Jamshoro, 1970, P 31-36.

Also see: Mariwalla, History of Commerce of Sind, Jamshoro, Institute of Sindhology, University of Sind, Jamshoro, 1981, P. 14-15.

Also see: Ardian Duarte, The crafts and textiles of Sind and Balochistan, Institute of Sindhology, University of Sind, Jamshoro, 1982, P. 13.

<sup>58</sup> . Kennedy, J. *The Early Commerce of Babylon with India*, an article published in J.R.A.C., of Great Britain and Ireland, 1898, P. 252.

Also see: Threadlines Pakistan, P. 11 and 51

this country (Sind) is so nice that it can easily pass through a finger ring'.<sup>59</sup> As stated, the production of textiles in Sind had its roots in the civilization of Mohenjo-Daro. The craftsmen have always created new patterns or borrowed patterns from the art of other nations. Sindhi artists must have borrowed new' patterns from Islamic art and introduced them in textile and printing patterns.

The tradition continued during the middle ages and received a tremendous boost with new technological developments and the introduction of new motifs under Muslim rule. European traders in the sixteenth century found that Sind weavers were producing not only high quality cotton textiles but also silk fabrics woven with fibre imported from Kashmir and Khorasan. Rohri was famous for its silk cloth called "*Daryai*". By the beginning of the seventeenth century, merchants from Portugal, the Netherlands and England had begun to buy cloth in a number of Sind towns namely, Thatta, Nasarpur, Hala, Gambat, Rohri and Sehwan. The East India Company opened an office in Thatta in 1635, and afterwards set up branches in Sehwan and Nasarpur. According to the agents of the Company there were three thousand families of weavers in Thatta,<sup>60</sup> most of whom made *khes'*, which was exported to Iran, Iraq and Turkey.<sup>61</sup> Nasarpur had over a thousand families of weavers and the towns were known for excellent '*Bafta*' cloth. It is historically true that this art continued during the early days of British rule. This art was very common in cities of Sind. Sehwan was noted for being a weaving centre. About 1000 households of weavers lived in Sehwan and made a very good variety of *baftas*.<sup>62</sup>

Thatta was also a big centre of weaving during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. About 3000 families of weavers lived there.<sup>63</sup> Among the varieties of cloth mentioned by the British traders are: '*bafta*', '*chintz*', '*malmal*', '*sussi*'; '*gharbi*', '*tusser*', '*ajrak*', '*lungi*', '*geegam*', '*khes*', and '*chunni*'. Several other accounts also tell of the scale of Sind's hand loom industry in the first half of the seventeenth century. A Portuguese officer, Antonio Boccaro, noted that in 1631 there were thirty thousand looms in Thatta alone.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> . Ibid

<sup>60</sup> . Withington, Early Travels in India, Ed. Foster, 1921, PP. 217 &: 218.

<sup>61</sup> . Aitken, W.H., Gazetteer of the Province of Sind, Karachi, American Press, 1907, P. 388.  
Also see: Hamilton A., New Accounts of the East India in Pakistan's Travels, Vol: VIII, PP. 304-9.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, P.309

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p 9.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p 10.



However, several factors contributed to a sharp fall in Sind's cloth output in the last decades of the century. The concentration of European traders on the Malabar and Bengal coasts led to the rise of Gujarat and Bengal as the leading cloth producing and exporting regions in the subcontinent. The silting of the Indus affected navigation and commerce. Tavernier wrote in 1667 that "the commerce of Thatta, which formerly was considerable, is decreasing rapidly, because the entrance to the river becomes worse from day to day ..." The great plague took a heavy toll of life in Sind.<sup>65</sup> Hamilton, who visited the region in 1696, wrote that in Thatta alone "above 80,000 died of it that manufactured cotton and silk."<sup>66</sup> But while Sind may have lost some of its value to the European traders, the art of weaving was kept alive by a large community. According to Pottinger, Thatta had, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, forty thousand "weavers of calico lungees."<sup>67</sup> "Shah-jo- Risalo" of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (eighteenth century) tells us that womenfolk used to make thread in every home and got it woven into cloth.<sup>68</sup>

In other regions of Pakistan also, the textile crafts have a tradition that has continued to grow through the centuries. Apart from references to looms and shuttles, and weaving by women in the Rigveda and Mahabharata, records of laws governing weavers and spinners during the Mauryan rule point to a well established textile industry in the Frontier and Punjab three hundred years before Christ. Woollen fabrics made in this part were exported to Syria and Egypt in the early decades of the Christian era. Gold brocades, woollen shawls, and embroidered muslins were produced in this region before the Muslim conquest but all these crafts rapidly progressed under the Sultans.

During the Mughal period, Lahore grew into a leading centre of textile production. Abul Fazl has noted that Akbar was particularly enthusiastic about the weavers' shops (in the imperial '*karkhanas*'), that owing to Akbar's interest "the intelligent workmen of this country soon improved",<sup>69</sup> and that the "workshops began to furnish all those stuffs which are made in other countries." The craftsmen employed at the workshops in Lahore made a name for

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<sup>65</sup> Tavernier, Jean, Baptiste, Travels in India, Translated from the original French Edition of 1676, p 59.

<sup>66</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Pottinger, Henry, Travels in Balochistan and Sindh, General Publishers Limited, 2009, p 78.

<sup>68</sup> Bhitai, Shah Abdul Latif, Shah Jo Risalo, Poetry of Famous Sindhi poet of 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>69</sup> Fazl, Abul, translated by Blochmann, Calcutta, 1927, p 56.

themselves with fine silks, brocades and velvets. Twenty varieties of woollen cloth were exported from Lahore to different parts of the subcontinent and abroad. For weaving shawls alone there were over one thousand '*karkhanas*'. There is evidence to believe that it was mainly due to a sizable textile production that Lahore, Thatta, Lahari Sunder, Sehwan and Karachi were counted among the large industrial and commercial centres in the subcontinent in the 16th-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The growth of textile arts throughout this long period was obviously influenced by the availability of raw materials, the nature of the landscape, the climate, and the occupation of the majority of the population, the native sense of colour, beliefs and customs, all of which went into the making of people's culture. Since cotton was grown in abundance in the plains of the Punjab and Sind and the climate dictated the use of light-weight apparel, cotton textiles accounted for the bulk of cloth production. In the northern regions colder climate necessitated the use of woollen fabrics. The climate also determined the choice of colours and launched the cloth - weavers on a course which led them to produce '*malmal khas*'. Similarly, patterns and motifs were derived from nature. The growth of new aesthetic traditions fostered the evolution of fashions which laid down what colours were to be worn at what age, and in which seasons. Economic constraints on most of the people forced them to choose such varieties of cloth as would last for long periods and this consideration, coupled with the drabness of environment in the sandy plains and shortage of water, made the cloth-weaver and the wearer go in for bright colour schemes that would reflect the joy of living at all times and in all seasons.

The textile arts owed their glory to the industrious workers who disciplined their eyes and fingers to keep pace with their robust imagination and produce fabrics of such indescribable beauty that poets found it difficult to adequately name them. The description of some of the finer varieties of cloth as '*aab-e-rawan*' (running water), '*shabnam*' (evening dew) and '*baft hawa*' (woven air) provides only a measure of the amount of labour and art that went into the making of these textiles.<sup>70</sup> The high level of these early craftsmen's skill can be appreciated, if one remembers the fact that for many centuries they spun yarn on the spindle-usually a rod with a bulge of clay at the end.

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<sup>70</sup> . Yaku pino , Feliccia , Threadlines Pakistan, Ministry of Industries, Karachi, Government of Pakistan, 1977, P. 53.

Although it has been generally contended that the spinning wheel was in use in the Indus Valley before the Christian era, recent researches have thrown up a credible theory that the '*charkha*' was introduced here by the Muslims who came to the subcontinent during the Ghori rule.<sup>71</sup> Even then the yarn used for the production of finest muslins was spun on the spindle. The best spinners were women aged between 18 and 30, as after 40 their eyesight was not good enough, to spin fine threads. Often when they sat down to spin fine thread they placed a vessel full of water in front of them so as to be able to see the thread more distinctly against the background of water and thus reduce the strain on their eyes.

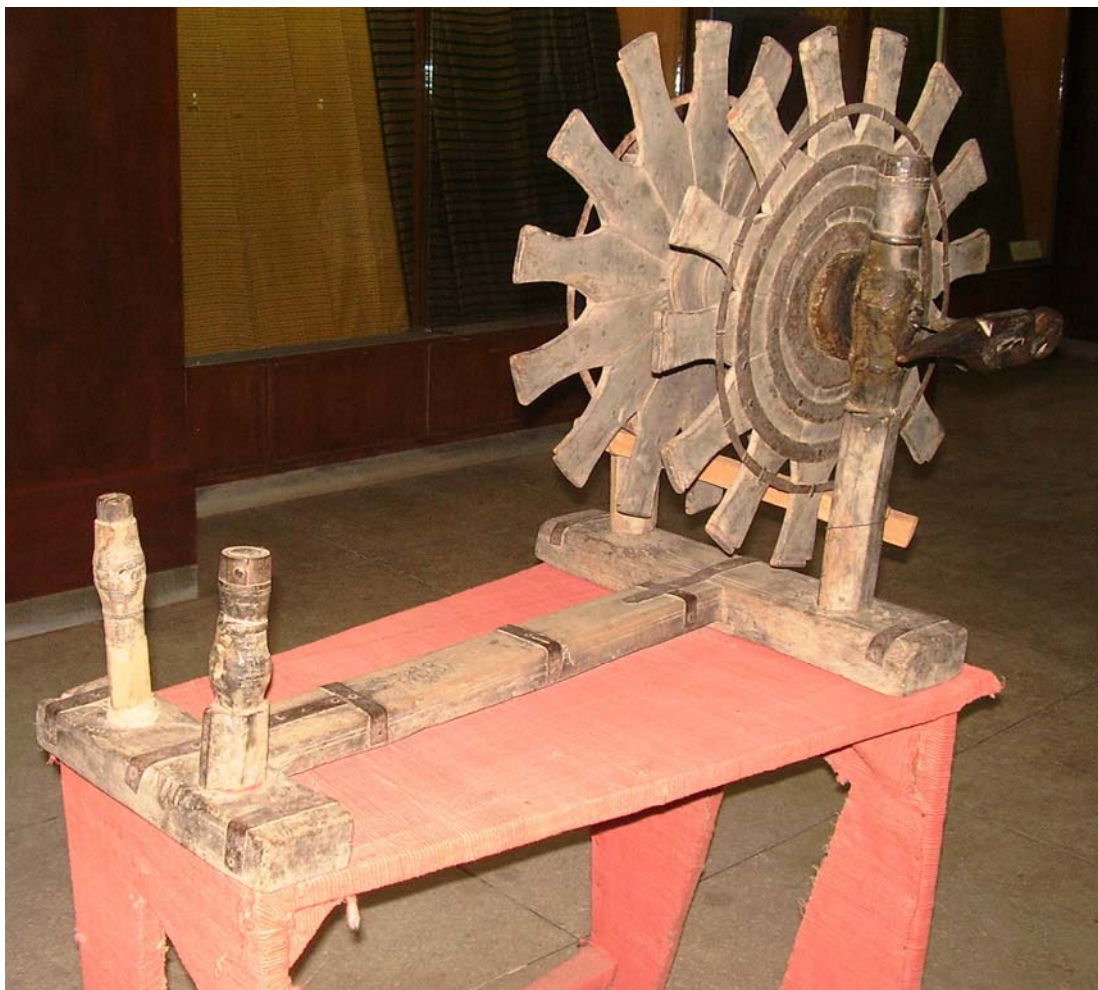


Fig 34. The famous ancient spindle called *charkha* of Sindh, at the Sindhology museum, Sindh, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p 53

The textile crafts suffered the most during the British period as their destruction was the principal plank of the colonial ruler's economic strategy. Mercifully, they did not wholly succeed and though large numbers in towns took to wearing imported cloth and the community of weavers was ruined, the hardy rural folk kept the native textile traditions alive.<sup>72</sup> In the first two decades of independence, the weavers were subjected to unequal competition from power-loom operators, and the production of handloom cloth fell still further. However, during the last decade the success of the craftsmen in diversifying their product and an improvement in public awareness of an interest in hand-woven cloth have led to a revival of the craft.

A significant indication of this upswing in hand-loom production is the emergence of medium-sized units where as many as five hundred weavers are employed and enterprising men are trying to evolve designs and colour schemes to suit the needs and tastes of overseas buyers. At the same time the village 'koli' is pursuing its traditional craft, working on primitive equipment and without the assistance of hired labour. The methods of production and the implements are therefore extremely diverse. Thousands of weavers have workshops in their poor dwellings and their looms are of the most primitive type while the more resourceful and better organised units have acquired modern equipment.

However, most of the weavers now depend on machines:-spinning. Mill-made yarn in different counts is available to all categories of weavers. Yet, the '*charkha*' has not gone out of use altogether. For a variety of reasons a considerable section of the population insists on wearing cloth made of home-spun fibres. In several parts of the Punjab and Frontier cotton and wool is therefore still spun on the '*charkha*'. Nor has the spindle become obsolete. For preparing thicker yarns it is employed in the rural areas all over the country. Most of the weavers work on the ancient pit loom. The unwoven warp is wound in a big hank and released 'when needed, and the completed yardage is rolled on the front beam. Bamboo harnesses with string heddles swing from a pulley system. Generally a hand-propelled shuttle is used but an increasing number of weavers has introduced a jacquard system which is

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p 68

manually manipulated with the treadles. Where complex patterns are to be woven manual pick-up devices have been introduced. Where handloom products have been standardized or a unit is specialising in particular variety automatic fly-shuttles and dobbies have been attached to handlooms to create semi-automatic weaving system. A greater part of Pakistan's handloom cloth is made from indigenous cotton which remains a major cash crop of the country. Despite sharp fluctuations in output caused by the vagaries of nature and the international market, Pakistan has retained its place among the top six cotton producing countries in the world.

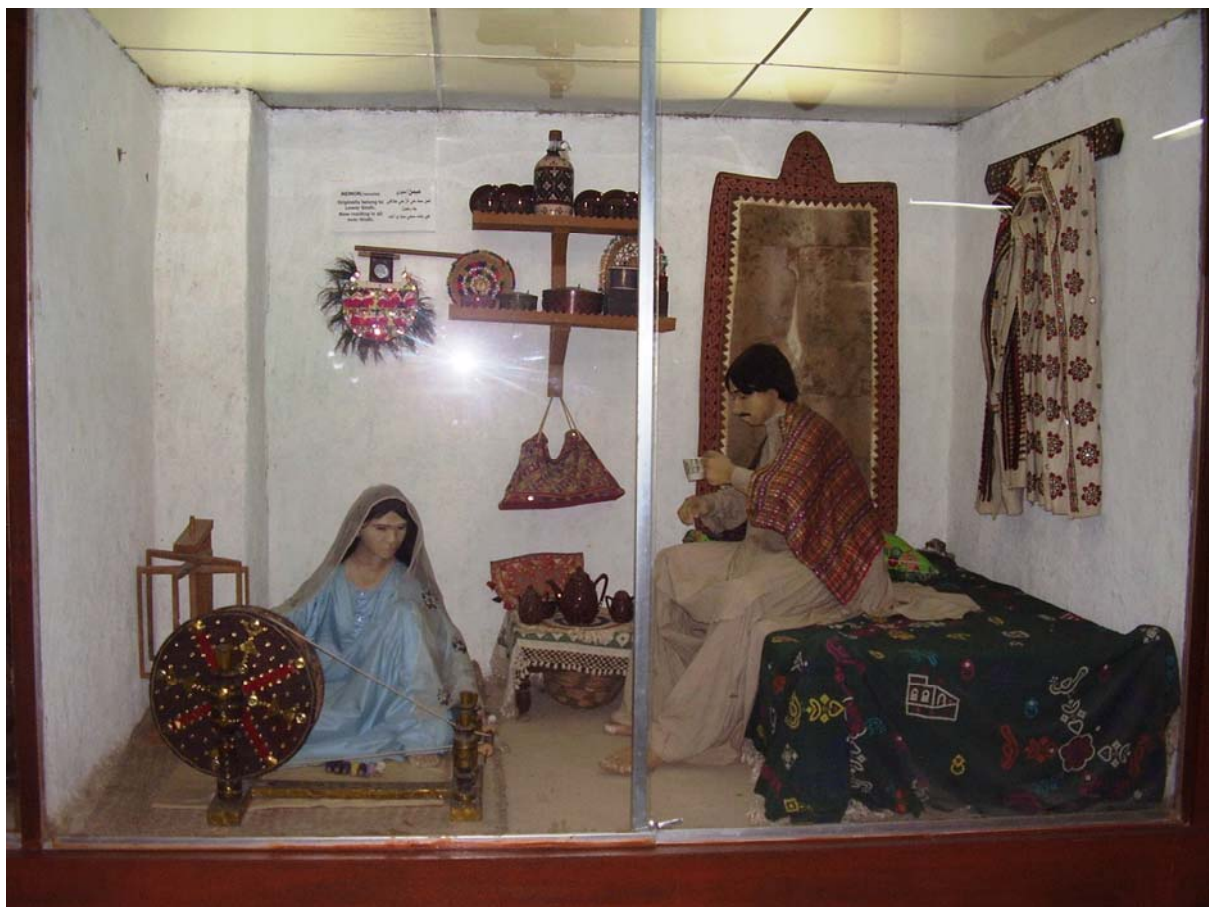


Fig 35. A traditional Sindhi weaver's home shown at the Sindhology museum in University of Sindh, Jamshoro.



Fig 36. A weaver shown weaving cloth with handloom at Sindh museum, Hyderabad, Pakistan

## ***KHADDAR***

The simplest cotton weave, '*khaddar*', described generally as coarse cloth, has retained its peculiar charm ever since it made its appearance thousands of years ago. Till about a hundred years ago it was among the region's major exports to Central Asia. After having fallen off the export list for several decades it has again found an overseas market. At home the '*shalwar/kurta*' combination of '*khaddar*' in natural white or camel colour remains a favourite dress. Although '*khaddar*' is produced all over the country the finest qualities are woven in Peshawar in the Frontier Province, Lahore, Multan, Jhang, Sargodha, Kasur and Jhelum districts in the Punjab, Thatta, Mirpurkhas and Karachi in Sind. '*Khaddar*' made for shirting, often called '*khadi*', is sometimes made of 60/80 count yarn in Multan, Sargodha, Peshawar, and Hala. '*Malmal khaddar*' is fancied for the traditional '*kurta*' (men long shirt) and '*pagri*' (head turban). '*Khaddar*' also comes in a wide range in thickness, texture and design and is marketed as yardage for upholstery and drapery, and finished into household furnishings, such as bed-covers, cushion-covers, table-cloths, place-mats, etc.



Fig 37. *khaddar* ,the cloth more famous in colder regions, Sindh museum, Hyderabad, Pakistan



Fig 38. Another piece of khaddar with embroidery on it, Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

Woollen pull-over and jackets may have replaced the quilted '*khaddar*' jackets and pyjamas in the cities but in villages they are still considered the best protection against cold. Far more common are the '*khaddar*' quilts. In the cities '*khaddar*' has become the most popular material for curtains. Solid '*khaddar*' is available in different colours. Wefts of various thicknesses and colours are combined to create plaids and stripes of rich textures. The designs on bed-covers and upholstery are often enhanced by off-setting the plain weave with woven patterns arranged in stripes. In recent years great progress has been made in the production of tapestry weaves and Multan craftsmen have won fame at home and abroad with tapestry cloth used mainly for upholstery and bed-covers. Its appeal has been enhanced by the use of patterns and borders in pleasing colour schemes. Some of the varieties are specifically designed for use as curtains and wrap-around skirts.



## ***KHES***

One of the widest uses of unstitched cotton textiles is in the form of the '*khes*'-a patterned and bound double weave cloth. It must have been evolved centuries ago to meet the need for a cotton blanket. During the Mughal period it was an important item of export. At present '*khes*' are used throughout Pakistan as bed-covers, curtains, table-cloths, floor coverings, and '*chadars*' (shawls). Of late they have begun to be used to tailor women's garments. Although simpler varieties are produced throughout Punjab and Sind, the best known '*khes*' come from Multan, Sargodha, Gumbat and Nasarpur. While the techniques and weave constructions in Sind and Punjab are identical each '*khes*' centre displays in design and colour scheme a distinct tradition of its own.

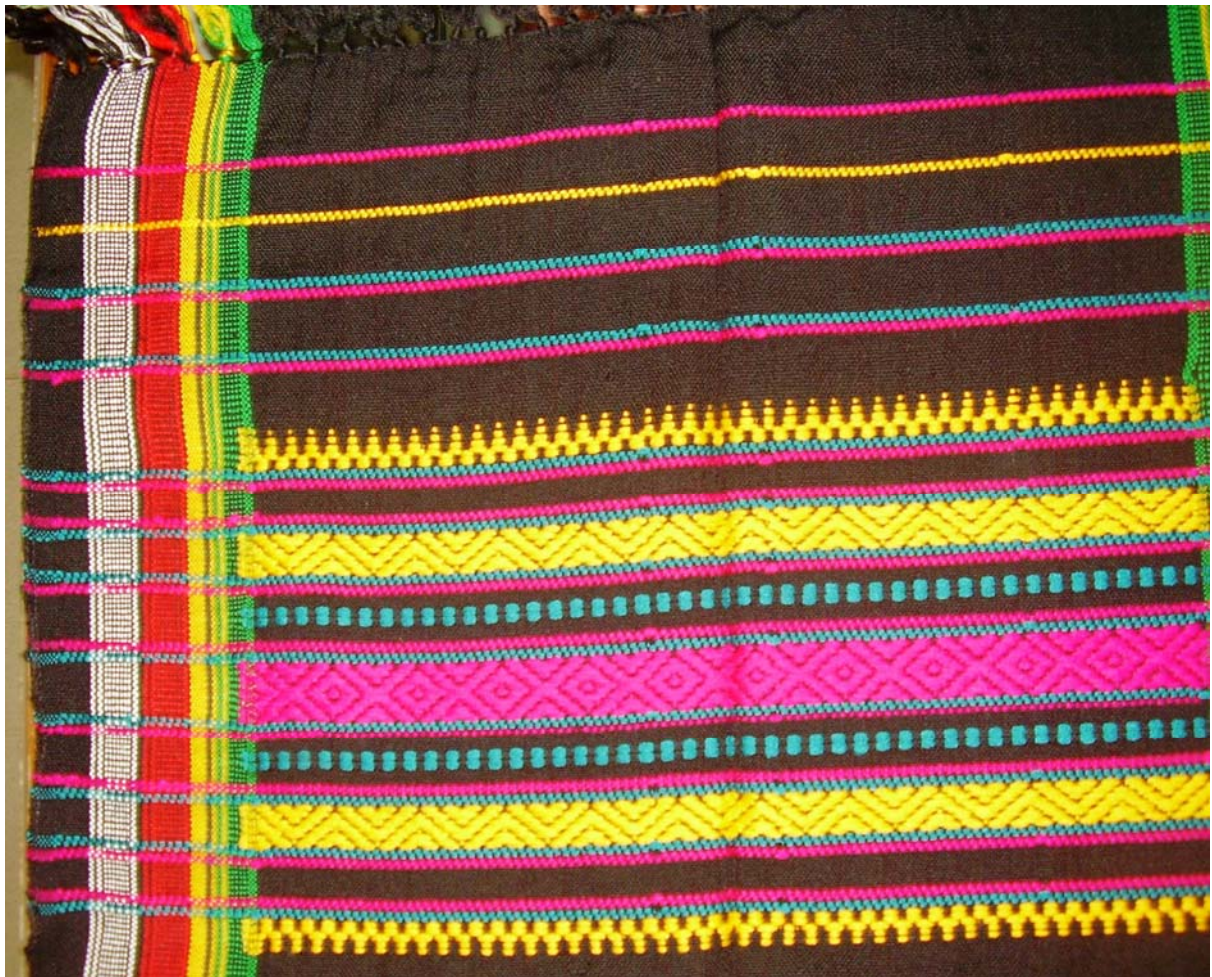


Fig 39. The *khes* of Sindh, at the Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

The *Multani 'khes'* generally has a bold, two-colour geometric pattern with similar motifs on both vertical and horizontal borders. Traditionally the most popular colour scheme was indigo and white. But combinations of mustard and black, yellow and orange, and green and orange are also common. Sometimes a third colour is added. The colour schemes favoured by weavers in Jhelum and Jhang are green and red, and yellow and black. The patterns are created mostly by repeating geometric forms or floral motifs or combining the two. In the '*khes*' woven in Sukkur, Gumbat and Nasarpur, the main field is filled with tiny patterns, usually a diamond enclosed in a box and crossed with a third colour. The wide horizontal borders are filled with bolder patterns alternated with vertical stripes. They are intricately woven, composed of many colours and create an attractive contrast to the overall '*khes*' design. The '*khes*' are traditionally woven in pairs and stitched together to create a 66" width and three-yard lengths.

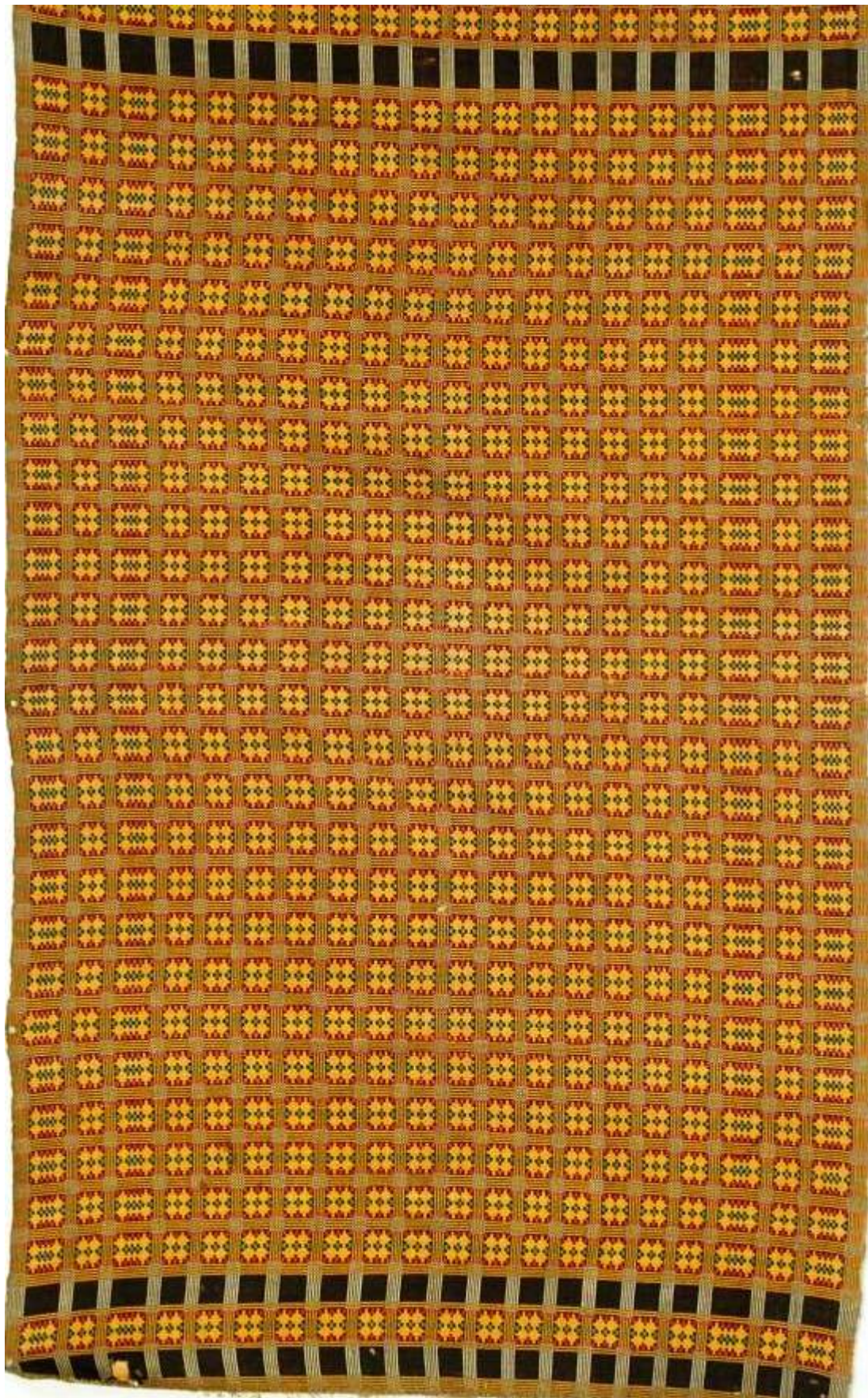


Fig 40. Another style of *khes* of Sindh, courtesy sarajo.com a catalogue for textiles.

## **The *Khes* of Royal Khairpur**

Khairpur, located in Upper Sindh, is a place of great historical significance in the subcontinent. Dating back to 5000 BCE, the ancient Kot Diji is among the oldest civilizations known to man. The advent of Muslim invaders in the 8th century brought Islam to this area. As a result, it has been exposed to myriad influences all of which have contributed in shaping its unique and distinctive character. The Talpur Mirs established Khairpur as an independent state in the 18th century and under their rule spanning over 200 years, the arts and crafts flourished. When Sindh was annexed by Sir Charles Napier in 1843, Khairpur state was allowed to retain its independence as a reward for its ruler Mir Ali Murad, who had helped the British to flourish in Sindh. Khairpur thus became a "princely state" allied to the British East India Company and the Crown. The state minted and used its own coins till 1903, after which they were discontinued and replaced by British coins.

The industry of handloom weaving in Khairpur produced a particular type of textile called *khes*, which gained fame for its quality. It was an acclaimed textile export item in the Mughal period and became popular in England. *Khes* was once noted for its vegetable dyed colours and the cochineal *khes* was among the most expensive. Combinations of garish chemical colours have now replaced the more muted natural colours. Today the finest *khes* is produced by the weavers of Ambh village. The skill of *khes* weaving has been passed down over several generations of craftsmen. All production takes place in the home, with families working independently of each other. The houses of the craftsmen are usually located behind their workshops, where amongst multitudes of children, the common yard is shared with cows, buffaloes, donkeys, and chickens. The workshops are simple thatched sheds with good ventilation. Each workshop houses up to four pit-looms. Both men and women weave the *khes*, although at present there are more men than women engaged in production. Men are responsible for the making of the warp, while women make the weft spindles. Two lengths of *khes* are woven on the traditional pit-loom; these are sewn together by hand. Each length is 3 metres, with a width of about 85 cm.

## ***LUNGI***

The tradition of draped clothing has been sustained in Pakistan by a number of factors-easily notable ones being the climate and the artisans' habit of attending to their work mostly in a squatting position. The image of a village belle in the Punjab is not complete without a shimmering '*lacha*' (a sarong-like wrap-around) and men all over the province wear '*tehmad*'. The most colourful '*tehmad*' is the '*lungi*' produced on hand loom in a number of towns-Multan, Faisalabad, Jhang, Sargodha, Kasur, and Pind Dadan Khan in the Punjab, and Hyderabad, Nasarpur, and Karachi in Sind. In the Frontier province a turban cloth is also called '*lungi*' and in Sind the name has been given to bridegroom's sash and scarf. The standard pattern of the '*lungi*' is the '*charkhana*' (small boxes) and bold 4 horizontal and vertical borders. It is generally woven in pairs, each piece twenty seven inches wide, and the two pieces are stitched together. The border and base wefts are in contrasting colours and the borders at the beginning and the end of the three-yard length are solid stripes or multi-coloured tapestry patterns.



Fig 41. The *lungi* patterns of Sindh, Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

Sometimes, metal threads are inserted into the main pattern and the border. The quality of a '*lungi*' is determined by the intricacy of the pattern, especially on the border, the fineness of the weave, and the colour scheme. Although extremely fine '*lung is*' are made at each of the above-mentioned centres, Multan has come to be recognised as the home of the most attractive varieties. These are available in bold colour combinations-blue and deep rose, green and red, white and blue. A special feature is the six to eight inch border in solid colour or divided by exquisitely woven stripes. In the last few decades, '*Iungi*' cloth has become quite popular with the urbanites as material for shirts and curtains, and one suspects quite a few of the chequered patterns seen on new varieties of woollen suiting were inspired by the work of '*lungi*' weavers.

## ***SUSSI***

*Sussi*' is the general name given to multicoloured, striped cloth. The pattern was evolved centuries ago as this variety of cloth is mentioned among the exports in the pre-Christian era and its production in sizable quantity in the seventeenth century has been noted. At one time '*sussi*' cloth made in Multan was highly valued in England but now the leading production centres are Gumbat and Tando Mohammad Khan in Sind. In recent times there has been a trend away from pure cotton '*sussi*' and cotton and silk or cotton and synthetic blends are commonly used. Traditionally '*sussi*' cloth has been used to tailor '*shalwars*' (trousers) for Sindhi women but now it is also used for shirts and curtains. The art of '*sussi*' weaving lies in the placing of the stripes in different colours, determining the widths of the stripes and the number of colours accommodated on a piece. Two varieties of '*sussi*' cloth have separate names-'*gharbi*' and '*mothra*'. The former variety is woven of silk or a cotton and silk blend, and the latter simply involves the use of black and white warps to separate the colours.



Fig 42. The famous *susi* cloth of Sindh, at Sindh museum, Hydearbad.

## SILK CLOTH

Throughout the ages it has been used all over the world as a mark of superior status, especially at rituals and ceremonies. If Pakistani women's passion for silks, satins, and brocades strikes anyone as extraordinary the reason can't easily be found, paradoxically, in the culturally barren and monotonous existence of the majority. The Pakistan territory has been known for excellent silk weaves since the first millennium B.C. In the Middle Ages, silk, gold and silver brocades made here found ready buyers in Europe, the Middle East, and even China. Under the Mughals sericulture and silk-weaving received special encouragement and silk cloth produced in the Punjab came to be prized throughout the world. Lahore and Multan developed into major centres of silk industry. So great was the demand for silk cloth that domestic supplies of raw material had to be supplemented with imports from Kashmir, China, Iran and Central Asia. The position has not changed. A large part of the handloom silk is, as in the past, plain weave meant to be printed.

However, most of the woven patterns evolved over many centuries remain popular. Multan still produces pure silk cloth for turbans, '*boski*' for shirting, '*daryai*', '*lungi*', and '*khes*'. Lahore weavers still specialise in brocades and velvets. Apart from major towns and cities silk-weaving remains a flourishing cottage industry in small villages of the Punjab and Sind. An outstanding variety is '*gulbadan*', the Sindhi '*lungi*' traditionally given to the bridegroom to be used as a turban, sash, or a scarf. The standard design is composed of multi-coloured, vertical stripes, woven into ten-yard lengths and about two feet in width. The complexity of design requires the use of several pick-up devices on multi-harnessed pit looms.



## **BANARASI SILK**

The most intricate, and also the most precious, silks are the *Banarasi* varieties, especially the '*saris*' with beautifully woven patterns and motifs in gold and silver and richly ornamented borders. Elegant graceful and durable, they are available in innumerable colour combinations. Although the city that has given its name to these silks is in India, named Banaras, Lahore was among the major centres of production when the craft developed in the subcontinent between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries. It was especially known for '*kinkhab*', the cloth chosen for the robes of the nobility. After independence a large number of Muslim weavers migrated from Delhi and Banaras and set up workshops in Lahore, Karachi and Khairpur, and found opportunities of surpassing, in some respects, the work of their cousins who had stayed on in India. They have continued to weave '*kinkhab*' in both the traditional patterns- '*beldar*' (scrolls) and '*butidar*' (small stars and flowers). '*Poth*' work is also common.



Fig 43. The banarasi cloth and the *kairi* designs, at Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

The popular motifs woven into the borders include the '*kairi*', '*chinar*' leaf, and creepers. Most of the Banarasi silk weavers work on cottage industry basis. Some of them are

under contract to big merchants and choose designs and a material under the latter's instructions. Others weave traditional varieties and sell them to the wholesalers. The weaving of '*kinkhab*' being an exceptionally complicated operation only the most experienced craftsmen venture into the field. The loom itself is very complex; pairs of heddles are separately connected to strings and taken upwards and worked from above. The pattern is worked up by a combination of strings and heddles manipulated separately, successively and then by reversing the order. To cope with this process the weaver must have a helper by his side.



Fig 44. A Banarsi saree at a shop in Banaras colony, Karachi, Pakistan.

### **Banaras colony**

There are plenty of workshops and sales shop in the famous Banaras colony, in Karachi city of Pakistan, these banaras silk weavers are the migrants from the famous city of Banaras from India, at the time of partition in 1947, and later they settled down and continued their

beautiful and intricate craft. People from all over the Karachi city and even from other parts of the world come here to buy their beautiful craft. There are number of designs and styles of Banarsi silk cloth, which includes unstitched cloth , *shalwar kameez* suits and mostly the beautiful saris.

## **Dyeing and Printing**

The Mohenjo-Daro cloth fragment was dyed purple with madder root and until an older piece is found that cloth should be taken to mark the beginning of the craft of decorating fabrics. The continuity of the tradition is borne out by the flourishing business of dyers all over Pakistan. Besides, except in families where women are not supposed to do any work, the dyeing of clothes is done in every household. The most notable technique developed over the centuries is that of resist dyeing. Pakistani dyers commonly rely on tie-and-dye method, called '*bandhani*' in native languages, to create myriad designs from simple *lehria* to intricate patterns within patterns. *Lehria* is a pattern of waves which symbolizes water waves. These types of patterns are adorned throughout the country but in Sindh many communities wear these style of dresses on daily basis, like the *Chohan* and the *Manghwar* tribe of Sindh are famous for wearing *Bandhani* and *Lehriya* pattern dresses and these dresses are usually skirt and blouse with a dupatta(shawl).



Fig 45. Bandhani style shown in the Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

## **TIE AND DYE**

Tie and dye, a form of resist dyeing, is a technique of patterning fabric by tying parts of it in different ways to prevent the penetration of dyes. This craft is one of the oldest in the world for making coloured designs on a fabric. Its definite origin is unknown, but the earliest

information of this craft can be achieved from books and other records of the 6th century AD which are to be found in the East, particularly in China, India, Japan and Indonesia. Records also say that this craft was in existence in South America and Africa during the 5th century. Europe has only recently discovered the creative possibilities of tie and dye.

## **Techniques**

The technique involves dyeing a fabric which is tied tightly with a thread at several points in various colors, thus producing a variety of patterns like *Lehriya*, *Mothra*, *Ekdali* and *Shibori* depending on the manner in which the cloth is tied.

Tie and dye (resist-dyeing technique) is classified into three categories.

- a) Either warp is tied and dyed or the weft is tied and dyed.
- b) Tie both the warp and weft and dye, for example: *Double Ikat*, *Patola*, *Telia Rumal*.
- c) Tie the fabric and dye, for example, *Bandhani*, *Lehriya and Mothra.*, *Shibori*

The fabrics used for are muslin, handloom, silk or voile. The dominant colours are bright like yellow, red, and green and pink. Maroon is also an all time favourite. Traditionally vegetable dyes were used but today chemical dyes are becoming very popular. Various synthetic fabrics are also highly in demand. For tying knots mostly synthetic thread is used on the fabric. The cloth piece is passed through different dye solutions in successive phases in such a manner that the area not to be dyed in a particular hue is tied into a knot with a nail or a string. In the proper resist system, the area not to be dyed in a particular stage or to be dyed lightly is covered with wax. When the piece is dipped in dye solution the area not covered with wax is dyed, and the rest is left unaffected. Also the hot bath melts some of the wax which flows on to the area meant to be dyed and this portion receives a lighter colour. The more intricate designs are mapped out on shawls and scarves by pressing them over a wooden block which has a mass of pins arranged in the required pattern. These points are marked and tied into small knots with waxed thread. When the cloth is dipped into a dye bath these points are not dyed. The tradition has helped the growth of '*batik*' centres at several places.

## Process

The process has the following steps.

- i) Preparation of materials (washing and cleaning)



Fig 46. A artisans is washing the cloth

(ii) Tying the motif



Fig 47. In this picture artisan is showing how to tie the motifs.

(iii) Dipping of the textile in the lightest colour

(iv) Touching the textile with a light colour.



Fig 48. This picture shows the light colour textile.

(v) Removal of the knots and then dyeing in the next darker colour

(vi) Renewal of the tying and dyeing with the darkest colour





Fig 49. This picture shows the tying and dyeing with dark colours.

viii) Washing of the fabric

viii) Opening the knots



Fig 50. This picture shows the process after opening the knots.

## ***BANDHANI***

The technique of dyeing *Bandhani* involves repeated tying and dyeing in several colours. For each colour the portions to remain undyed are tied up with cloth. One starts with the lightest colour and goes on till the darkest. The dyeing is done with a cloth dipped in colour or colour brushed over the required areas. After the dyeing is over the cloth is dipped in a solution of castor oil and dried. The traditional colors used are turmeric, indigo and alum for yellow, blue and red respectively but nowadays different type of dyes like vat, naphthol, direct, and procion are used. The pattern fully emerges when the knots are untied.



Fig 51. This is famous Bnadhani pattern of sindhi women wardrobe.

The *Lehriya* technique is quite different from the *Bandhani* technique although this too is a tie and dye process. Here the fabric is rolled from one corner to the other diagonally and then it is tied at intervals with strings.



Fig 52. This picture shows, the Tying with strings.

*Mothra* is an extension of *Lehriya* in which diagonal lines cross each other in opposite directions, at 45 degrees, giving rise to small diamond shapes.



Fig 53. *Lehriya* print after opening the ties

## **Product and their uses**

As per the designer's imagination a complete range of products can be created using tie and dye fabrics, for example, shirts, *dupattas or odhnis*(shawls) and various types of garments, scarves, shawls, etc.

## **Motifs/designs**

Various traditional motifs like flowers, trees, animals, geometric designs, etc., are used to decorate the fabric. The price of *Bandhani* depends on the base fabric used, the intricacy and fineness of the design and the number of colours used. A fully worked *sari* with figures and animal designs in small dots using five colours may take six to eight months to complete.

## **Changes over the years**

Nowadays, these textiles are occupying a good place in the national and international markets. In the olden days the craftsmen catered to the demand of the local community so they used their imaginations. Today, however, the colours and motifs used are mostly dependent on the market demand which is influencing the traditional techniques, colours and motifs.

## BLOCK PRINTING

Far more noteworthy is the tradition of block printing. Some of the highest achievements made by the subcontinent's craftsmen in the past lay in this field. Not only hand-printed cloth was exported to the far corners of the world since before Christ and till late in the eighteenth century, Europe learnt much about cloth printing from the incomparable 'chintz' made in this part of the world. Throughout the Muslim period Lahore and Thatta enjoyed world-wide reputation for calicoes and 'chintz'. Calico is a plain-woven textile made from unbleached, and often not fully processed, cotton. It may contain unseparated husk parts, for example. The fabric is less coarse and thick than canvas or denim, but owing to its unfinished and undyed appearance, it is still very cheap. Originally from the city of Kozhikode Kerala India (known by Europeans as *Calicut* in the 11th century). The fabric was made by the traditional weavers called *chaliyans*. The raw fabric was dyed and printed in bright hues and calico prints became popular in Europe. In 1700, Britain banned importation of printed calicos from India, in an effort to support the British woolen and worsted industry. The ban failed, and was strengthened in 1720 when it weakened the Indian textile industry, and India was forced to buy British textiles.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Wikipedia.



Fig 54. The display of beautiful ajraks from sindh, at the Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

## AJRAK

One of the greatest accomplishments of the subcontinent was the development of the technology of dyeing and printing of cloth. This is evident from the discovery of a dyer's workshop at Mohenjo-Daro. *Indigofera Tinctoria*, the most fabled, ancient plant for the indigo dye also grew in abundance on the banks of River Indus.<sup>74</sup> Historically, Sindh has been trade oriented and receptive to external influences. Over a period of time, The craftsmen

<sup>74</sup> Bilgrami, Noorjehan, Sindh jo Ajrak, Department of Culture and Tourism Sind, Government of Sind, 1990, p 21

developed printing techniques from simple printing on one side, to the rich two sided resist – printed cloth, the *ajrak*.<sup>75</sup> The people of Sindh have a deep reverence for *ajrak*. From birth to marriage, until death, *ajrak* celebrates all significant events of the life cycle. This cloth has much different usage in everyday life.<sup>76</sup> It is worn as a turban, a shawl, spread as a bed-sheet or tablecloth and when worn out, it is recycled as a hammock for a baby, cover for a bullock cart and most commonly used as a backing to patchwork quilts. It is used and reused till threadbare. *Ajrak* is a cloth worn by different income groups, from the wealthy to the poor. The colours, patterns and design-format remain the same, only the quality of the fabric is different. The celebrated statue of the King Priest discovered at Mohenjo-Daro has a trefoil motif on the draped shawl. It is believed that the shawl is *ajrak*, a traditional textile. The same trefoil was found on the bodies of Sumerian bulls in Mesopotamia. The trefoil is composed of three sun-disks fused together to represent the unity of the Gods of Sun, Water and Earth.<sup>77</sup>

### **Use of *Ajrak* in Sindh:**

Before the eastern most portions of Sindh, like Kutch, Rajasthan and Gujrat, were lopped off at partition, that the names and patterns were probably fairly similar. There are, therefore, no indications of different traditions developing in terms of patterns used. However, while the influence of Sindhi culture is still very strong in Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan, the political and ideological separation will eventually find expression in a differing material culture.<sup>78</sup>

*Ajrak* is probably the most intimate piece of printed textile in Sind and is interwoven in Sindh's everyday life. Its versatility is amazing. It is a mark of respect when it is given to an honoured guest, a friend, or a woman. It is also spread over dead body of a friend or a family member before burial or cremation as a mark of respect to the departed soul and his/her relatives. It is also used as a kind of *sash*, as a curtain, as a place for eating, as a lower body garment like *sarong* by working men, as a cloth to tie up bundle of things to carry or to keep, as a support tied around the back and legs to sit comfortably, as a *cumberbund*(back rope)for Sindhi form of wrestling known as *Mallh-a*.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p 34

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p 23

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p 54

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, P.55



The '*Ajrak*' remains a popular Sindhi fashion and is traditionally used for bedcovers, skirt material, men's turbans and women and men's '*chaddars*(shawls)'. '*Ajraks*' are available in yardage as well as stitched into table-cloths and matching napkins, curtains and bedspreads with matching cushion and pillow covers. In the Punjab block-printers have considerably diversified their craft. The reproduction of patterns and motifs-floral, geometric and sculptural-evolved in the Mughal period continues but at the same time intense competition has forced a search for new patterns.<sup>79</sup> Remarkable success has been achieved in the printing of '*khaddars*' for curtains and upholstery and the magnificent designs traditionally printed on '*dastarkhwans*' (dining cloth) have been improved further. There are sizable communities of block-printers in small towns all over the Punjab and the Frontier and each centre has developed designs to suit the local environment and the taste of the people around. After a long break, block printing on silk and synthetic cloth has been revived in Multan and Karachi.

At present Sind can boast a block-printing tradition that has been famous for the last many centuries. The Sindhi craftsmen employ the most ancient technique to block-print their '*ajraks*'. Instead of printing the colours directly, as in later techniques of block-printing, a mordant and a resist is stamped on to the cloth which is then dipped in to a series of dye baths. The pattern printed with a resist remains white. When a mordant is used the dye only adheres to the print. Since '*ajrak*' means blue in Arabic, it is believed that indigo traditionally dominated the colour scheme as it does in contemporary production. Traditional colour combinations are blue and red, red, white, blue and/or black, as well as black and white. Yellow and green, once derived from pomegranate rinds, are sometimes added especially by block-printers of Tando Mohammad Khan, one of the leading '*ajrak*' producing towns. The unique geometric patterns are typically composed in a series of borders to enclose a contrasting centre design.

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<sup>79</sup> Bilgrami Noorjehan, Ahmed Tehmina, Mingeikan Nihon, Tana Bana: The Woven Soul of Pakistan, Koel Publications, 2004, p 54

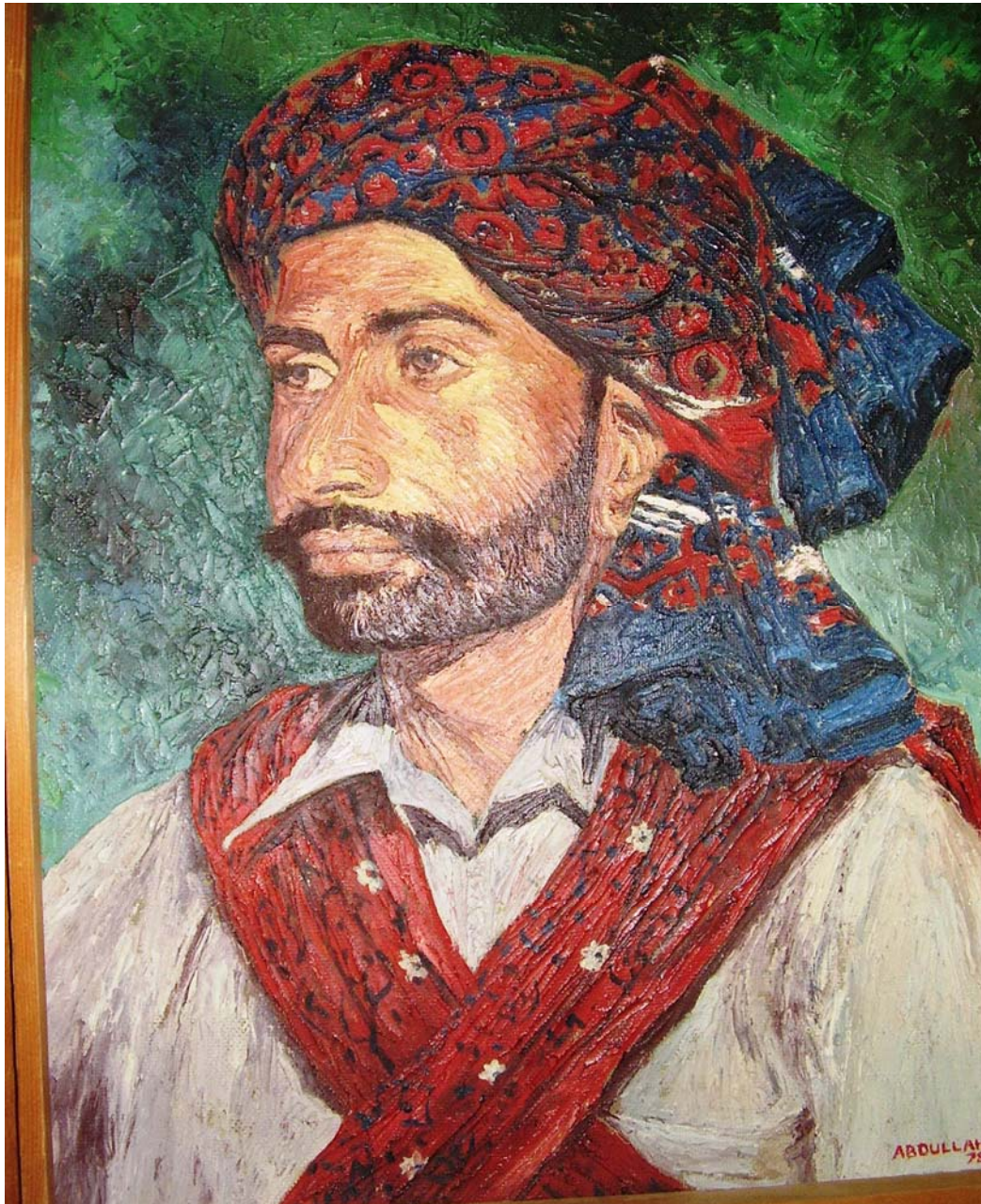


Fig 55. This picture is an painting showing a Sindhi man wearing turban of *Ajrak*, in Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

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Wax painting and printing is another technique traditional to Pakistani craftsmen. The *Afridi* tribe is known for printing multiple colours of wax with metal blocks. Painting with wax is done by craftsmen in Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi and Quetta. The motifs are generally delicate animal figures and landscapes. The craftsman relies on family formulae of making the wax paste with safflower oil and lime. The craftsman begins his work by putting a small portion of the paste on his hand. He pulls out fine filaments of the material with a stylus, attaches it to one point on the cloth and then stretches it to sketch the straight lines and curves that make up the painting. The piece is dusted over with multicoloured and metallic powdered pigments which only adhere to wax. Wax painted cloth is traditionally used for wall-hangings, ornamental table-cloths and women's clothing. Recently silk-screening has developed as cottage and small industry in Karachi, Hyderabad, Multan and Lahore. The printers employ the international technique of photo silk screening. Their prints are often inspired by traditional block-print and '*ajrak*' designs. Some of the prints contain as many as five colours which are registered with separate screens.

The cities of Sekhat, Khebar, Matiari, Tando Mohammad 'Khan, Matli, Thatta, Hyderabad, Hala, Badin, Mithi, Ghulam Nabi Shah, and Umarmkot are the centers, where the art of block printing is practised. The list of cities visited gives an indication of the type of printed cloth. They are primarily cloths for both men's and women's clothes: cloths known as *ajraks*, skirt material, women's veils and head dresses. In those places where it is practised, I also studied tie-and-dye work. There are different methods and techniques of block printing, which is classified below.

## **TECHNICAL STUDY**

The principle of block-printing consists of printing; on a white cloth, either a mordant or a resist. When a mordant is printed the dye reacts with it and only the printed areas are coloured. When a resist is printed it is the areas not protected by the resist which are coloured during dyeing.

### **The Manufacturing Processes**

Printing involves numerous operations. These vary according to the type of design, but in every case they can be classed under three headings: preparation of the cloth; printing; and dyeing.

### **PREPARATION OF THE CLOTH OF AJARAK**

White cotton cloth, bought in large quantity, is cut to the required size and then washed in boiling water containing soda-ash. The cloth is then soaped and oiled, these two operations being carried out either simultaneously or successively. For this purpose two types of oil are used: *herran jo tel* (castor oil) and *jhambo jo tel* (vegetable oil). Finally the cloth immersed in a solution of ground *sakun* seed and oil. The object of these processes, known respectively as *khumbh*, *sajj*, and *kasai*, is to remove chemical products, notably the dressing, from the manufactured cloth, to soften it and make it more receptive to the dyes.

### **PRINTING**

The first printing, *asil* or *asul*, is made with a mixture of gum (*babur khonr*) and lime (*chuna*) to which water has been added. The block used is called *asule jo pur*. The second printing, *kot* made with a solution of iron sulphate (*hira kas*) thickened with gum or crushed *ambika*, or *ammika*, seeds (from the *amli* tree) the block used is known as *kot jo pur*. The third printing, *chor is* made with a mixture which consists principally of fuller's arth (*met*),

flour (*ata*), gum(*khonr*), aluminium sulphate (*phitki*), water and, finally, molasses (*gur*). After this last printing but while the work is still in progress, the cloth is covered with rice *brat* (*kitti*) or with powdered cow-dung, which fixes the mixture on the cloth.<sup>80</sup>

## DYEING

The first dye to be applied is indigo. The dye is used cold, the cloth folded in pleats. Certain chemicals are added as a fixative. The cloth is then washed before the madder dye is applied. Madder dyeing is done in boiling water containing ground *sakun* and madder. The dyeing takes almost two hours and the cloth is constantly agitated to ensure a uniform result. Madder and *sakun* are added at regular intervals throughout this process.<sup>81</sup> The madder dye plant produces one of the most light-fast of natural dyes and the fleshy swollen madder roots produce the madder red dye which is sensitive to temperature and to the mineral content of the water. Alizarin is the main chemical compound and gives the red colour. The cloth is then immersed in water containing camel-dung (*gissi*), washed in water containing soda-ash, in another water containing caustic soda; finally it is spread on the ground and sprinkled with clean water several times. The process is known as *tapai*. After this the cloth is again printed with a resist similar to that used previously, and it is again immersed in the indigo dye. This process is known as *mina*.<sup>82</sup>

## FINISHING

The cloth is carefully washed in water containing soda-ash and detergent, then in clean water. The final process, beating, is carried out after a number of washes. This serves to soften the cloth.

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<sup>80</sup> Cousin, Françoise, some data on block printing, *Sindh Through The Centuries*, proceedings of an international seminar held in Karachi, Dept of Culture, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1975, p 230

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*

## **SKIRT MATERIAL**

### **PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL**

The material is washed then immersed in water containing *sakun*.

### **PRINTING WITH MORDANTS**

The first printing (*charna* or *churna*) is done with *pa*, a liquid mixture of aluminium sulphate (*phitki* or *pitikari*) and *ambika*. The printed areas come out red when madder dye is applied. The second printing is done with *kot*. The printed areas come out black when madder dye is applied. The material is washed to remove the excess aluminium sulphate.

### **MADDER DYEING**

#### **PRINTING WITH RESISTS**

The resist, known as *dabu*, is a mixture of rice bran (*chilka*), gum' (*gondh*), lime (*chuna*), earth (*mitti*) and, finally, water. Sand is sprinkled on to fix the resist on the material. .

### **DYEING IN INDIGO**

#### **FINISHING**

The material is washed in clean water and in water containing detergent, and then beaten. At this point patches of unfixed colours are applied either with a block or with a pad; this operation is known as *kinja* or *banu*.

The other manufacturing processes are the first *kiriana* and the second, *malir* and *jimi*.

## **KIRIANA**

In this method, the first impression is made with a resist (*kiriana*) of gum and lime. The second is made with *kot*. After this, the whole surface of the cloth is covered with a paste of aluminium sulphate and *ambika* mixed with water (*pa*), this process is known as *potna*.

The resist, *kiriana*, is carefully removed and the cloth is dyed in madder. After washing, patches of unfixed yellow or green are applied, this technique is employed for veils and for a certain type of skirt.

## **MALIR AND JIMI**

After preparation, the cloth is printed in the same way as an *ajralk*, dyed in indigo, and washed; it is then dyed in madder and washed again. The difference between this process and that used for *ajraks* is that there is no second resist printing and no second dyeing in indigo.

## **RAW MATERIAL**

Most of the natural products, vegetable and mineral, employed in dyeing have completely disappeared from use. For example, iron sulphate (used as a mordant) is no longer made from scrap iron left to soak in a mixture of water and molasses but is a synthetic product. The same applies to aluminium sulphate; which has superseded natural alum, and to the dyes themselves based on madder and indigo. While chemical indigo simplifies and quickens the process, chemical madder requires a lot of time, not in its preparation but, in its use.<sup>83</sup> Artisans obtain the basic materials, most of which are produced in Pakistan. Madder, indigo and aluminium sulphate are imported. The cloth used is calico manufactured in Pakistan.

## **PRINTING TOOLS**

Wood blocks (*pur*), made by specialist craftsmen, and are the basic tool. The village of Radhan, in the district of Dadu, is particularly renowned for the skill of its craftsmen, as also is Hyderabad. The blocks are made from a wood that will continue to give a crisp image over a long period of use. Several blocks are required in the printing of a cloth and they are given

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<sup>83</sup> Cousin, Françoise, some data on block printing, *Sindh Through The Centuries*, proceedings of an international seminar held in Karachi, Dept of Culture, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1975, p 231

special names according to their use.<sup>84</sup> The artisan sits at a low work-table (*pattia*) made by the local carpenter. The table is covered by a protective layer, known as *gharr*, made up of several thicknesses of material. On top is a piece of thicker material known as *acharo*, this gives a soft surface on which to lay the cloth to be printed.<sup>85</sup> A small cushion serves as a seat.

On the right, either on the ground or on bricks, is one of the printing mixtures in a rectangular earthen-ware container (*chatti*). A reed riddle (*chhipri*) is placed inside and on it a piece of thick material, jute or wool and then a layer of calico. The printing mixture is poured into the vessel from the side, a little at a time, and is thus evenly absorbed by the pad. When the block is put on to this pad a uniform covering is given to the raised surfaces of the block. In some instances the resist is put into a broken earthen ware pot (*tibri*).<sup>86</sup> These are the principle tools required but a number of other. Tools are also used. The upkeep of the blocks requires a pig-bristle brush and an awl (*suo*) to clean the holes carved in certain blocks. Detailed work calls for a piece of straw (*tili*) to take measurements for the joining of motifs and a piece of material or of paper (*chamli* or *chamri*) to cut the design.<sup>87</sup>

### **Equipment for the preparation of printing mixtures**

For certain grinding jobs (for example, the grinding of *sakun* seeds) a mill similar to that for grinding corn is used. Mordants are prepared in large copper pots (*degri*) while large earthen-ware pots are used for the preparation of resists.

### **Equipment for dyeing and washing**

Madder dyeing is carried out in a large copper tank (*charu* or *charun*) placed over a fire (*batti*), as the process requires heat. The pieces of material are constantly turned with the help of two sticks (*dhandio*). In Umarkot, the tank is called *chero*, the sticks *dandia* and the fire *radan chulla*. A container known as a *vasti* is used for measuring madder, and *sakun* is measured by the *bhuk* (two handfuls).

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p 231

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p 231

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p 231

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p 231



Indigo dyeing is done in an earthenware tank (*kuni* or *gundi*) made by local potters. A long wooden pole (*lat*) is used in this process. For the washes done in the canal or river, copper pots are used; the beating of the cloth is carried out on a stone with a wooden mallet.

## **THE ARTISANS AT THEIR WORK**

Most of the operations are carried out in the workshops, which are set apart from the dwelling houses. However the preparation of raw materials is done by women in the dwelling houses. As for the various washings and beatings, these are done, in the canal or the river. The artisans in the places visited are all Khatri Muslims, except at Umarkot where lives a sizeable community of Khatri Hindus. Generally speaking, the printing and dyeing are carried out by men. Nevertheless, women are occasionally employed in the preparation of certain products.

At Umarkot, men and women do the printing, but only men do the dyeing. Each workshop has a master craftsman (*usto*), artisans (*karigar*) and finally, a *chokro* – (boy). The latter help the artisans in all the operations carried out by them. The number of tables in a workshop indicates the number of printers employed there. The artisans are either members of the *usto's* family or are hired. In fact the set-up changes according to the location and the size of the workshop. Thus in Tando Mohammed Khan there are a number of concerns with a sizeable work-force. Some of the workers are related to the *usto*, others are not-some not even belonging to the Khatri community. Among the latter, some are employed exclusively in washing the cloths. It is common for the printers to specialize, some concentrating on one type of motif exclusively. The preparation of the dyes and the measuring of the ingredients for the printing mixtures are done by the *usto*.

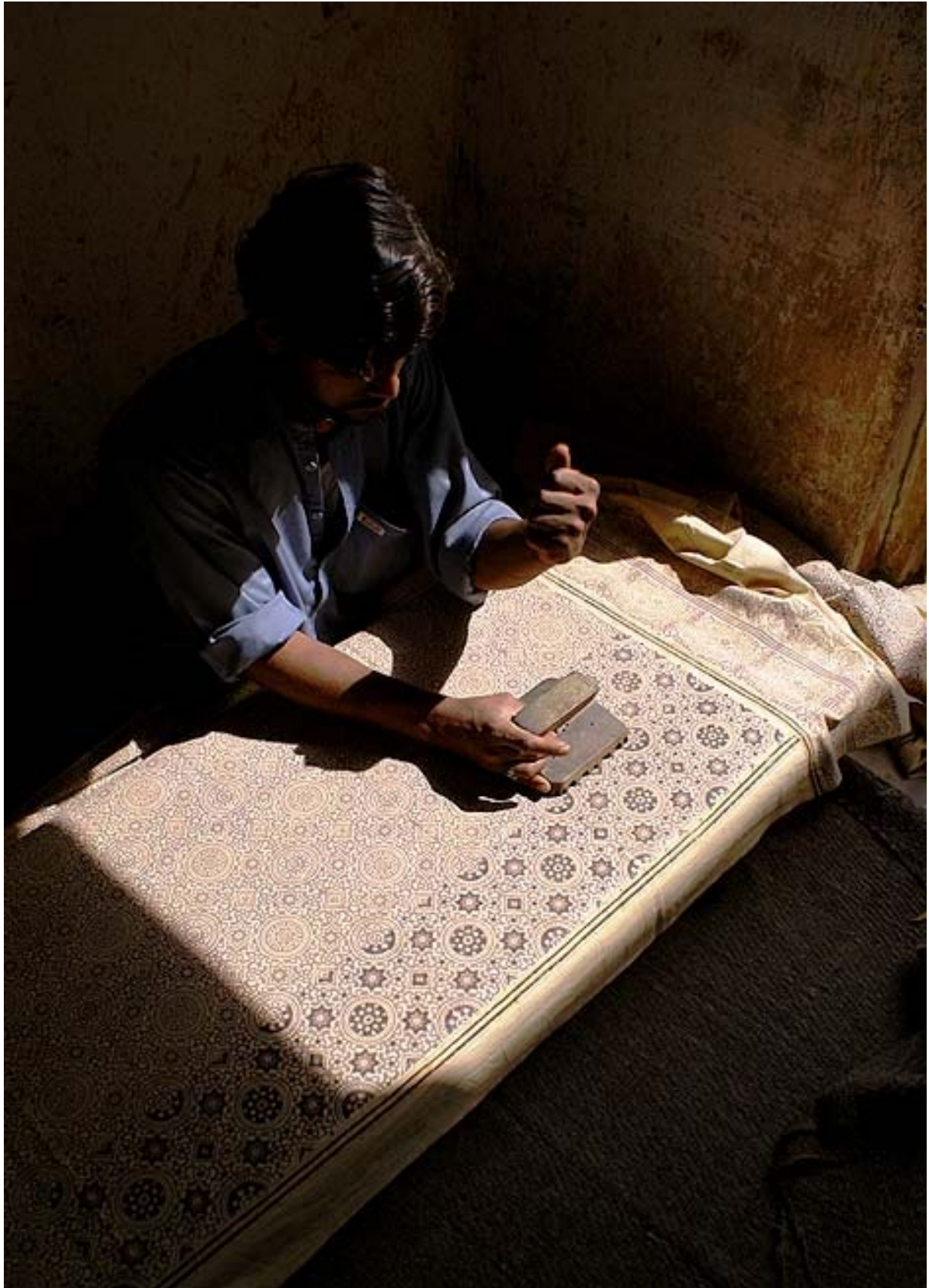


Fig 56. An artisan at work doing block printing, the *ajrak* style, at a workshop in Hyderabad city of Pakistan



Fig 57. This picture is of a shop, which sells all sorts of ajrak designs, from old to modern ones in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan

## DESIGN AND USE

One cannot discuss *ajraks* without reference to the most interesting work on these cloths by Mrs. Feroz Nana, which deals in variety of designs. *Ajraks* are rectangular pieces of cloth, carrying geometric design, and worn by Sindhi men. Some of the *ajraks* are also used as scarves by women. On the whole, the motifs themselves are traditional. Certain designs, however, are recent, either as a result of a fresh juxtaposition of the elements, or through the use of a new motif or of a traditional motif normally, used on another type of material. Such innovation is evidence of the strength of interest in *ajraks*. They are made in two qualities: *ek puri* (printed on one side only) and *bi puri* (printed on both sides). Naturally, the *bi puri ajrak* is the more difficult to execute and therefore the more costly. The workshops most renowned for the quality of their work only produce this type of *ajrak*. On the other hand, the less financially sound workshops are obliged to concentrate on *ek puri ajraks*.

*Ajraks* are distinguished from one another by their pattern and by the motifs which make up that pattern. According to his taste and the amount of money, he wishes to spend, the customer is able to choose from a variety of patterns, which are classified by the number

of frames they contain, and sub-classified according to the different motifs used. Certain motifs, it should be pointed out, are only found on certain types of *ajrak*. All *ajraks* have either a blue or red background. The pattern is built up as follows; across each end runs a border called *palad*, bounded by these are two borders running the length of the *ajrak*, within these borders is the central rectangle which may or may not be surrounded by one or more frames these are the frames by which the *ajrak* is classified. Dividing lines are printed between the discrete elements of the pattern.

The simplest type of *ajrak* is called *naro vari ajrak*. The dividing line of the end borders consists of a triple white stripe, *naro*. The side borders are marked by the same triple stripe indented. The central rectangle is decorated with anyone of the *ajrak* motifs. The most elaborate type of *ajrak* is called *hashe ji ajrak* (triplebordered). The end borders are surrounded by a dividing line, to which the motif gives the name *sadi vat*, which is also found in the side borders. A rectangle is thus formed within a triple 'frame': *parai hasho, seleimi hasho, parai hasho* separated by a dividing line, *sadi vate*. The central rectangle is decorated with the *seleimi hasho* or some other motif.<sup>88</sup> Between these two *ajraks* there are numerous other varieties. Besides differences in the quality of the workmanship, there are differences in the quality of the cloth itself which determine the price of the finished article.

### **Communities who wear *Malirs and Jimis***

*Malirs* are worn by Hindu men of the Thar Parker as a head dress. They are normally embroidered at the four corners on top of the printing. The *Jimis* are worn by the women of the same community as veils. At either end is a border made up of three motifs: *lalaer, katoro* (enclosure wall) and *dhario* (stripes). Along the sides and bounded by the end borders runs a border made up of two motifs: *katoro* and *dhario*. In the centre is a rectangle filled with a single repeated motif, which is not the same for the *malir* as for the *jimi*.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Bilgrami, Noorjehan, *Sindh jo Ajrak*, Department of Culture and Tourism Sind, Government of Sind, 1990, p 57

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p 59

## Communities who wear Skirts

These are worn by the women of the Thar Parker, both Hindu and Muslim. In the materials, at Umarkot the pattern generally consists of alternating lines of the motif from which the pattern takes its name and either a geometric motif or a simple unbroken stripe. Examples of this are *philangi* patterns, alternating small flowers and chevrons on a blue and green background: *mina*, garlands and small flowers on a pink and blue background: *boriai*, garlands on a green background and plain red stripes: *gulhandan*, small flowers and plain lines on a red background; *ambar*, small flowers on a red background and a diamond pattern.<sup>90</sup>

The name of the pattern is sometimes determined not only by the motif itself but also by the process by which it is produced. Thus, for the same motif, one would talk of *dhorsar gandh* when the dyeing stopped with the maddar bath, of *halari*, when the material is later dyed in indigo after printing a reserve, of *limai* when, after dyeing in madder. The material is immersed in a bath of un-fast red dye which colours the whole. Certain patterns are formed by the repetition of the same motif over the whole doth, in which case, only a 'side border is printed, as happens in the case of *kewra* cloth. It is worth making separate mention of the costume worn by *Khatri* women. At one time it was in daily use, now it is only worn for weddings. It consists of a 'Veil (*gor phul odhani*) and of skirt material whose pattern is known as *kotibro*, The complicated technique called *kiriana*, is used for these materials which enables a black and white pattern to be produced on a red background.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, P.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, P.65



Fig 58. The process of dyeing and printing, the first 8 steps.



Fig 59. In this picture the different designs of ajrak are shown, in the Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro



Fig 60. A traditional *rallee* pattern from Sindh, at a shop in Hyderabad.

### **RALLEE MAKING, A CULTURAL ACTIVITY OF SINDHI WOMEN**

The tradition of *rallee* or quilt making is common in Sindh, Baluchistan, and in the Cholistan desert. The *rallee* is often associated with the Sufis; it signifies their concept of humility, by the reuse of old cloth. The devotees who throng to Bhit Shah, the hometown of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, the Sufi saint revered all over Sindh, to pay homage at his shrine, carry rolled bundles of *rallees* (quilts) from their homes to spread out in the courtyard as bedding. The word *rallee* comes from the word *ralanna*, which means to mix and connect. *Rallee*-making is one of the activities of material culture. In Sind, it is carried out by the womenfolk all over the country. It demonstrates their aesthetic sense as well as patterning skill. The word '*rallee*' has its origin in the infinitive '*ralannu*', which means to mix, to join, to connect. Hence, the word '*rallee*', in the making of which the process of patching or joining small pieces of cloth is involved. *Rallee* is a sort of quilt or coverlet. The diminutive of it is '*rallo*', which is made and used for babies.



Sind is a hot region, and therefore, the *rallee*, which is entirely made of cotton stuff, is used as a bed-spread as well as blanket to put on top. *Rallee* making is a lengthy process which is undertaken in leisure time by the womenfolk. All the worn-out clothes after washing are collected and preserved. The more strong pieces are then stitched together till they make a full sheet of about 3-1/2' X 6' size. It is called the '*purr*' (the cover sheet). The *rallee* consists of two *purrs*, the upper and the lower one. In between the *purrs*, clean pieces of rags are spread and thatched. This is called *lihu*. The lower *purr* (the reverse sheet) is simpler one. It is dyed in indigo or any other light colour, preferably green one. The upper *purr* (the face or the obverse) must have a design. The more easy way is to use a full cloth sheet with the hand print design on it. Thus, the half worn *ajrak* used by men or the *chunee* used by women as head wear is often used as the readymade 'upper *purr*' to expedite the *rallee* making process.<sup>92</sup> This is the more common type of *rallee*. The more sophisticated type would have the upper '*purr*' made of patch-work of cloth pieces, cut into various designs so as to make it more attractive, more impressive and more colourful. The '*purr*' of this type takes a long time to make. When the two '*purrs*' are ready and also enough of *lihu* (clean pieces of rags) is collected, the lady from one house, would invite other ladies from the neighbouring houses, for what is called '*rallee-vijhannu*' (laying the *rallee*), which means starting *rallee* making. The ladies would arrive on the fixed day after the breakfast time. Straw-mats would be spread out. Then the lower '*purr*' would be spread out for *lihu*(laying), i.e., thatching the rag-pieces proportionately all over. Thereafter the upper '*purr*' would be laid out on the top to cover up the *lihu*'. Then the ladies would sit on different corners to do the stitching work in straight lines. During this process, the ladies would be carrying on their discussions simultaneously so as not to get bored. The work would be suspended for an hour for lunch and resumed again. Thus, work and entertainment are combined during *rallee*-making, which is an occasion fondly looked for by all. Before sun-set, the basic stitchery would beaver and the ladies would depart leaving the host to complete the rest of the work more leisurely.

The colours and designs of the '*rallee*' vary with the different sub regions. In the lower Sind (*Lar*), upper Sind and also in Cholistan (the hilly western region) the dominant colours of the upper '*purr*' would be black and white, with different designs and borders; but in the

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<sup>92</sup>. Bilgrami Noorjehan, Ahmed Tehmina, Mingeikan Nihon, Tana Bana: The Woven Soul of Pakistan, Koel Publications, 2004, p. 45

central area, it would, be multi-coloured. This is especially the case with the eastern Valley called '*Muhrano*', extending from Sanghar to Samara and Umerkot talukas. *Rallees* of '*Muhrano*' are famous for their beautiful design and fine stitch. A distinct type of *rallee* is known as '*kanbeeree*'; the characteristic of which is that the face-designs are created not by patch work but by stitching a variety of coloured threads.<sup>93</sup> It excels in its stitching technique. This type of '*rallee*' is made in the lower Sind. *Rallees* are not always made for sale; they are a necessary utility for household purposes. As a custom, *rallees* are presented as gifts to the *Pirs* and *Faqirs* (spiritual guides) when they visit the homes of their followers. New tastes have been developed and the best designed *rallees* are being used as carpets in drawing-rooms, cushion-covers and wall-decoration. Day by day they are in greater demand.

### **A normal *Rallee***

Whether a quilt, a cushion cover or a table runner, is a textile jewel finished with physical and spiritual labour done with hand and mind putting in almost 180 hours of an artisan woman doing this job. Women start making *rallee* in early ages as part of their dowry. In other cases, the poor artisans offer these products as gifts to elite families of Sindh on occasion of marriages or births and in return get an animal like cow, buffalo or a goat (locally called as *khir piyarina* i.e. to provide a regular source of milk for the artisan's family).

### ***Sindhi Rallees***

*Sindhi rallees* are beautiful and colourful. They are cluster of patchwork and or embroidery. Used also as bed linen *Sindhi rallee* is made with multicoloured pieces of cloth stitched together in attractive designs. The colour combinations and unique patterns speak for the aesthetic sense of its creator. The designs vary from floral motifs, waves and images of animals or trees. Many handicrafts of great beauty like cushion covers, embroidered shirts; wall hangers and mirror worked handbags are also made in *rallee* style mainly in Umarmarkot and Tharparkar area of Sindh. Most commonly used as a bedspread, the *rallee* can also be used as a cushion cover, pillow case, prayer mat (*musallah*), or floor covering. Almost every

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<sup>93</sup> Bilgrami Noorjehan, Ahmed Tehmina, Mingeikan Nihon, Tana Bana: The Woven Soul of Pakistan, Koel Publications, 2004, p. 47

rural household in Sindh contains a collection of *rallees*, usually made by the members of the family for everyday use. In Sindh, two different types of *rallee* are produced; the *tuk* (piece) *rallee* and the *kata* (cut) *rallee*. The *tuk rallee* is made by sewing together small pieces of multicoloured cloth to create different designs, much like patchwork. The patterns are usually bold and geometric, giving a simple but stunning effect<sup>94</sup>.

The craftswomen produce the *tuk rallee* in their homes, with families working independently of each other. However, members of one family usually work together in sewing the *rallee*.<sup>95</sup> Traditionally, *rallee* was only made from cotton. However, around 15 years ago the trend changed and the demand for cotton tapered off, being replaced by cheap polyester silk. As a result, most *rallees* produced today are synthetic.<sup>96</sup> The *kata rallee* is an appliqué, where pieces of coloured cloth are folded and cut into various patterns and then stitched onto a white base cloth, forming the upper part (*teha*) of the *rallee*. The lower part (*purr*) of the *rallee* is then attached to the *teha* by a fine running stitch (*tropa*).<sup>97</sup> The *rallee* is also used by travelling *faqirs* (beggars) and snake-charmers. In Tando Bagho, a small town of Badin district in Sindh, under a temporary shed with partitions of *rallee* embroidered cloth, and piled metal trunks, live small nomadic communities of Sami fakirs, people come to them to know their fortune (*faal nama*) read; they otherwise wander, carrying their belongings in *jholis* (sacks) made with fine, colourful contrasting stitches.<sup>98</sup> The women embroider on patched pieces of quilted recycled cloth, with several threads at the same time. Combining running or darning stitch, back stitch, and interlacing stitches, exquisite patterns are created. Their intricate embroidery echoes the markings of windswept sand, flowers of the desert, and geometric patterns.

*Rallee* textiles are very traditionally made by women in the areas of Sindh, Pakistan, Western India and Gujarat. *Rallee* textiles are just gaining international recognition, even though women have been making these quilts for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. The

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<sup>94</sup> Bilgrami, Noorjehan, *Tana Bana: The Woven Soul of Pakistan*, Koel Publications, Karachi, 2004(ed), p 53

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p 53

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p 54

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p 54

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p 60

levels of the people, who make these textiles, are woven into each piece.<sup>99</sup> The symbols of flowers and animals used in the decoration and colours are imaginative and exotic. Every *rallee* quilt tells a story. It tells of the natural creativity and love of colour and design of the woman who creates them. Every *rallee* tells the story of the strength of tradition and motifs of *rallees* which have been passed from mother to daughter and woman-to-woman may be for thousands of years.<sup>100</sup> The pattern and colours of *rallee* quilts embody all the romance and exoticism of the East.<sup>101</sup> One of the *rallee* quilts pictured in her book looks like a bar quilt of flying geese, surrounded by a saw tooth border and a wider border of square-in-a-square on point.



Fig 61. Another style of rallee which reflects the western influence, these types of rallees is produced on demand, at Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

<sup>99</sup> Stoddard, Patricia Ormsby, *Ralli Quilts: The Traditional Textiles From Pakistan and India*, Schiffer Publishing, 2003, p 45

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, P 68

<sup>101</sup> Eddy, Cecilia, *Quilted Planet: A source book of Quilts from around the world*, Clarkson Potter Publishing, 2005, p 118

Ironically, this fascinating cultural product, gaining recognition abroad, is losing its importance back home. Textile market trends are changing as do the changes in ultra fashioned home textiles which influence the purchasing priorities of the buyers. A major reason involved in decline of usage of the cultured goods is also the poverty of the inhabitants of Sindh. A lot of skilled artisans are leaving their profession because of a lack of patronage. This work of art is exclusively handmade and cannot be duplicated. The skill travels from generation to generation but due to dearth of proper avenues for young artisans, new generation has not much interest in learning the trade of their forefathers. Their priorities too have changed. Which's why this centuries old art is on decline, for a revival and preservation of the handicrafts support is needed from the concerned quarters of the society. New markets need to be explored within the country as well as internationally.

**AHAN** steps in to solve the problems and to tackle on-ground issues, due credits go to AHAN (Aik Hunar Aik Nagar) project of the Ministry of Industries, Govt. of Pakistan, with a three pronged strategy initiated a pilot project for the craftswomen of Sukkur (Sindh). During first phase of this pilot, a large number of designs were reviewed by the designers. They observed that different geographic locations have different *rallee* designs having their own history and tradition, hence different geographic clusters and craftswomen were identified by AHAN. They were then trained as master trainers. About five clusters of 12 master craftswomen were given one month on-job training at designers' training centres in Karachi. The training course provided skills in product development with different themes and tones. The object of this pilot project is that by training the 'masters' they will then work further at their villages to train more women. Renowned Pakistani designer Deepak Perwani was involved to provide his expertise in product development and training. He has now trained a group of female artisans at his factory in Karachi. The idea behind such trainings is to add value to this village craft by turning out different *rallee* products like fashion apparel, handbags, embellishments on shawls and bedroom accessories that include table lamps shades, cushions and toys. The women participants were also trained on modern designs and guided on different marketing channels. Their products were also displayed at a women expo to get the market feedback.

In embroidery and patchwork *rallee*, Ms. Shehnaz Ismail, Head of the Textile Deptt., of the Indus Valley School at Karachi, was engaged to design and develop a tailor made course for the artisans engaged in embroidery and patchwork. The first training of the groups was conducted by the craftswomen who were already familiarized with design, measurements and pattern making, improvement of aesthetic- ability, sense and quality aspects of the product. During trainings they were also introduced with different markets for purchase of good quality raw material and sale of their products. Once the training programs scheduled by the AHAN are completed, we can see some chances for the womenfolk indulged in this rural craft; that their economic lot will be improved and their products will be sold not only in their traditional markets but also in modern, trendy fashion boutiques of the world as well.



Fig 62. A traditional and beautiful rallee stye at Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

## Chapter 3

### EMBROIDERY

Embroidery is another art at which the women of Sind have been very expert for generations. The traditional embroidery patterns incorporate decorative elements prevailing in the art media of ancient times.<sup>102</sup> Embroidery is an established craft of the Indus Valley Civilization. Among the excavation finds at Mohenjo-Daro are thin bronze needles resembling those used for embroidery and the depiction of a figure robed with ornamental cloth. The robe of the king priest, a noble man, has trefoil motifs that are raised above the surface and suggest that they were embroidered.<sup>103</sup> This may be conjectured but the fact remains that the inhabitants of Mohenjo-Daro were sophisticated craftsmen of many media and fancied decorative ornamentation.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, it is logical to assume that the ancient people of Sind also mastered embroidery which is a fundamental textile craft. Sind has continued this art during every period of history. Embroidered leather slippers were exported to Baghdad from Sind in the 10th century.<sup>105</sup>

Intricate embroideries on leather mats and pillow cushions were described by Marco Polo in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and by Hamilton in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as decorated with rich floral patterns, animals, and birds embroidered with gold and silver thread.<sup>106</sup> The wide range of decorative styles with different kinds of motifs can be discussed in relation to their different areas and work done by different ethnic groups. The *Gajju*, unique to Thano Bula Khan of District Dadu, is a lavishly embroidered shirt with different kinds of colours and with different kinds of floral motifs and geometric patterns. It is fully covered with intricate thick

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<sup>102</sup> Yacopino, Feliccia, *Threadlines Pakistan*, Ministries of industries, Karachi, Govt of Pakistan, 1977, p.27

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p.27

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p.27

<sup>105</sup> Sorley, H.T., *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, p.99

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p.99

silk embroidery and mirror work. The Lohanas and other Samat tribes of Thano Bula Khan are acclaimed for their fine craftsmanship in this art. Other extraordinary embroideries also come from Thano Bula Khan.

The craftsmen of Pakistan today excel in a varied, media of hand embroidery wrought with cotton, silk; wool, gold and silver threads. Pakistan also has a distinct folk tradition in embroidery in which the stitch and motif employed by the embroiderer varies from region to region. The northern hill areas, Swat, Chitral, Hunza and Kashmir, are renowned for their *kashida* embroidery. The *phulkari* embroidery technique on the other hand is centred round Multan, Peshawar and Lahore. Then again Sind and Baluchistan have a distinct tradition of interlaced (herringbone) stitch called *hurwich*. Sind is also the home of the famous mirror work embroidery, with its myriad reflecting lights on a bright red or black dress of silk or cotton home spun. In the *kashida* embroidery of Kashmir, the pattern and colour schemes are so magnificently embroidered that the finished product is a woven fabric of variegated silken sprays. The perfection of the *Kashmiri kashida-work* has touched the heights of fantasy and incredulity.<sup>107</sup> So minutely and intricately are the blossoms, tender leaves, arid bird motifs of the famous valley laid before the eye, as if the craftsman stitched not because it was a tutored art, but because his mood was aligned to the spirit of nature around him.<sup>108</sup>

The embroidery of Kashmir is today worked on shawls, stoles, coats, saris, table-linen and dress material, and for beauty and aesthetic perfection draws the tourist from the far corners of the world. Refugee artisans from Indian-occupied Kashmir are settled in Pakistan in and around the important towns of Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.<sup>109</sup> It is interesting to note that whereas the Kashmiri embroiderer and refugee artisan from Delhi and Lucknow employs the formal floral designs of the Mughuls, the folk embroidery of Pakistan is characterised by an exotic arrangement of Turkish motifs, laid in squares and cubes and geometric shapes. The

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<sup>107</sup> Mirza, Anis, Handicrafts of the West Pakistan, West Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation, 1964, p.44

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p.44

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 44



intermingled flower and leaf motif is comparatively inconspicuous.<sup>110</sup> Bold lines and bright colours are the striking features of Pakistan's rural embroidery.

The state of Kalat is known for its exquisite embroidery, especially for the manner of embroidering the pockets and arms of the woman's garment called *pashk*. Las Bela has a tradition for intricate crochet work. The custom of ornamenting the red bridal bedspread with tassels, shells and glass is also peculiar to this region. The pattern is laid in triangular arrangements into which shell patterns are set. Mirrors are embroidered on to the fabric and the hem is outlined with shells and tassels. The gold and silver *karchob* embroidery tradition in Pakistan probably originated in the time of the Mughul Emperors who ruled over Delhi.<sup>111</sup> The *zardozi* and *kamdani* styles of gold and silver embroidery are largely the artistic handiwork of Muslim artisans from Delhi and Lucknow.<sup>112</sup> The *kamdani* embroidery is light and star-like in effect, and worked with a flattened but stiff gold or silver wire. *Zardozi* embroidery is heavily wrought on thick satins and velveteen. Discs and stars or crescents of gold are set in intricate patterns. Karachi is one of the leading centres for *zardozi* work. The Lahore artisan is however a past master in embroidering bridal attire with heavy and silver inset work called *gota* and *gokru*.

## **TYPES OF EMBROIDERY**

Sind region has developed unique types of embroidery, which are attractive and fascinating owing to their intricacy and colourfulness. Here, not only women but also men have practised this art for a long time. In particular, the majority of women in Sind have a heritage of needle work behind them. Most of them are extremely handy with the needle. Their needle work satisfies two basic cravings every human being has, the desire to create and the desire to beautify. The following types of embroidery are being practised in Sind region today.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p.44

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p.53

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p.53

### ***TIKUN JO BHARTU* (Mirror Work)**

The mirrors are extensively used in the embroidery of Sindh and Baluchistan. The silvered glass is attached to the fabric by means of stitched so called Indian Mirror frameworks and encircling borders. For this work, small round pieces of mirror and multi-coloured silken thread are required. The round mirror pieces are first fixed appropriately, according to a particular design, on the cloth with cross stitches and then the round edges are made with button-hole stitches. This work is always accompanied by different types of embroidery in order to enhance its beauty. The art of mirror embroidery is centred around Hyderabad and Quetta. It is really a later off-shoot of the *phulkari* technique. A striking effect of this innovation is the reflection of colour and light.



Fig 63. Sindhi embroidery shows the mirror work at Sindh museum, Hyderabad, Pakistan.

## ***HURMUTCH WORK***

*Hurmutch* work is done very intricately so much so that to complete it one has to do and re-do it, even four times. Some women use blocks for tracing while others, being experts, do it without tracing. Silken as well as cotton thread is used for this embroidery. First the base is made and then it is filled in, mostly with contrasting colour shades.



Fig 64. The Hurmutch work displayed at the museum of Sindhology.

## GAJJU WORK

It is done on a square piece of silk. Sometimes cotton piece is also used. The worked over piece, called *gajju*, forms the upper portion of the blouse, to the lower border of which is attached either a long loose red cloth piece known as *lawan* or a short piece of hand print cloth known as *petti*. The *gajju* embroidery is mostly done through running and satin stitches in different shades in geometrical patterns. The round pieces of mirror, tusslets, sequens and dull beads are sewn both on *gajju* and *petti* to enhance beauty and decoration.



Fig 65. The famous gajju work of Sindh, Sindh museum, Hyderabad.

### ***KATAH JO KAMMU (Appliqué Work)***

In olden days, this work was done exclusively on *rallees*, but nowadays it has received so much of appreciation that fashionable folk have started having this work on shirts, saris, cushions, table cloth etc. Two cloth pieces in contrasting shades are used for this work. One piece is cut into different intricate designs and is then sewn on the other piece with hem stitches. Finer the stitch, the better the work becomes. The same sort of work is done on white voile *pahrans* (men's loose shirts). It is done on the wrong side of the neck and shoulders of the *pahran* and it takes the form of shadow work. On the *rallee* it is done on the right side of the cloth.

### ***Sindhi Lohana Woman's Wedding Tunic***

The wedding tunics made by the women of *Lohana* Hindu enclaves in Sindh are encrusted with geometric and floral designs, mostly in chain and double button-hole stitches. The knee-length tunics are worn with trousers and a head covering. During the wedding ceremony the bride wears the neck-slit to the back, after the ceremony, to the front. The upper corners of the neck-slit are filled with sand from the bride's native village or a sacred site.



Fig 66. This is Sindhi Luhana tribe women wedding tunic or shirt called cholo.

## ***PHULKARI* (flower work)**

It is a technique of surface darning and satin stitching that requires counting the threads on the reverse side of the fabric. By taking up a single thread with the needle, only the smallest amount of silk shows on the reverse, while a “float” of shimmering hand spun silk floss (pat) is left on the front. Nuances are created by changing the direction of the stitches. Hindu and Muslim communities in Punjab Province and the Hazara Region have traditionally created *phulkari* shawls for important family occasions, especially weddings. Those from Hazara are traditionally made of joined panels of coarse, hand-woven white cotton (khaddar) and embellished with geometric patterns in dark Pinkish-red silk floss.

For centuries, the women in the villages of Punjab have made embroidered head-cloths, skirts, shawls, bed-spreads, carpets and wall-hangings using phulkari. In rural areas, a young girl's skill at phulkari would influence her marriage prospects. *Phulkari* was a part of a girl's trousseau that was painstakingly prepared through years — the quality and quantity of *phulkaris* and *baghs*(garden) given during marriage determined the social status of the family. Corners of the shawls or *duppattas* would be deliberately embroidered with a flawed design (nazar buti) to ward off evil. However, like many other traditional crafts, *phulkari* too is sadly a dying art today. The traditional weaving and embroidery in Pakistan transcend state boundaries — for instance the *phulkari* embroidery is not just confined to Punjab, even women from Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province make beautiful *phulkari* creations.



Fig 67 Phulkari work, front view, at Sindh museum.



Fig 68. Phulkari reverse view, at Sindh Museum.



## ***SITARAN AIN MOTEN JO KAMMU (Sequence and Bead Work)***

Sitaran ain Moten jo Kammu is Sindhi language term ,It is a common art practised all over the region. The bead work, at times, is done in a typical way. The dull beads are woven like a net that forms the cover for baked 'clay toys and glass vases. Long tube-like beads are woven to form beautiful frills of doors and windows.



Fig 69. This picture shows the bead work, it is famous in Tharparkar district of Sindh, Sindh museum, Hyserabad.

## ***ZARDOZI (Silver & Gold Thread Work)***

### **History**

The word is of Persian origin- (lit.gold stitching'), and, this art probably, developed in the Subcontinent under the Iranian influence during the Mughal period. Close contacts between

Sindh and Iran continued up to the Talpur rule (1781-1843) and hence, in Sind, this art continued to flourish at its zenith up to the end of this period. Hyderabad, Khairpur, Mirpur, Thatta and Shikarpur were then the main centres of *Zardozi* embroidery. In the city of Hyderabad alone hundreds of artisans practised *Zardozi* as a profession. *Zardozan-jo parro* (quarter of zardozi) near Khuhnbati Street and Tando Agha were the main centres of this art in the city. This work is done all over the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, but the Sindhi art is typical in technique and execution. After the British conquest in 1843, this art began to decline, first due to lack of patronage and then due to change in taste. Yet the old families continued on with their traditional profession and; by 1875, there were still one hundred practising artisans in the city.<sup>113</sup> The cloth is fixed into a rectangular wooden frame and then the embroidery in silver and golden thread is carried out in different designs. *Zardozi* work of Sind region is comparatively more sober and beautiful, and hence it has become a craze of the fashionable society nowadays; *Gota*, *Champa*, *Thapa*, and *Kinari* work is also practised. The work done on leather (shoes, purses, decorative sheets) is a special feature of Sind region.

Sindh has a rich tradition of needlework and, even today, embroidery is the main source of livelihood for the rural Sindhi women, who make ingenious use of mirrors, threads, beads, ribbons, coins and sequins etc to decorate *cholis* (shirts), *kurtas* (long shirts), *duppattas* (shawl) and caps. The style of embroidery varies from region to region — in north, the embroidery has a distinct Baloch influence and in Thar it is decorated with patterns of Kutchh and Gujrat. The North-West Frontier Province, bordering on Afghanistan, has been influenced by trade with Turkistan and China. Textiles here reflect a mix of Afghani and Pakistani tradition with a focus on phulkari and other embroidery. Unique local styles of embroidery still survive in more isolated areas.

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<sup>113</sup> Baloch, Dr. N.A, Welcome address on the occasion of the 18<sup>th</sup> All Sind Literary Conference Hyderabad, Sindh University Press, Hyderabad, 1958, p.22



Fig 70. This picture shows the famous used zardozi work by Mughal emperors in their dresses, at Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

Sindh has a rich tradition of needlework and, even today, embroidery is the main source of livelihood for the rural Sindhi women, who make ingenious use of mirrors, threads, beads, ribbons, coins and sequins etc to decorate *cholis*(shirts), *kurtas*(long shirts), *duppattas*(shawl) and caps. The style of embroidery varies from region to region — in north, the embroidery has a distinct Baloch influence and in Thar it is decorated with patterns of Kutchh and Gujrat. The North-West Frontier Province, bordering on Afghanistan, has been influenced by trade with Turkistan and China. Textiles here reflect a mix of Afghani and Pakistani tradition with a focus on phulkari and other embroidery. Unique local styles of embroidery still survive in more isolated areas.

Again, embroidery is an activity undertaken primarily by women, who embroider garments for their families. Designs may feature medallions and the typical 'ram's horn' pattern. Baluchistan, which is the largest province in Pakistan, is famous for its rich nomadic culture. Embroidery forms a part of domestic tradition of all three major ethnic groups in the rural areas of the province and is the main source of income for the rural women. Each tribe has its original symbol of motifs and colours. These embroideries use embellishments such as beads, mirrors, threads, golden and silver *kallabattoo*, ribbons, shells, coins, sequins, and semiprecious stones. Valued for their intricate designs and workmanship, the embroidery of Balochistan is so fine that it gives the impression of being machine-made.

Sadly, the rich textile legacy of Pakistan is in the danger of dying out. Even as the Pakistani fashion comes of age with trendy boutiques displaying a dazzling array of stylish clothes in scintillating colours and designs, the fate of the ancient textile heritage of the country hangs in balance. There remain only a handful of block-print workshops employing the ancient and timeless techniques that date back to the Indus Valley civilization. The hand-spun silk floss is slowly giving way to machine-made threads and the vegetable dyes are now being replaced by the synthetic dyes. As Pakistani textiles prepare to carve a strong niche in the international arena, it is time to revive and resuscitate the ancient crafts on the verge of breathing their last.

## Chapter 4

### WOOD CRAFT

Woodcrafts in Pakistan are showing unmistakable signs of rejuvenation. Carved wooden panels for doors and walls are again being used in houses and so are latticed screens. A large community of craftsmen is beautifying all types of furniture and other wooden articles meant for daily use or decoration through carving and incising, colouring and inlaying. Considering that wood is an expensive material, costlier than some of the easily available substitutes (iron, plastic and concrete), and that Pakistan does not have abundant timber resources, the popularity of woodcrafts cannot wholly be explained as a legacy of primitive man's affinity with trees. Although less than five per cent of the country's land is under forests, the material available to Pakistan's wood-craftsmen is of considerable variety. While the forests of mangrove-like trees in the coastal areas mostly provide firewood, date palms, *babul* (acacia Arabica or acacia nilotica), *farash*, *kikar* and *pipal* (ficus religiosa) scattered all over the sandy plains have traditionally yielded raw material for wood-craftsmen. In hill tracts of Baluchistan and the Northern Areas are found fruit trees and forests of deodar, pines, walnut, oaks, birch and willows. But by far the largest source of wood are the irrigated plantations of *shisham* (dalbergia sissoo) and mulberry. The shisham also known as Indian Rosewood plantations vary from large forests in Chhangamanga and Chichawatni.

It is not possible to trace the evolution of carpentry in the agricultural communities of Sindh, more than 5,000 years ago or during the period of the Mohenjo Daro-Harappa culture though wood is mentioned among its exports. The Vedic literature, compiled by Aryans moving into the Gangetic plains of India from the Frontier and Punjab regions of Pakistan, mentions carpenters as prominent members of the artisan community.<sup>114</sup> There are also references to different kinds of couches-a special one to serve as the nuptial bed, of a

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<sup>114</sup> Nabi Khan, Ahmed, *Budhist Art and Architecture in Pakistan*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Islamabad, 1976, p 11.

different size for a maiden and another for a single woman. The oldest designs of wood work to have survived in this region date from the Buddha period. In the Northern Areas have been recovered numerous specimens of wooden sculptural figures of deities and rulers. Far more impressive workmanship is seen on doors, panels, chests, windows, balconies, water-pitcher stands, etc., in what has come to be known as the Swat style. The availability of a more durable and easier to use, material like stone in the region may have obviated the necessity of constructing all-wood complexes such as the Guptas built at Pataliputra (old name of Patna City of India) but wood cottages were common in the northern valleys of Chitral and Kafiristan.<sup>115</sup> Simple, incised or raised lines and geometric designs on wall panels, doors, balconies and windows show widespread traces of Greek influence.<sup>116</sup> The surviving collection of old pieces displays craftsmanship that has evoked admiration for ages.



fig 71. This is an traditional style of Sawat and Hunza homes, with wood carved walls and doors.

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<sup>115</sup> Khan, Dr FA, Architecture and Art Treasures in Pakistan, Elite Publishers, Karachi, 1969, p 63.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid,

## WOOD CARVING IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF PAKISTAN

The condition of wood-carving and woodwork in the sub-continent has been conditioned by numerous factors; the availability and import of wood, the trend of architecture, and the place of furniture in the lives of the people. All these factors, in one way or another, have from time to time either encouraged the craft, or brought about its decline. Intricate and detailed wood-carving once was a significant feature of Muslim tradition in the subcontinent. The Muslim craftsman both here and in the Middle-East, from Turkey through Iran, had established a unique tradition of carving arabesque and *jali* or *pinjdra* (designs with wholes) patterns, in all kinds of wood. The chief characteristics of what was known as the Muslim style in wood-work is exhibited by the absence of mythological depictions. Instead, one perceives a flatness of relief, absence of undercutting, and the free use of geometric diapers incised in line merely, or in framed lattice work, on the late Mughul pillar, pilaster and *mehrab*.



Fig 72. This is the very famous Omar Hayat Haveli at Chiniot, Pakistan, with wbeautiful wood carving on the windows with the shape of a *mehrab*

Architectural use of wood was confined to places of worship and '*havelis*'(palaces) of the middle order nobility. A number of Hindu temples had whole walls of intricately carved wood. Several specimens of such work have been preserved in the Peshawar and Lahore Museums. At one time it was common to decorate the ceilings in homes with thin strips of wood arranged in geometric designs which could then be studded with mirrors or painted, such as the ceilings in *Shish Mahal* in the Lahore Fort.<sup>117</sup> Richly ornamented doors, windows and balconies at some of the old '*havelis*'(palaces) in Lahore and Chiniot still attract interested observers in large numbers. The Sethi family home in Peshawar, built in the nineteenth century, presents fine examples of wood craftsmanship. But as in other parts of the Muslim world it was the use of wood in the mosque that brought out the best of the wood-carvers. The '*mimbar*' (rostrum) installed at the Wazir Khan Mosque, though made during the British period, reflects the influence of a mature tradition. The craftsmen carved on wood floral motifs, arabesque, and lines from the *Quran*. Up in the north in Swat, the craftsmen engaged to carve panels for the mosque at Kalam produced a fine blend of the Islamic style of floral ornamentation and pre-Islamic sculptural carving.

In Chiniot one can still find a number of houses in which carved wood panels and columns were used. Large panels of lattice work, called '*pinjra*', were fitted into the upper portions of the walls to serve as ventilators or window screens, or wooden niches were designed in numerous forms.<sup>118</sup> In countless houses in towns and villages such screens are still considered ideal means of ventilation without affecting the privacy of the house. Over the centuries craftsmen have evolved innumerable patterns for '*pinjra*' work. Within a frame are set small pieces of thin wood on which geometric or floral designs have been pierced and when the design is repeated-sometimes hundreds of pieces are assembled to form a panel-the piece as a whole acquires a most imposing pattern.

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<sup>117</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts: Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, p.357

<sup>118</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts: Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, p.357



A far more extensive use of the wood carver's skill has been in furniture making. The oldest surviving style was evolved by the early craftsman of the Northern Areas who created massive pieces-beds, chests, chairs, stands for water-pitchers and oil-lamps, spoons, etc. Time has not affected the appeal of such items of furniture and they have never gone out of use. In the recent decades they have found patrons far away from the area of their origin. For example, the whole furniture designed by the late Shakir Ali, one of the most original painters of Pakistan, a great lover of arts and crafts, and for many years Principal of the National College of Arts, for his house in Lahore-now turned into the Shakir Ali Museum-is in the style immortalized by unknown Swati craftsmen centuries ago. Many an art-minded urbanite takes pains to acquire at least one Swati couch for his home and it is not uncommon to find old windows or fire places from Swat installed at newly-constructed bungalows. One can find the legs of latest beds and chairs shaped as inverted lotuses, and if the craftsmen of old style, they decorate their work with geometric designs carved in various patterns the trend now is to mix the traditional motifs with new patterns in arabesque and floral variations.

A similar but equally vigorous style of wood work has developed in the Peshawar valley. Traditional Peshawari furniture is still liked for its sturdy look and bold ornamentation. While the Swati and Peshawari furniture is made from oak, deodar, and partial wood, all over Azad Kashmir and some parts of the Frontier province walnut wood has provided the craftsmen with a wonderful base to give full rein to their inventiveness. Kashmiri wood-carvers, in particular, have become famous all over the world. They have perfected their skills in all forms of carving and most of their work is done at home. The cottage provides the atmosphere of a genuine craftsman's workshop and the worker creates beauty by the dextrous use of his hands. Over the years the range of carved wood articles has greatly increased. Today Kashmiri craftsmen are producing a number of furniture items-beds, sofa-sets, dressing tables, writing desks, drawers, cup-boards, chairs, etc.-, all of profusely carved walnut. Besides, they are carving sculptural figures, foliated patterns, creepers and geometric designs on innumerable articles of common use and decoration pieces, such as wall panels, vases, lamp-stands, bowls, plates, spoons, fruit dishes, combs, hairpins, cigarette boxes, lighter-cases, walking sticks, '*rehals*' (stands for putting the Quran on), toys, etc.

Craftsmen in the Punjab plains have taken to carving on hard and cheaper wood like *shisham*. (Dalbergia sissoo). Chiniot is the traditional home of such workers but one can find smaller groups in almost all major towns near the markets. No doubt they sometimes succeed in carving motifs and patterns traditionally associated with walnut but they know that *shisham* cannot be given the soft texture of the walnut. This probably explains the, concentration of effort on creation of variety in form and designs of surface decorations. Thus one finds tables in numerous shapes: the tops may be rectangular, square, circular, polygonal, or palm-shaped, and they may rest on four straight legs or on a single pillar.<sup>119</sup>



Fig 73. A wood carver at his workshop , carving the most difficult walnut wood at Karachi.

<sup>119</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Pakistan, 1979,P.103



Fig 74. This wooden piece carved in Sindh, reflects the Chaukhandi style of carving from Chaukhandi Graveyard in Karachi, Sindh.

Punjab wood-craft was only confined to architectural functions only but, beautifully carved takht (divans) beds, piris, chowkis, tables and cabinets were made in many centres of this province. Local and immigrant craftsmen carved superb pierced-work caskets, screens and boxes for innumerable functions. Their best skill was exhibited in carving printing blocks for the dyers and *qalamkaars* of northern India.<sup>120</sup> The principal style associated with Punjab woodwork in the Islamic tradition was a text-book reproduction of floral and geometric scrolls and foliage minutely veined, twisted and distributed in diapers of flat low reliefs.<sup>121</sup> The finest specimens of this style in the shape of doors and windows were salvaged by the British from Shahpur Bhera and Chiniot, three affluent trading centres. The other known centres of wood-craft in the Punjab were Jullunder, Ludhiana, Gujrat, Hissar, Hoshiar pur, Batala and Amritsar, Sir George Watt observed in his famous compilation: "In the wide range

<sup>120</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, *History of Handicrafts: Pakistan and India*, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, P. 360

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

of work met with, the most powerful influence has undoubtedly been that of the Muhammadan." He added further: "The modern Hindu and Sikh doors of the Punjab are so governed by Muhammedan influence that, but for the vivid representations of living forms, they can with difficulty be separated as distinct styles of architecture and carving."<sup>122</sup> While Punjab loaned its skills and master tarkhans to other provinces it also received infusions of Kashmiri talent through the refugees who fled the valley after each natural and political upheaval during its long and turbulent history, and it was through Kashmiri woodwork that tradition in the Punjab was further enriched by Persian aesthetics.

Culturally Multan and Uchchh lie midway between the Punjab and Sindh and therefore they have culled the best from both. This region is generally rich in handicrafts such as tile-work, handlooms, leather work, block-printing, enamelling, carpet-making, etc., but it has not been associated with woodwork the way Chiniot, Shahpur and Bhera were in the Punjab. The documented gazetteers and journals prepared by the British since the 1860s do not have entries for carved woodwork from Multan whose carpenters were good at lathe turnery.<sup>123</sup> The best preserved architecture in this area like most others is obviously religious; particularly saints' shrines which have been well-maintained through the centuries by cash gifts of devotees and ruling chiefs. The main emphasis on the decor of these monuments has been given by painted glazed tiles whereas woodwork has played a very subdued and insignificant role. Moreover, it is not possible to date this woodwork as most of it has been repaired and replaced at various stages. Possibly one of the oldest surviving woodwork specimens from the Sultanate period in the subcontinent is said to be the *mihrab* or arched prayer niche in Shaikh Rukn-i-Alarri's mausoleum in Multan which was completed by 1326.<sup>124</sup>

At first sight it may appear that the technique of carving on wood has not changed much except that the craftsmen have replaced their home-made chisels, with blades in a limited number of sizes, with stronger, imported chisels, with straight and curved blades of various widths. But Pakistani craftsmen eager to explore further the possibilities of decorative carving offered by the natural colour and grain of the wood or to overcome the limitations

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<sup>122</sup> Watt, G, A dictionary of economic products of India, Vol, VI, London, 1893, p 360

<sup>123</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts: Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988,

P.361

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

imposed by such peculiarities. Traditionally they have ... their workmanship to suit the nature of the raw material, but now the work is in black, opaque wood and more of relief work on lighter coloured wood. The patterns of carving would be determined by the staple and grain and tonal variations on the surface of the available wood. But there is increasing evidence of successful attempts to defy the impediment of grain to carving and also to reduce reliance on post-carving operations, like rubbing with sandpaper or polishing, to smoothen out rough chisel work or sharpen the detail. It is easy to appreciate the glow of pride in the eyes of a master craftsman like Mohammad Ali, who heads the woodcraft section of the Design Department at Lahore's National College of Arts, when he draws your attention to his exquisitely carved panels of deodar wood, generally considered too long stapled for minute carving of foliated designs, displaying a miracle wrought by fingers and chisels, in natural colour and without the aid of any rubbing agent.<sup>125</sup>

For a long time the craft of wood carving was far more common than inlaying. The reason was obvious: in the ancient village societies a carver working alone needed only a piece of wood and his elementary tools. But the idea of crafting wood with different materials could not have failed to attract societies that had learnt to appreciate the beauty of inlaid stone and metal objects. The rich rulers started matching precious wood with precious metals or ivory but since there was enough of gold and embellished court gowns and sandals, ivory became the most highly prized material to inlay wood with. Only a little of the ivory inlaid wood work from the Mughal period, when the craft reached its peak, has survived. But the strength of the craft can be judged not only from the surviving specimens of the period but also from the present-day practice of inlaying wood with cheaper materials. Ivory inlaid furniture and decoration pieces are still produced in Pakistan but a shrinking market for such expensive goods and limited availability of imported ivory have forced the craftsmen to substitute it with horn, bone, or plastic.

Many craftsmen have learnt to use bone strips so well as to give the effect of ivory inlay. In fact, unlike the workers inlaying wood with ivory, they have found it possible to use bone to create bolder patterns. Notable examples are the setting of floral cut-outs in spiral-

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.104

like combination on jewellery boxes, and the arrangement in perspective of cut-out pieces under the glass top of a table to give the effect of a sea-bed scene. Much more common now is the use of brass. Peshawar and Chiniot have been the traditional centres of brass-inlaid wood-work. The *Mohallah Tarkhanan* (carpenters' quarters) in Chiniot has the largest concentration of inlay experts whose constant hammering fills the air with the vibrant music of labour.

Whatever the material used for inlay the technique is the same. First the inlay pattern is drawn on paper or card-board which is then perforated or cut out to be used as a stencil for transferring the pattern on to the sheet of inlay material-ivory, brass or plastic. The impression of the cut-out pattern is drawn on or hammered into the meticulously smoothed wooden surface. Then the pattern is incised to the right depth and the inlay cut-out driven in. In case of linear patterns the worker lays strips of ivory, bone or brass in the grooves with one hand quickly followed with light strokes with a small hammer held in the other.

The patterns are as varied as on stone, tiles and fabrics. Articles meant for marketing at low prices carry simple designs—a single stylised flower, or a floral design surrounded by a circular or rectangular border. A more elaborate design takes the form of a central medallion with intricately laced borders and '*tughras*' in the corners. Sometimes the inlaid top of a table or the front of a chest can display the whole design of a finely knotted carpet. with stylised floral decorations, arabesque, '*tughras*', and motifs arranged in borders, centres and corners. In many cases craftsmen are repeating a design over and over again but two trends are in evidence. One, the composition of the inlay design is changed to suit the shape of the wooden object. Second, every few years the craftsmen move from simple designs created with a few lines and curves to crowded patterns, and vice versa, obviously in order to keep pace with the consumers' habit of seeking change from any familiar design.

A simpler method of beautifying the wooden objects and making them stand out in an environment dominated by the colour of sand is by painting them in different colours. Of course, no emulsion can create the natural glow of walnut or deodar or the beautiful waves of

the staple, and not all wood looks dead<sup>126</sup>. But then a large number of articles are made of coarse wood and village women learnt long ago that these could look prettier and last longer if dipped in mustard oil. And if no wood carver was available in the village the doors and the legs of cots could be painted.<sup>127</sup> In the Northern Areas the housewives often paint their wooden pots and cooking spoons with red and black. In the Potohar region painted bed legs, sticks used to churn curds, cooking spoons, thick rods for husking rice at home, door-frames and door panels, rustic cradles and swings, etc., are quite common.

The Hyderabad door was the masterpiece from Sindh; the Kalhoras had commissioned some master-carvers for enriching their architectural facades. Almost 32 years earlier Nur Mohammed Kalhora had a tomb created in memory of his loyal commander Shah Baharo in Larkana, called the Eden of Sindh. The doorway of the tomb is a magnificent piece of carving art in Sindh and a rich recompense after the mysterious vacuum of centuries. Carved in deep relief with blossoming sprays and cypresses in twelve major and eight minor compartments, the doorway's main impact is made by the arched recess and spandrels on top which are superbly designed with inter-connecting flowers and leafy stems. The tradition of executing relief at multiple levels on surfaces to give an extra dimensional depth initiated by Mahmud's Ghazni doors was consummated by the doors of Shah Baharo in Larkana in the 18th century.<sup>128</sup> A few samples of wood-carving in Sindh such as handsome mihrab carved in cusped arches at the Shakranj mosque in Thatta belong to later times. Fine chisel woodwork dating from the late 19th century onwards is seen in a few private houses at Thatta, Rohri, Shikar and Jacobabad which strongly conveys an art with a long anterior tradition.<sup>129</sup>

In Sind and the Multan-Dera Ghazi Khan regions of the Punjab the craft of applying lacquer to wood has been refined to a high level. A number of families in Hala, Kashmore, Khanewal and Dera Ghazi Khan have stuck to traditional workmanship despite sharp fluctuations in consumers taste and the nature of patronage. The craftsmen rely on a primitive lathe to rotate the wooden piece while layers of lacquer in various colours are applied and then etched to expose the required pattern. The choice of colours and decorative patterns vary from place to place. Black, white and brown are favourite colours in the Punjab and the designs are mostly

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.106

<sup>127</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Pakistan, 1979, P.107

<sup>128</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts: Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, P.362

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

geometric. The Kashmiri craftsmen like floral patterns in black, red and other deep colour combinations. In Hala the dominant trend is to use rich primary colours to paint both geometric designs and floral patterns.<sup>130</sup> Till some time ago lacquer was applied mostly to items of furniture used in villages-bed legs, low chairs, 'jhoolas' (swings for infants)-, but in recent times elaborately lacquered sofa-sets and chairs have found their way into the drawing rooms of the modern urbanites. The quality of the wood available in the desert was neither good for carving nor was its colour pleasing.<sup>131</sup> The application of lacquer satisfied the rural folks' instinctive desire for different colour schemes as well as helped them to bring the beauty of flowers and foliage into their mud huts.<sup>132</sup> However, the growing popularity of lacquered wood objects even when the environment has improved considerably is in a large measure due to the craftsmen's merit. The whole process is so dextrously conducted that one is amazed at the firm and calculated moves of the craftsmen's hands.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> Ibid





Fig75. This is the famous Lacquer work or *Jandi jo kam* in Sindhi language, displayed at Sindhology museum, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

### **JANDI WORK IN SINDH (LACQUER WORK)**

Among the many traditional forms of art, *Jandi* art or Lacquer work on wood has been a particular identification of the Sindh region and a source of live hood and sustenance for artisans and their families for many years. Although the practice of lacquering objects originated 4000 years ago, in Asia region *Jandi* work can be traced back to the dynasty periods of India and China.<sup>134</sup> Early records of Sindh indicate its presence since the 14<sup>th</sup> century Samma period.<sup>135</sup> At the time, usage of *Jandi* was utilitarian as lacquer was applied to add sturdiness to wooden objects in daily use. Religious leaders held lacquered staffs during prayers and traders measured grain in wooden pots with lacquer work on them. In addition, lacquer was used to decorate boxes and swings for royalty and other vessels and containers

<sup>134</sup> Lacquer Arts of Asia, (Asian Art Mall-[www.asianartmall.com/articlelacquer.htm](http://www.asianartmall.com/articlelacquer.htm))

<sup>135</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts: Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, P.364

for common household use. Over time, the art improved and matured through encouragement and support provided by various rulers. It reached its apex during the 18<sup>th</sup> century under the Kalhora dynasty when *Jandi* found its present home in Hala, in the district of Matiari. The Khanote area (in Hala) became the main art centre probably because *Bihan* trees (botanical name) whose wood is used in jandi were found in abundance in the region.

It is commonly acclaimed that the *Vighamal* tribe pioneered the art in the area in the early 18 century; Mir Mohammad Khan Kalhoro brought craftsmen from Baluchistan and settled them in Khanote.<sup>136</sup> After 1975, with the establishment of an artisan colony in Bhit Shah in the Hala Tehsil, many *Vighamals*, besides other artisan communities migrated and settled near the shrine of the Sufi saint, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. The number of families doing *jandi* work in Bhit Shah and Khanote numbers around fifty. While the majority of them belong to the Vighamal clan, generations of artisans of the *Bhutto*, *Kumbrani* and *Wadha* tribes too are living in this area.

Today old Hala, Khanote and Bhit Shah engage artisans in the production of a variety of items including furniture, decorative pieces, souvenirs, domestic utensils and toys that are sold in the local markets of Hala and Hyderabad and exported as well. Other than Hala, jandi work is done in Luqman and Kashmor in the upper Sindh region.

Hala lacquer work, done by families that have practised the craft for centuries, wood (kikar, farash) is first cut and chiselled into the required shape. The surface is rubbed smooth with sandpaper or pottery powder. The piece is then passed on to a lathe worker squatting on the ground. He rotates the wooden piece on the lathe and presses the lacquer stick in the required colour against it. If the ground is to have more than one colour, the craftsman leaves spots blank which are coloured in subsequent rounds. After repeated coatings of lacquer the piece is passed on to another lathe operator who uses a chisel on the spinning piece to separate the layers of different colours. The piece is then handed over to the design-maker who chisels off the upper coat of lacquer to reveal myriad patterns. The speed with which a skilled craftsman carries out this delicate operation is unbelievable. Finally the object is given a marble finish by first rubbing it with a bamboo pen and then with an oil rag. The whole effect is created by craftsmen with their hands but the modest Sindhi worker chooses to call his craft 'jandi' (rotation).

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<sup>136</sup> Vigham al, Kham iso Khan, *Jjandi jo Hunr'* In Dr. Nawaz Ali Shauq [ed], *Siind ja Hunr*, Department of Culture & Tourism, Government of Sindh, 1990, p. 545

The entire process is highly labour-intensive and requires both dexterity and patience. Skills are transmitted from one generation to the next through informal learning that takes place while children grow up in the work environment participating in activities alongside their elders. Early familiarization with the art enables a child to learn and acquire refined skills by the time he formally adopts the profession. However, despite the fact that the learning of the skill continues within a family, those currently associated with *Jandi* realize that the profession does not provide gainful employment in the long run. The low financial returns for the arduous labour have caused a general lack of interest in successive generations of younger artisans and continue to discourage new persons from acquiring the line of work.



Fig76. This is a display of lacquer work or *Jandi jo kam*, at the Sindh museum, Hyderabad.

Several factors that threaten the craft and the artisan's livelihood have been cited. The most critical is the paucity of basic raw materials. Until the early 20th century, artisans in Hala obtained Bihan wood at low cost from the nearby forest of Rajri Belo. The forest hit by widespread deforestation has vanished completely. Environmental degradation has directly affected the economy of local artisans who are now forced to buy wood from upper Sindh at a high premium. The freshly cut wood is wet and has to be dried in cool shade for 3 to 12 months in order for it to be ready for use. Since artisans have neither funds nor the space to dry such quantities in bulk, they do not buy from the open market at competitive rates.

Glass or mirrors are often used in place of wood. However due to its brittleness glass is difficult to handle during production. The coat of lacquer disintegrates if the smooth surface of the finished glass item comes in contact with cold water. Glass therefore remains a less favoured alternative; glass products are only made to order. Other inputs including powder colours, oil and coal are inexpensive and are readily available but lac that is used in preparing the colors. Lac has been an expensive raw material in the past.<sup>137</sup>

Thus environmental degradation, low returns, restricted exposure to open markets and monopoly of the middle man contributes to continued uncertainty. The artisans' laid-back attitude has highly marginalized the sustainability of the art and the artisans themselves. The Government of Sindh in the past has tried to create an enabling environment for the artisans especially through the establishment of an artisan colony at Bhit Shah. A community based organization called [andi Multi-purpose Cooperative Society was formed during the mid 1980s with artisans as members. Although the association is dormant now, the workshop set-up at Bhit Shah is still used as a workplace by various artisans. A non-governmental organization called Artisan Development Welfare Association established in 2004 is presently working for the rights of artisans.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p.547

## Chapter 5

### JEWELLERY MAKING

Jewellery making in the Indus Valley dates back to the Neolithic-age Mehrgarh culture (7000—5500 BC), and Late Harappa age, which predates the iron-age development of metal-casting and metal working. The Indus Valley region, which encompasses Persia and the Indian sub-continent, was the home to the *Indus-Sarasvati* civilizations (Aryan, Harappa and Vedic peoples) which were the largest both population and geography of the major ancient civilizations from Egypt, Mesopotamia, South Asia and China. The *Sarasvati* was a river praised in the *Rig-Veda* (a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns), running the length of the Indus Valley, from Punjab to the Arabian Sea.<sup>138</sup> Early Indus Valley jewellery consisted of strands of simple beads that were carved from soft stone, or fashioned from shells. The Harappans were expert craftsmen, making beads from agate, amethyst, carnelian, lapis lazuli and turquoise. Some stones were heated to produce a reddish colour which was prized by the early Indus civilization.<sup>139</sup>

During the Late Harappan period craftsmen began to work with bronze, copper silver, and gold, fashioning simple necklaces, head-bands, bangles and other ornamentation from cast metalwork, glazed faience (a non-clay ceramic), terracotta, shells, and carved ivory. Copper was mined locally by the Harappans in Baluchistan and Rajasthan.<sup>140</sup> Examples of this early jewellery can be seen on the bronze statuette of the 'Dancing girl of Mohenjo Daro'

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<sup>138</sup> All chin, Raymond and Bridget, *Origins of a Civilization, The prehistory and early civilization of South Asia*, Viking publications, New Dehli, 1997, p 7

<sup>139</sup> Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark, *Ancient Cites Of Indus Valley Civilization*, Oxford University Press and American Institute of Pakistan Studies, Karachi and Islamabad, 1998, p 19

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p 20

believed to have been made in 2,500 BCE.<sup>141</sup> The Harappans were also accomplished sailors and navigators, helping them to expand the boundaries of trade to Bahrain and Sumer. For navigation, the Harappans carved compasses from conch shell, which they used to measure the angle between stars.<sup>142</sup> Jewellery was also made in the form of anthropomorphic symbols such as animals, trees, and sexual organs, due primarily to their pagan, and matriarchal spiritual beliefs. Jewellery was worn predominantly by the female, and was not buried with the deceased, but passed on to their heirs.<sup>143</sup> Another popular Harappan spiritual motif was the *Shiva Pashupati*, or Yogic "Lord of Beasts."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p 21

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p24

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p 23

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p 26



Fig 77. Popular Harappan spiritual motif was the *Shiva Pashupati*, or Yogic "Lord of Beasts."

### **JEWELLERY FROM MOENJO – DARO AND HARAPPA**

In the majority of Neolithic India, as in most parts of the world at that time, people fashioned jewellery out of seeds, feathers, berries, flowers, bones and shells. But in the north of India, in the Indus valley cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, men and women were already wearing jewellery made of gold, silver, copper and set with precious and semi-precious gemstones. The Indus valley civilization, preceding the Vedic, existed from 3000

B.C. to 1500 B.C., and was built in and amongst the fertile lands of what is known today as Pakistan. The Neolithic Indus valley people like others, domesticated animals and harvested crops of cotton, sesame and barley. Contrary to the belief that India only possessed an agricultural economy in this period, evidence has been found at the Indus cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, showing the people as having been sophisticated urbanites whose cities were bastions to art and culture.<sup>145</sup> Proof of the Indus people's impact on Neolithic trade was found when archaeologists excavating Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa found engraved seals written in cuneiform, the world's first written language whose origins lay in Mesopotamia in the Near East.

The seals, describing the contents of sacks, were used to close bundles of merchandise as cord marks on the reverse side testify. Other similar seals were found in ports on the Persian Gulf near modern Bahrain, and amongst Mesopotamian site at the city of Ur, which is now the southern Iraq. The seals originating from the Indus sites described cargos of textiles, and luxury goods such as semi precious gemstones, ivory, carnelian beads, pearls, and jade sent to Persia and Mesopotamia in exchange for gold, silver, tin, copper, lapis lazuli and turquoise. Bitumen from Mesopotamia, where it occurred naturally, was also imported and used as the binding glue in mother of pearl inlay in precious items of jewellery and ornamentation. These products and their seals found in various Indus archaeological sites bare testament to the presence of foreign traders living amongst the Indus people. The Indus civilizations were ethnically diverse incorporating many cultures and creeds. Many terracotta, bronze and stone figurines found at the Indus sites display a variety of different styles of clothing, headdresses and ornamentation indicating a multi-ethnic civilization. Some of the figurines were adorned with multiple chokers and necklaces, which appear to represent beaded ornaments of gold, silver, and semi-precious gems. The complex 'Cire Perdue' casting technique, meaning 'Lost-wax,' was employed in the production of the metallic figures pointing towards a culture of knowledgeable and sophisticated metallurgists.

Further excavations of Mohenjo-Daro's lower levels revealed the living quarters of metal workers, specializing in the production of copper and bronze implements and weapons.

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<sup>145</sup> Possehl, Gregory L, *The Indus Age, The Beginnings*, Oxford and IBH, New Delhi, 1996, p 12



Flat axes, spears, knives, arrowheads, chisels, saws and razors were cast in smelting furnaces then simply hammered into shape. Silver, reserved for smaller precious objects, was smelted and moulded into small vases, vessels, seals, pendants, and brooches. Other crafts in the city included the manufacturing of beads made in a variety of different shells, ivory and semi precious gem types such as alabaster, lapis lazuli and turquoise from Persia, amethyst from Maharashtra, and jade from Central Asia.

In ancient societies, in settled and stable communities possession of gold and precious stones constituted a measure of a man's rank in society. For the common people, who had little opportunity of productive investment of savings or diversion from the endless drudgery that was the lot of both man and woman, acquisition of jewellery became a yardstick of success and it's giving away the highest token of affection. No wonder that, as in other ancient societies, ornament-makers made an appreciable contribution to the Indus Valley culture. They used a variety of materials: gold and semi-precious stones for the rich and silver and copper for the less affluent, while the poor had to be content with faience, shell beads and clay. The shape of an ornament was determined by the part of the body for which it was meant and this condition offers one of the reasons why in essential form some of the present-day ornaments resemble the early models, as indeed they do anywhere else in the world. The favourite adornments seem to have been necklaces, pendants and finger rings. The most common design was to string together beads in different shapes. A necklace could consist of one or several rows of stone or metal beads of a uniform size or the size of the beads could gradually increase from the ends to the centre, or bigger stones in different colours could be placed at intervals. Around 3,000 B.C. the town of Chandu Dero in Sind was famous for its bead ornaments which were exported to many countries.



Fig 78. These are gold jewellery found at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, displayed Sindh museum, Hyderabad.



Fig 79. These are the ancient jewellery made of beads and pearls, found both at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, displayed at Sindh museum, Hyderabad, Pakistan.

The remains of jewellery found in the ancient cities of Taxila, Sirsukh and Sirkap, speak of the Greek-Roman influences. That tradition has stood the test of time is amply proved by the sculptured jewels of the Gandhara figurines.<sup>146</sup> The Gandhara women wear the massive *chandan haar* (crescent shaped necklace) *tauq* (neck fitted necklac), *hansli* (a collar type necklace, graduating from a thick centre to tapered ends ; sometimes of hollow metal and often filled with lacquer work) and *pazaib* (anklets) which are worn by village women all over Pakistan. Workmanship has a wide range, from simple reproduction of objects of beauty found in nature, the sun, the moon, the stars, flowers and leaves-to sculptural representations and geometric designs in moulding, etching, filigree and open work. The beaded gold necklace is still fancied but the stone pieces are now cut into different sizes and arranged in a variety of patterns. The thick gold bracelet ('*kara*') has taken the shape of a two-headed serpent its heads facing each other at the circle's opening. A fine example is a gold bracelet with geometric filigree work on the main cylindrical surface, with a chain-impression border and engraving around a hollow for the stone on the hinged lid.

### **FILIGREE PATTERN**

A richer pattern of filigree work-a leaf, three petal flowers, a wheat-pike-is found on a gold ring the bezel of which has a row of round cavities with heart-shaped cases for stones. But the most complex pattern is a gold ear-pendant. Its upper part consists of stylised floral patterns set with stones. This part is hooked to a circle placed on the top of a Grecian urn, on the sides of which are Cupid-like figures astride tightly reined tigers. The body of the urn has stones set in a grain-pike topped with grapes. On either side of the urn are four wheat-pike chains with pears and small pendants at the lowest end. Apart from the necklaces, armlets, anklets, ear-pendants and bangles that have been found at Taxila and in the Gandhara Valley, female sculptures from the period reveal extensive use of ornaments, especially necklaces, tight-fitting neck collars ('*hansli*'), girdles and anklets. During the Hindu period an increase in the demand for sculptures of deities and other statues opened new avenues for goldsmiths. Refinement in ornaments was also necessitated by the native rulers' habit of bedecking

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<sup>146</sup> Mirza, Anis, Handicrafts of West Pakistan, WPIDC, Kutchery Road Karachi, Pakistan, 1964, p63.

themselves with heavy jewellery and conferring awards on princes and courtiers in the form of precious ornaments.<sup>147</sup>



Fig 80. The most complex filigree style jewellery form Taxila, from Taxila museum website.

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<sup>147</sup> Ahmed, Nabi, Khan, *Buddhist Art And Architecture in Pakistan*, Ministry of Information, Islamabad, Pakistan, 1976, p 56.

The designs in gold and silver neck, foot and hand ornaments from the Gandhara period are strikingly identical to the present day patterns.<sup>148</sup> The jeweller's craft received a new and fresh impetus with the establishment of Muslim power in the sub-continent. About the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century Turkish and Persian trends set in, for at this time the Seljuk Turks in Iran, had paved the way for geometric tracteries and arabesques. The Golden Age of jewellery however emerged with the Mughul Emperors who sought an aesthetic harmony of Persian-Turkish tradition, with prevalent indigenous talent. The Mughuls brought colour into jewellery-a feature lacking in the local tradition. The technique of coloured enamel-inlay in jewellery called *minakari* came into vogue. This introduction emerged from the Persian miniature method of ornamenting art objects. The colours employed in the *minakari* jewellery revealed the tints of the rainbow in purity and brilliance, and they were laid on gold with exquisite taste.<sup>149</sup>

- ***Filigree*** (formerly written *filigrann* or *filigrane*) is a delicate kind of jewel work made with twisted threads usually of gold and silver or stitching of the same curving motifs. It often suggests lace, and in recent centuries remains popular in Indian and other Asian metalwork, and French from 1660 to the late 19th century. It should not be confused with ajoure jewellery work; while both have many open areas, filigree involves threads being soldered together to form an object and ajoure involves holes being punched, drilled, or cut through an existing piece of metal).

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<sup>148</sup> Mirza, Anis, Handicrafts of West Pakistan, WPIDC House, Kutchery Road, Karachi, 1964, p 63.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p 64.

## JEWELLERY UNDER MUSLIM INFLUENCE

Under Muslim rule, the jeweller's trade was exposed to radically different influences. The Arabs established themselves in Sind at a time when the spirit of asceticism fired by the young faith was still running strong and the injunction against wearing jewellery, especially gold, was largely complied with. This, coupled with a fall in the demand for temple sculpture, dealt a blow to the jewellers' craft.<sup>150</sup> But by the time the *Ghoris* founded the Sultanate Muslim nobles had found ways and means to rationalise the wearing of jewellery. Elsewhere, when the Seljuks took over the *Khilafat* and adopted a more permissive attitude towards arts and ostentation the trend spread from Egypt to the shores of the Indus. The *Mughals*, thus, inherited a tradition which allowed people not only considerable freedom to use ornaments but also compromises with indigenous social currents. Besides, the prosperity enjoyed by the country, especially during the first half of their dynasty's rule, made it possible for the nobility to amass jewellery. A number of new ornaments were designed for queens and princesses and *Noor Jehan* is credited with having made several outstanding inventions. Besides, there was a constant flow of ideas from the neighbouring countries. For example, in the seventeenth century refugee goldsmiths from Armenia created a new tradition in Baluchistan.<sup>151</sup> Most of the ornaments produced in Pakistan at present acquired their shape in that period.

Although neck collars, ear-rings, necklaces, pendants, bracelets and anklets. Most of these ornaments bear geometric motifs. The pendants and parts of an ornament are usually large-sized and when stones are set in them they, too, are quite big. The continued use of such ornaments is related to the material circumstances of the wearer. The choice of silver is plainly determined by its being cheaper than gold. The preference for sturdier designs is dictated by the fact that a village woman cannot divide her time between hours of work and leisure. Often she has no time to take her ornaments off and then put them on again, and, maybe, the safest way of guarding the valuables for a hut dweller is to wear them on her body

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<sup>150</sup> Ikram, S, M, Muslim Rule In India And Pakistan, Star Book Depot, Lahore, 1966, p 32.

<sup>151</sup> Rehman, I, A, Arts and Crafts Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Govt of Pakistan, Elite Publishers Limited, Karachi, Pakistan, 1979, p 122.

all the time. Delicate pieces of jewellery and fancy hooks would not go with her style of living.<sup>152</sup>

The essential ornaments are common to both the folk and the modern traditions. The main ornament for the head is the '*jhoomar*', the modern form of which is believed to have been designed by *Noor Jehan*. Worn slightly tilted to the left of the head and supported by a chain or string hooked to the hair on the back of the head, it is in the shape of a pyramid, studded with stones or glass pieces, and with a fringe of beads or pearls at the base. The '*teeka*' is a pendant worn in the middle of the forehead and held in place by a string hooked into the hair. The pendant is generally a circular or crescent shaped disc intricately filigreed and set with stones. The supporting string may be a chain of gold or pearls strung on a silken cord. Sometimes in place of the '*teeka*' the whole forehead is covered with '*singhar patti*', a belt with or without a medallion in the middle. Then there are hair pins, with floral motifs and tiny jingles on their heads, to crown the hair bun. In some parts of the country women wear clove shaped pin called '*long*' on both sides of the nose. The round shaped '*nath*' the golden hoop carries a big pearl between two rubies also worn in the nose especially on the wedding day. In the Northern Areas, the tribal belt and parts of Sind, the '*nath*' may have one or two crescent shaped rings suspended from it.

The tribal women often wear a '*bulaq*', a ring passing through the wall separating the nostrils. The ear ornaments come in a far greater variety, their shapes and designs are determined by the wearer's height and length of the neck and the amount of gold she would like to display. The smallest are tops (studs), small bulbs, and plain or latticed discs, or leaves set with a stone in the centre. A little higher in estimation are '*bunday*', pendulums and pendants in diverse shapes. The commonest ear ornaments remain the '*bali*' (small ring) and '*bala*' (large ring). In folk style several rings may be worn along the rim of the ear and may have fringes of glass beads, stars or leaves ('*pattey*'). On thicker '*balis*' motifs are etched or enamelled. The popular designs are '*chandbali*' (moon-shaped ear-ring) and '*machhli*' (a jewelled semi-circle with a fish-shaped pendant suspended from its outer edge).<sup>153</sup> But nothing compares in

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p 123.

<sup>153</sup> Riazuddin, Akhtar, History of Handicrafts of Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, P.35

glamour with the '*jhoomkas*'-fringed bells suspended from tops and '*jhularian*'-multi-tiered strands hanging from tops.



Fig 81. The very famous style of earrings called *Jhoomkas*, believed to be designed by the queen of Emperor Jahangir, Noorjehan of the mughal dynasty. Today even its extremely famous and worn in weddings and also daily life, all over the country, with slight changes in accordance with region, courtesy from the website of Asiatic journal.

The centre-piece of the jewellery set is the ornament for the neck, its shape and name changing with the area covered by it. The ancient tight-fitting '*hansli*', a crescent-shaped piece of silver, is still in use along with a newer version called '*guluband*' (neck collar). A looser variety becomes '*tauq*' if the piece comes down a little lower it is described by the generic



name of necklace. Still lower down on the breast is worn '*champakali*', so called because the fringe is made up of a row of *champa* buds. Then there are '*hars*', '*malas*' and locket. For the more sophisticated there is '*satlara*', a necklace with seven identical strands of pearls, and '*chandanhar*'.<sup>154</sup>



Fig 82. The very famous necklace of Mughal period, called *guluband*, still very famous in SouthAsia, displayed at the National museum Karachi.

For the arms and hands there are a number of variations on the ancient '*kara*', bangle, and amulet. The '*kara*', worn on the wrist may be a ring of solid bar or a hollow tube, its thickness depending on the means and the taste of the wearer. Its ends may be shaped like heads of birds or flowers and sometimes a small chain may be laid between them. The surface may be plain or decorated with floral motifs, enamel or studded with stones. Then come '*chooris*'. In the old days the '*chooris*' used to be rings of solid bar but now they are mostly in the form of thin strips with the ends soldered to form a circle. Sometimes the sides are cut to form a series of geometric forms or the designs are chased on the surface. A popular design is the '*choori*' made by soldering small components each set with stones. Those who do not find it convenient to slip their hand through the ring get an arc hinged to the main body of the '*choori*', which can be secured with a lock. Another set of ornaments is

<sup>154</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Karachi, 1978, P. 126

designed by placing a circular strip between two '*chooris*'. The surface of the strip can be embellished in a number of ways. When thin strips with deep grooves cut into the outer edge so as to form pointed needles are placed between the side '*chooris*', the piece becomes '*kangan*'. When the strip is set lower than the side '*chooris*' and leaves are suspended from the latter, the ornament is called '*pariband*'.

A highly rated piece is the '*paunhchi*', three rows of small drops with hooks strung on cords. The ornaments growing out of the amulet are '*bazooband*', '*jaushan*' and '*dastband*'. The former two are worn above the elbow and are in the form of amulet cases-rectangular, square, or circular-hooked one after the other in rows, and are tied around the arm with a cord. The '*dastband*' is worn on the wrist and resembles a gauntlet; its body may consist of false amulets, plain or pierced, soldered or hooked together or linked by chains. For the back of the hand there is '*dastphool*', a flower-shaped piece, linked with a '*choori*' on the wrist and with separate chains to rings for all the five fingers.

The foot ornaments present an equally impressive variety. The most popular piece is the '*pazeb*'-a strap overlaid with drops or creepers, or a floral pattern in the open, with a fringe of drops and leaves, with or without jingles. From the base of the ankle it comes down to the back of the heel. A lighter version popularised by modern designs is the '*gulshan patti*'. The older '*jhanjhan*', hollow tube with pebbles inside, also survives along with '*lachhey*'-thin coiled rings. For the toes there are rings and '*chhallas*' in numerous designs. For the waist, a girdle, '*kamarpatti*', was once commonly used. It may still be seen in some rural and tribal families, but the piece, which was worn over sari or *lehnga*,( skirt) never became popular with Muslim women.

Changing fashions and shrinking purses have reduced the demand for quite a few of the traditional ornaments. For instance, '*jaushan*', '*kangan*', '*pariband*' and '*dastphool*' are now worn by a small number of women. For obvious reasons, working women are moving away from heavy ensembles and are quite happy with a '*long*' in the nose, a '*bali*' in the ear, and a locket around the neck. But whenever there is a wedding most of them like to display whatever ornaments they have. In the last few years revival of interest in folk culture has also generated among the younger people a trend towards folk jewellery for ceremonies. Some of

the traditional ornaments, like '*hansli*' '*kangan*', '*pariband*', '*jhanjhan*', '*lachhey*', '*pazeb*', etc., are usually made of silver, while a few, like '*paunhchi*', only of gold, and the rest of both. But while jewellery fashions keep changing the craftsman's techniques have changed little for centuries. His tools are wholly traditional: an anvil and hammers for beating sheet metal and driving punches; chisels; drills; tongs; files; burnishing-stones; scales; crucibles; a drawplate; blowpipes; and an oil lamp.

The material used for making ornaments is either in the form of sheet or wire. The first stage in production is the drawing of the ornament's sketch by a designer. The design is then etched on a tin plate which serves as a cut-out. If the ornament is to be made from sheet metal the cut-out is placed on the gold plate and the craftsman proceeds to chase, engrave or work in the open. For work the goldsmith drives punches into a piece of metal placed on a bed of yielding material and hammers along the dots. However, in Pakistan most ornaments consist of a number of separately made parts which are soldered together. For example, a necklace may consist of several square or rectangular components each with stones set in cavities. First on each rectangle the cavities will be soldered and then the rectangles will be soldered together. A bracelet may consist of ten to twenty parallelograms, each bearing four to ten cavities for stones. The process of soldering will be the same. When all the pieces have been soldered together to form a chain the piece will be rounded on a hollow cone and the ends joined. The common soldering agent is copper, the craftsmen relying on the knowledge that while pure gold melts at 1,0630C, when gold is heated with copper both melt at 8900C. By heating the object further the craftsmen can ensure that molten gold flows over on to the copper, thus concealing the joint wholly. The same system is mostly used for laying decorative motifs.

Other methods of decoration include filigree, granulation and enamel. The motifs on most of the jewellery items are derived from shapes of flowers and leaves. The '*kundan*' pieces require extraordinary skill in choosing stones in appropriate colours, cutting them into desired shapes, and finally arranging them in pleasing patterns. The preparation of chains and cords is a specialised branch of the goldsmith's craft. The chains are made in numerous forms. For some ornaments-like '*guluband*', '*bazooband*', and '*paunhchi*'-cords are used.

These cords are made by coiling gold or silk thread over a core of tougher threads, and the ends are knotted in fine shapes.

Jewellery in Mughul period, from 1526 till the late sixteenth century, can only be guessed at as there is a complete imbalance between the traveller's descriptions of the same and the lack of any sound evidence. However, it is a fact to be noted that the Mughal treasury was one of the fullest and best endowed in all of Indian history, and therefore jewellery too must have occupied a place of prominence.

### **Influences on Mughal Jewellery**

The existing trends in jewellery under the Mughals were a continuation of the amalgamated style of Islamic and Hindu artistic styles. Islamic influences had been seen in the subcontinent as far back as the 8<sup>th</sup> century and excavations have unearthed remarkable material which shows the adaptability on both sides of the equation - traditional Islamic and traditional Indian - and the originality and creativity of artists in the region in adjusting to new influences, creating new styles and expanding horizons.<sup>155</sup> A number of Islamic powers had been establishing base in India before the advent of the Mughals. These include the Ghaznavids, the Ghuris, and the Turkish and Afghan dynasties that broke away from the Sultanate in Delhi. Babur was the first Mughal ruler and he had seized power from the Lodhi Dynasty in India. Thus the culmination of centuries of Islamic rule was seen in the Mughal dynasty and all these collective influences were witnessed in their life, art, architecture and crafts, including in jewellery.<sup>156</sup>

India was blessed as the only significant source of diamonds before their discovery in Brazil in the 18th century, and it was also made rich by the spices; but more than any other resource, it was the art industries (most especially textiles, but also including a whole array of

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<sup>155</sup> Momin, Latif, *Mughal Jewels*, Société générale de banque; 1st edition (1982), P.134

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p.137

specialized and sophisticated products) which India traded for the gold and silver that poured in by the ton. This talent and tradition for fine and artistic craftsmanship, coupled with a wealthy and active class of patrons, is responsible for the marvels which we are privileged to study and now to present to the wider public.

### ***Influence of Rajputs***

Some of the finest goldsmiths' works have been produced under the Mughal patronage. The colours were not just exclusive to Jaipur, and were found on much eighteenth-century jewellery from centres as far apart as Murshidabad and the Deccan.<sup>157</sup> Some areas, such as Rajasthan, were able to resist being completely overwhelmed, because Rajasthan undoubtedly contributed a great deal to the formation of the hybrid Mughal style: its princess's married Mughal royalty and its rulers had taken high positions at court, both bringing their jewellery and, probably, their craftsmen with them.<sup>158</sup> The *Rajputs* had also contributed jewelled and gold articles to the emperor's treasury. In Rajasthan itself, there are restrictions on the use of certain types of gold jewellery. In general, Hindus do not wear gold on the feet, as it is a sacred metal, which would thus be defiled. However, in Rajasthan the anklet of gold (worn by men) worn on one or both feet is a proof of nobility as well as of being entitled to a certain position at a *Durbar*, and to certain honours there.<sup>159</sup>

### **European Influence on Mughal Jewellery**

Among the Mughal jewellery pieces which have survived. Some of the earliest ones show the gradual influence of Europeanism. The scrolling leaf designs on the inner surface of a thumb ring are influenced by Renaissance jewellery. A more significant European intrusion can be seen in turban jewellery where a completely new form seems to have its source in European

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<sup>157</sup> Untracht, Oppi, *Traditional Jewellery of India*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 2008, p 57

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, p 59

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, p 68

hat aigrettes. Turban jewellery was the prerogative of the emperor, his close family, or members of his entourage (including his horse). Courtly jewellery carried on the traditions established in the seventeenth century, whereas in the nineteenth century, pieces made for exhibition from 1851 onwards and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, show that blue and green were still the keynote colours, but a soft, pale, translucent violet and a slightly harsh, opaque gamboges yellow had been added, together with both opaque and translucent turquoise.

## Style of Mughal Jewellery

Akbar's own style of jewellery was a combination of Iranian and Hindu influences, as would be expected of the emperor of a dynasty whose cultural roots were in Iran.<sup>160</sup> The turban plume (*Kalgi* or *Figha*) and golden bands (*Sarpich*) are exactly those seen in contemporary *Safavid* painting. His necklaces on the other hand are of the kinds listed in *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, consisting of pearls and gems, gold on its own, or gold with pearls and gems. A contemporary work, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, gives a list of ornaments worn by the women of Hindustan.<sup>161</sup> Some of these may be seen virtually unchanged and by this time worn equally by Muslim ladies. The ornaments include the *Karanphul* ('ear flower'), which is shaped like the blossom of love-in-the-mist (*Nigella sativa*), and *Nath* (nose ring). The *Nath* (in the form of a circular gold wire threaded with a ruby between two pearls, or other gemstones). The few images of ladies at Akbar's court show that the divisions marking Indian and Iranian jewellery may have been observed more clearly than in the case of the emperor's ornaments.

The dancers in the illustration from the *Akbarnama* of century 1590 are both Muslim and Hindu and wear clearly differentiated styles of jewellery in accordance with their origins.<sup>162</sup> By the time Akbar's son, Jahangir, came to the throne, fashions at court had undergone a dramatic transformation as can be seen in the painting of Jahangir weighing his

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<sup>160</sup> Fazl, Abul, *Ain-i-Akbari*, translation by H.S. Jarret, Clcutta, 1939, p.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, p.

son, Prince Khurram. Akbar followed the Iranian fashion by having his upright feather plume at the front of the turban. Jahangir introduced his own, softer, style with the plume weighted down with a large pearl. Jehangir has been described by Edward Terry, a clergyman, in his book "A Voyage to India" as "the greatest and richest master of precious stones that inhabits the whole world." Shah Jehan the son of Jehangir was also fascinated by jewels and reputed to be the largest collector in the Muslim period. It was reported that it would take an expert fourteen years to go through and value all the Emperor's personal jewels. He was considered a connoisseur of precious stones and was able to give an accurate judgement on the quality of a particular item. On his accession he commissioned Saida-i-Gilani to design the famous Peacock Throne, surmounted by a canopy held up by twelve emerald pillars, at the top of which were two peacocks on either side of the throne. Later, Shah Jahan turned to Europe for an innovative *Jigha*, which related to the designs of the Dutch jeweller Arnold Lulls. Lulls supplied jewels to the English court between 1603 and 1606. Shah Jahan also wore jewels by James I in the portraits brought to the court by Sir Thomas Roe. In the 1618 painting Shah Jahan, still a prince, holds an Indian version of Lulls' designs. Foreign travellers coming to India in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were dazzled by the splendour of the jewellery worn at the various courts and intrigued by the array of ornaments worn by people at all levels of society.

Vijayanagar in 1438 saw all the inhabitants of the state, both the elite class and even the artisans of the bazaar, wearing pearls, or rings adorned with precious stones, in their ears, on their necks, on their arms, on the upper part of the hand and on the fingers. Ludovica de Varthema, the Italian in India from 1503 to 1508, went to Bijapur, in the Deccan and he described the Muslim ruler's servants as wearing rubies, diamonds and other jewels on the insteps of their shoes. Thus, even the adornment of jewellery on the fingers of their hands cannot be ruled out. Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese official in Calicut a few years later, also described the multiplicity of gold ornaments worn by the thousand 'ladies of good caste' in the king's service. He also explained the ornaments of the Mughal women as in the side of one of the nostrils they used to make a small hole, through which they put a fine wire with a pearl, sapphire or ruby pendant. Other types, such as the *Mang* (worn on the parting of the hair to add to its beauty) and *Bali*, (a circle with a pearl worn through the ear) were worn

throughout the period.<sup>163</sup> In addition, Francois Bernier, the French physician who was in the court of Emperor Aurangzeb also had descriptions of India being `an abyss of gold` since he observed the gilt pillars in buildings, jewelled golden thrones and roofs and walls of plated gold.<sup>164</sup> Sadly, very little gold jewellery has survived to show the exact nature of the ornaments, which led Sir Thomas Roe to describe the Mughal Court as the treasury of the world. He also describes Aurangzeb`s aigrette as being composed of diamonds of an extraordinary size and value, beside an oriental topaz, which may be pronounced unparalleled, exhibiting a lustre like the sun.<sup>165</sup>

Following the Mughals, their style of jewellery-making was carried forward and indulged in by the successive Indian rulers as well. The most prominent among this was turban jewellery worn by the Hindu and *Rajput* Kings. The 18<sup>th</sup> century sees different adornments used by the Maharajas and the princes for their turbans. Though the making of the jewels was done mostly in Udaipur or Jaipur in the state of Rajasthan, every decoration is different from the other.

## **JEWELLERY IN SINDH**

The earliest use of jewellery in Sind is witnessed during the 3rd millennium B.C., when a large number of bangles-plain and painted are encountered at Kot Diji and Amri sites. Beads with incised decoration found from these sites may have also been used as personal ornaments. The discovery of these bangles and beads, though rudimentary and heavy in forms, is an ample proof that women of Sind had a great fondness for ornaments from the ancient times. The art of jewellery in Sind reached its zenith at Mohenjo-Daro and reveals rare skill in introducing the different designs and modes of jewellery. The jewellery unearthed from Mohenjo-Daro consists of ornaments like necklaces, fillets, armlets, finger rings, nose studs, hair pins, anklets etc. The material used for making different ornaments was gold, silver, copper, bronze, faience, steatite, semi precious stones, shell and pottery. The favourite ornament was the fillet or head-band worn around the forehead. This was generally

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<sup>163</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export promotion Bureau, Karachi, 1978, p.123

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p.123

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p.123



made of thin plates of gold, a little over half an inch in width. The ends were rounded and pierced with a small hole to enable them to be tied together. Small cones, of gold which are still worn at the parting of the hair by Rajasthani and Punjabi women, have been found from Mohenjo-Daro. Of special interest is a very fine necklace of long carnelian beads of six rows. These beads are beautifully made of bright translucent red colour and are generally 3 to 4 inches in length. The boring for making holes in these beads itself reflects a great skill of the people of Mohenjo-Daro. The bronze globular beads have been used as spacers and at each end of the necklace there is a semicircular terminal of hollow bronze. The shape of this necklace resembles the modern necklace of Sind which is commonly known as the "*Chandanharu*".

After the glorious traditions of pre-historic Sind, we notice the specimens of early historic period dominated by the Sassanians, Scytho-Parthians, Hindus and Buddhists. There appears to be a temporary eclipse in this art after the decline of Mohenjo-Daro and before the commencement of Muslim period in Sind. The jewellery of artistic and visual beauty, as observed in the pre historic days of Mohenjo-Daro, is certainly wanting, if not totally missing, from the early historic period of Sind.<sup>166</sup> The evidence from the early levels of Banbhore and Mansura and from the late levels of Jhukar and other sites of early historic period do not throw much light on this vital aspect of feminine importance. At the best, the jewellery items like beads, rings, bangles etc. were made in terracotta, shell, ivory and semi-precious stones. There is, however, no positive evidence, if gold and silver was at all used for manufacturing ornaments.<sup>167</sup>

The jewellery specimens discovered from the Muslim settlements of Banbhore and Mansura are somewhat in improved forms. Beads and pendants of various shapes and sizes, and made of terracotta, glass, ivory, shell and semi-precious stones, have been recovered in large numbers. The semi-precious stone beads in particular show fine workmanship. They are made of carnelian, onyx, agate, crystal and other semi-precious stones. It is interesting, that

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<sup>166</sup> Rasool, Niaz, A catalogue of the exhibition, 'Sindh Through The Centuries', Archaeology of Sind, Dept of Archaeology and Museums, Ministry of Education, Govt of Pakistan, 1975, p 39.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p 40.

some of the tombs in Sind belonging to the late Muslim period bear also representation of jewellery specimens. These types of tombs are located at Thatta, Sonda, Goth Raj Malik, Gujjo, Chaukhundi, Malir, Manghopir etc. Many of the female tombs at these places have jewellery engraved on the head or the side of the tombs. The specimens of jewellery items found on these tombs are extremely rich in variety and decorative in designs, which include various types of necklaces, armlets, ear rings, finger rings etc. These designs are strikingly common in the present day jewellery worn by the women in the villages of Sind.

Jewellery in Sind, Baluchistan and Punjab has a definite family resemblance though local specimens retain their original names. In Sind, silver ornaments enamelled in light or dark blue, red, black and yellow are also made. The method of enamelling may be described as *champlevé* in so far as the enamel is laid in hollows between raised lines of metal.<sup>168</sup> These are however produced by hammering the silver plaque into a steel die or '*thappa*' and not by engraving. A crude form of '*kundan*' - setting of uncut precious stones or semi-precious stones in gold or silver so that each gem, irregularly cut and mellow, adds to the lustre of the other is produced in Sind. This technique is made available to the lower class by using bits of glass instead of gems. Colour is added by inserting coloured tinsel under the pieces of glass. Some of the typical ornaments now being used in Sind and especially by village women are as follows:

### ***TIKKO***

An ornate medallion hanging on the forehead just below the centre parting with the silver chain going along the parting and hooked at the back of the head.

### ***SINGHAR PATTI***

It has the central '*tikko*' with silver chains attached on either sides and hanging along the hair line on the sides of the face and attached behind the ears with hooks into the hair.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p41.

- *Champlevé is an enameling technique in the decorative arts, or an object made by that process, in which troughs or cells are carved or cast into the surface of a metal object, and filled with vitreous enamel. The piece is then fired until the enamel melts, and when cooled the surface of the object is polished. The uncarved portions of the original surface remain visible as a frame for the enamel designs; typically they are gilded in medieval work. The name comes from the French for "raised field", "field" meaning background, though the technique in practice lowers the area to be enameled rather than raising the rest of the surface.*

### ***Nisbiri or Chhali***

Circular earrings of beads with a central medallion decorated with 'kundan' work. These are worn on the ear ridge above the lobe.

### ***Nath or Bulo***

Nose ring worn by brides. It is delicately worked in a raised beaten design with three coloured beads, two whites and one red or two reds and one turquoise.

### ***Tabizu***

Pendants fixed on either black thread or silver chain and worn round the neck. These come in different shapes, beautifully raised with *minakari* or *kundan* work.

### ***Hass or hasli***

Heavy, solid silver, crescent shaped necklace, with the middle part heavier and decorated.

### ***Chandanharu***

A long heavy necklace of four or five rows of beads or decorated with some typical motifs in silver or gold with a pendant at the end. This elaborate necklace is frequently worn by the women in Sind.

### ***Bazubandu***

It is tied on the arm just above the elbow. It is made of silver tubular pieces, raised with *minakari* string of black thread and with a very decorative bund.

### ***Kanganu***

Thick bracelets and sometimes set with stones and made to fit the hand closely.

### ***Challow***

A silver ring with silver bells.

### ***Kharioon***

Thick solid silver anklets ending in knobs. These are either intricately designed or worked in *minakari*.



Fig 83. This picture show the different types of anklets worn by the Sindhi women, at Sindh museum, Hyderabad.



Fig 84. This picture show the famously worn locket called *hasli or hass*, at Sindh museum, Hyderabad. It is used in daily wera jewellery among many Sindhi tribes.



Fig 85. The very famous neck ornament called *Chandanhar*, mostly worn at weddings, at Sindh museum, Hyderabad.



Fig 86. These are different styles of armlet called bazoband ,worn a little down to shoulder, it comes in bangle shape also, at Sindh museum,Hyderabad.



Fig87. These are the anklets, at Sindh museum, Hyderabad.

## THE Work of *SUNAR* (Gold Smith)

Since the discovery of precious metals and the development of metalwork techniques the *sunar* or goldsmith has played a leading role in the development of ornamental forms. With the discovery of gold and the realization of its potential properties, the goldsmith was able to give free reign to his skill and imagination to produce ornaments which are our rich heritage. In the Subcontinent the *sunar* has always been amongst the *corps d'elite* of artisans, patronized by emperors and a wealthy aristocracy to whom money meant nothing and the aesthetics and skill everything.<sup>169</sup> He was an essential part of the palace entourage and kept constantly busy, being respected and renowned for his skill, envied, much sought after and often paid bribes to encourage him to change masters. With such patronage and recognition he worked with care and great devotion, excelling in his chosen technique and producing marvels of manual skill and aesthetic taste.<sup>170</sup>

The craft of the goldsmith reached its zenith during the Mughul period. Akbar did his utmost to attract the best artisans from all parts of the world and had his goldsmith shops outside the palace walls, which he regularly visited, inspecting each ornament personally and rewarding the artisans. Jean Baptist Tavernier, the famous gem merchant from France, made five journeys to India during the reigns of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb and was shown the royal collection by Aurangzeb. Jahangir, in his memoirs, mentions an European goldsmith whom he calls '*Hunarmand*' (skilful) who presented him with a throne of gold and silver, the supports of which were in the form of tigers, completed in three years. Jahangir says of him '*who had no rival in the arts of a goldsmith and a jeweller*'.<sup>171</sup> Western designs were inevitably copied by Indian artisans, producing jewellery with a singular blend of the East and the West.

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<sup>169</sup> Aziz, Abdul, K, Arms and Jewellery of the Indian Moghuls, Ripon printing press, Lahore, 1947, p 12.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p 12.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, p 16



The *sunar* in Pakistan inherits the skill and the methods by the direct descent of an immemorial tradition which has survived through centuries. The craft is handed down from father to son. The learning process begins at an early age. The child is exposed to his father's craft at the age of about ten years and his parent infuses in him the age old skill which he learnt from his ancestors. It is normal to find the sons following in the footsteps of their father, learning a particular technique of which he is a master. The master artisan may also hire an apprentice who will stay and work with him during his lifetime. A master craftsman usually works in his own home and being the best in his field, is much sought after and highly respected by the proprietors of jewellery shops. The proprietors visit him to place orders and provide the gold and gems. Most of these skilful *sunars* work independently, fulfilling the orders of two or three shops only and charging according to the design of each article. Some of the *sunars* have their own wholesale outlets. They buy their silver and gold from the dealers and have many employees who work in a variety of techniques. The metals used for ornaments in Pakistan are gold, silver and white metal. All pieces are worked entirely by hand and are still fashioned by the traditional tools of iron, copper and bronze used through centuries. Similar decorative techniques may be applied to the three metals. The desired textures of each form are determined by the method applied. Most jewellery is a combination of various techniques of surface decoration.

### ***Rupousse***

*Repousse or awkaz* is a technique where the design is punched in relief on the metal sheet. The metal plate is laid face down on a bed of warm pitch or *lac* and the design is drawn with the help of a scribe, the pattern is then punched out with a variety of blunt chisels and a mallet. The *lac* is tacky and softer than the metal; it grips the plate firmly and allows it to follow the contours of the tool. When the design is complete the pitch is slightly heated and the gold plate removed. The front design is completed with chasing and engraving tools. The metal is then shaped to the desired form, be it a bracelet, earring or necklace.

## **Chasing and Engraving: *Chitai***

The artisan who does the chasing and engraving is called the *chatera*. There is often confusion between the two techniques. A chasing tool makes an indentation in the metal by pressure, the metal is squeezed out of the groove but still forms part of the pattern. Engraving actually gouges out a section of the metal leaving a clear thin line. The metal is worked on a bed of pitch with the help of sensitive engraving and chasing tools. The designs are memorised by the artisans and it is not unusual for them to have an average of twenty basic patterns on recall and to mix and combine them to make numerous variations.

## ***Sadakari***

*Sadakari* or open work is a technique where the surface is worked entirely by hand with the help of a saw, the result resembling a very delicate network of leaves, vines, flowers and geometrical patterns. *Sadakari* is applied to heavy gold ornaments, the gold plate having to be quite solid. The design is first drawn on a piece of paper and transferred to the metal sheet by gluing the paper on its surface, and outlined with the help of a chisel and hammer. Holes are drilled in the pattern to insert the saw for cutting the pattern along the lines of the design, whilst manipulating the gold plate in the appropriate directions.

## ***Thappa***

Die stamping or *thappa* is similar to *repousse*. While in *repousse* the pattern is worked by chisel and hammer on a bed of *lac*, in die stamping a similar result is obtained by patterned moulds of iron and tempered steel.<sup>172</sup> The thin metal sheet is laid on top of the mould, covered by a lead sheet, pressed and beaten lightly with a small mallet. The lead facilitates the metal sheet to fill the grooves and form the moulded design. This technique is suitable for

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<sup>172</sup> Jewellery from Pakistan, Export Promotion Bureau, Pakistan, Elite Publishers Limited, Karachi, p 18

light-weight ornaments, the metal being quite thin in order to accept the pattern. The largest engraving mould is about four inches in length.<sup>173</sup>

### **Filigree: *Cuttuck***

Filigree or *Cuttuck* is perhaps the very earliest form of ornamentation in precious metals. The surface of the ornament is adorned by wire, twisted, spiralled, plaited and curled by hand with the help of tweezers. The wire is then cut into shapes of leaves, curly vines, flowers and a variety of geometric shapes and soldered to the surface of the ornament. The design is further embellished by spheres, balls and bells. *Rawal*, a method similar to granulation, where round balls are glued to the surface and attached to it by applying heat through a thin blow-pipe is also popularly used with filigree.<sup>174</sup>

### **Enamelling and Inlay *Minakari***

Enamelling is a branch of the art of vitrification, a method of painting on metals with mineral oxides in such a manner that the colours adhere to the surface. There are three forms of enamelling in practice today. One in which the colours are applied like paint on the ornaments' surface. Secondly, the *champlevé* method where the design is engraved out of the metal and colours placed in depressions hollowed out to receive them. Thirdly, the *cloisonné* method, a very ancient form of encrustation known in the Subcontinent as *kundan*, earliest examples of which were found in Taxila. Thin gold strips are bent round to form a cell then soldered to the ornament's surface and filled with enamel paste which is made to adhere by fire. After the article has been engraved for the *champlevé* method or the cells soldered to the gold surface, the hollows are ornamented with hatchings which serve not only to make the

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p 18

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p 18

enamel adhere but also helps to increase the play of light and shade through the transparent colours.

The enameller or *minakari* now applies the colours in order of their hardness, starting with the hardest. These colours are in opaque vitreous masses. The base of each colour is vitreous and the colour matter is the oxide of a metal like cobalt or iron. All colours can be applied to gold. The colours are pulverized and made into a paste. As soon as the piece is ready it is placed on a talc sheet and put into a furnace for such time as required to mix the colour. Next, the piece is polished with corundum and cleansed. One of the earliest and most popular ways of adding colour to plain gold ornaments was inlay by the *kundan* method. A stone, instead of enamel paste is placed in the cell, glued to the surface; the gold wall is then pushed against the gem making it more secure. Inlay is also combined with *sadakari*. Holes are drilled in the open work design and the gem or pearl placed in position. The surrounding area is chased and the gold pushed against the stone at four points making it secure.



Fig 88. The *kundan* work on bangles, at a shop in a market of Karachi.



Fig 89. This picture shows the work of *Minakari*, on some traditional jewellery still famous in urban population also.

Whether it is a ring, bracelet, earring or a pendant, whether it is embossed, engraved, enamelled or inlaid, the ornament goes through the same basic steps before it reaches its completed form. Most of the surfaces are a combination of two or three techniques; a bangle may be engraved and enamelled or embossed and inlaid. Each step is completed by a different artisan, master of his craft, who has perfected his skill in the chosen technique. It is not unusual for the finished piece we see in the shops to have passed through many hands before its final polishing and to have travelled through workshops in far flung corners of the city. More and more, though, as mechanisation and the use of sophisticated tools increases, not to mention the massive escalation in the world price of gold, one fears that the ancient craft of the goldsmith, like so many other handicrafts, will be lost to the world, unless as in Pakistan, ornaments are considered a part of our way of life and cultural tradition.

The power vacuum left by the Mughuls was filled by the British who laid a network of railways across the Subcontinent, making communication easier and regions more accessible to one another, facilitating a free flow of ideas and fashions and levelling the difference of design and forms between areas.<sup>175</sup> Tourists from Europe and England began visiting the country, placing new demands on the *sunar* who once again adapted himself to fashioning ornaments to suit the demands of the times. Western influence made it felt in every sphere of life, even the native elite came under its influence. English became national language; the western impact displayed itself in patterns of textiles, clothes and jewellery.<sup>176</sup> Side by side with traditional ornaments, the *sunar* was producing jewellery with distinctive western forms and patterns. Gold bracelets with mounted miniature paintings and necklaces consisting of a series of oval plaques united by chains now came into vogue. Silver gained prominence. Up to now it had only been worn by rural folks or people too poor to afford gold. Silver brooches, belts and bracelets in mat pattern became popular. Delicately filigreed butterflies, beetles, lilies and crosses were the favourite shapes.

The West introduced the open claw setting of stones; massive rings with single precious stones were worn, necklaces too were decorated in this style. Uncut stones were abandoned

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid, P.19

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p 19

and the trend of cut stones came into vogue. By the end of the 19th century industrialisation and easier communication created a mobile society. To conform to this new way of life jewellery patterns and designs underwent a change. A general streamlining and simplification came about. These new shapes required harder metals, white gold and platinum were used. Pure gold being too pliable for the new shapes a quantity of alloy became necessary and to determine the quality of the gold, the carat system was introduced by the West. Polishing of gold was unknown; the ornament's surface was left dull. The 20th century not only saw the introduction of new metals but also the advent of metal polishing. The raised gold surfaces were diamond cut to add an extra brilliance to the gold piece. Plain, highly polished bangles and bracelets, light chains and necklaces were the trend.

Ancient forms and designs were revived again and came into fashion. The present Pakistani jewellery is a combination of the indigenous forms evident in our rural ornaments and the continuation of the Muslim designs introduced in the 16th century by the Moghuls. The jewellery of the village folk was traditionally of silver, gold being worn by the chiefs and wealthy landlords. The villagers and small town dwellers did not come under the sway of the cosmopolitan cities or their effect on the arts and crafts. Thus, the silver jewellery of the villages is reminiscent of the ornaments of Mohenjo-Daro and Taxila, a constant reminder of a hoary past. The Muslim impact on ornamental techniques radiated from the court at Delhi to all the major towns whose elite came under its sway. Thus the modern urban women's jewellery is still very much a part of the Moghul inheritance. The increasing amalgamation between the East and the West has resulted in jewellery that is streamlined and utilitarian. Simple pieces such as chains, rings and plain highly polished bangles are worn daily. Jewellers are copying western motifs from trade catalogues and magazines which result in similarities of design in fashions and ornamentation. However, the traditional, intricately worked pieces continue to be produced and are highly prized and appreciated.



Fig 90. This picture shows the beautiful bangles of Hyderabad city of Pakistan.

## **BANGLES FROM HYDERABAD AND ITS MAKERS**

Hyderabad may not be one of the biggest cities of the country but is sure the second largest city of Sindh. Interestingly, Hyderabad is an important city, famous throughout the country for its own reasons. The city is renowned for manufacturing a large variety of colourful glass bangles which attracts people from all over the country. But Hyderabad's bangles are not only famous within the country, but their fine quality and unique designs have made a niche internationally as well. Bangles play a very important part in the life of women. They not only wear bangles on special occasions but as a part of their makeover - especially when they want a traditional touch for their look. The love for bangles is not only limited to Pakistan or India, Asian women all over the world demand bangles as an important part of their look. The bangles are a decorative ornament that women across India-Pakistan have been wearing for



centuries. In fact, the bangles have a great socio-cultural-religious significance in Indian and Pakistan history and culture. This is because literature has glorified this ornament to make it the epitome of feminine grace.

Besides all this, bangles have a very traditional value in Hinduism. As it is considered inauspicious to be bare armed, Hindu married women are always wearing some bangles around their wrists. Today, the modern day women may not wear bangles with their daily attire, but only on occasions and festivals. This is because to them, bangles have a very sentimental value. In fact, to the Hindu woman, bangle is not only an ornament, but also an important part of womanhood and honour. Bangles are made of many materials including plastic, glass, metal, kundan, lac, beads, and black metal, silver and even gold. They are found in different colours, designs and different shapes too. Of course, the most durable of these bangles is the gold bangle, and the least durable, glass bangles. This is why many women prefer wearing gold bangles for day to day life and glass bangles for special occasions.

In Gujarat and Rajasthan, the bride's mother has to gift the bride a pair of ivory bangles. It is only on wearing these ivory bangles that the bridal couple can perform the 'saptapati'; without the bangles, this ritual cannot be performed. (The saptapati is the seven steps that are taken around the fire, without which no Hindu marriage is considered complete). Married women in Bengal have to wear the iron 'kada' (bangle) or 'loha' as it is commonly called, to signify marriage. In addition to this kada, the bride is presented with white conch bangles that are beautifully crafted and red lac bangles.

Surprisingly, the hands that create them belong to women as well, who are over worked and underpaid for their beautiful creations. The 'bangle industry' is no doubt an unmanaged and home-based industry, where women toil away to earn a livelihood under extremely deplorable conditions. Besides the hard work involved, a number of health concerns are also faced by the women workers. However, they have very little or no knowledge of the hazardous consequences that this vocation exposes these workers to. The age of the bangle workers spans from the very young to the older lot. This is mainly because of the poverty that

these people are faced with, and even if they were aware of the hazards they would be compelled to work at low wages and under perilous conditions to feed their families.

According to a 1998 survey of International Labour Organisation (ILO), 10,000 families are associated with the bangle industry, which makes nearly 20,000 women workers. But now the number of women working for the bangle industry has increased because of the rise in poverty and inflation in the country. Glass bangles are produced in factories in the initial stage and then transferred to women workers at their houses for sadai (levelling). Then they are taken for welding, cutting, designing and finally for colouring.

The finishing process is quite tricky in the sense that women who are less educated and unaware of the marketing trends become victims of the contractors who give them low wages and earn a lot from factory owners. In the end, the bangles are sold from Rs.20 and onwards per dozen depending on the quality and design applied on them, while the women workers don't even get the half of the profit.

Reshman, working in Rehman Town of Paretabad says she earns Rs. 3.50 for one toora (pair of 320) of bangles. This includes what her daughters get as well as they help her in the work. "After working for an entire day with short intervals to complete other household chores, I earn Rs. 30 to 40, says Resham. Falling ill is a routine too as sitting in front of the fire creates skin problems. And sitting in the same position for hours causes body pains." In Ramadan, the work load is at its peak. The women work all night long till dawn, as they get advance orders for Eid (festival) (when the sale is at the maximum in the entire country). Besides, being the time of the greatest sale, it is also a time when workers fall ill frequently. And if it's summer, the situation becomes even more severe when they are unable to bear direct heat.

The areas in Hyderabad where women work in large numbers are Paretabad, different units of Latifabad, Hali Road, American quarters, Makrani Mohalla, Ilyasabad, Liaquat Colony, Islamabad, Jinnah Colony, Pacca and Katcha Qila. Perveen, a resident of Paretabad and a mother of five, entered this home-based business after the death of her husband. She is disheartened by the whole situation as she says that they are the ones who work from dawn till dusk but all the profits are earned by the factory owners and contractors. They are given meagre wages which are not even enough for food and clothing, let alone the education of the children. When asked why they are still working despite the detestable conditions, they say at least they are working within the secure walls of their homes. There are a lot of social and cultural obstacles for a woman to step out of the house to earn, so they opt for this hazardous job. In these circumstances, the amount earned doesn't compensate for the negative attitude of the people. Hence, the wristlet makers demand an increase in their income as that's the sole source of income for their families.

Shamim, a widow with eight children, lives in a one room quarter and earns nearly Rs. 2,000 per month. "It is very hard to live with this amount and a family to support. Sometimes we take a meal in a day and sometimes two which makes survival very tough," says Shamim. The National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) is working to eliminate the worst form of child labour in the glass bangle industry. Nazar Joyo, worker of NRSP, says that in order to improve the living of these families, girls are trained as beauticians, enrolled in sewing and embroidery courses. Many girls have now opened small parlours as the NRSP

supports them in getting microfinance too. Khalida, a resident of Ilyasabad, has set up a parlour at her place and is happy to quit bangle making and designing. The parlour helps her earn more money. "I earn more than Rs. 30 to 50 per day on an average against what I used to earn from hard labour which was even below Rs. 20 per day," she said.

These jobs are easier than making bangles and cause no dangerous ailments. "My hands are vulnerable to skin diseases and you are only able to see my nails in proper condition because of Eid holidays. The rest of the year they are in very bad shape," informs Shaista who is also running a school to impart education to children of the bangle industry under the patronage of NRSP. The NGOs are not much help to these women too as their focal point is to make the women switch profession rather than helping them improve their work conditions. Elimination of such forms of labour from homes would not solve the problem of poverty, until poverty is eradicated from these areas by the authorities and the women are not given a substitute to earn from their homes.

## **CHILD LABOUR INVOLVED IN BANGLE BUSINESS**

I went to Hyderabad to learn about the bangle industry, and child labour involved in its process. I found out that a huge number of children are involved in it, because of mostly the same purpose i.e. the financial problems at home. Ten-year-old Mohammad Adnan leans towards the blazing furnace, moulding bangles for up to 12 hours a day to earn 18 cents to help feed his family. 'I'm just starting and can make six to seven tora (300 bangles) a day and earn 14 to 15 rupees,' said Adnan, in Pakistan's southern city of Hyderabad. Adnan is just one of thousands of Pakistani children toiling to manufacture the popular glass bracelets that adorn the arms of practically every woman who can afford them in the south Asian nation of 170 million. Mohammad Kaleem, Adnan's father, is one of the best paid, earning 3,000 rupees (36 dollars) a month for carving names and designs onto the thin glass. 'I inherited this art from my father and now I am transferring it to my son,' Kaleem said. Pakistan's bangle industry started on the banks of the Indus river in 1947 when a large number of artisans migrated to Hyderabad as British colonialists partitioned the Indian sub-continent, creating two independent nations. But for every bangle given as a present in wealthy homes this Eid(festival), lies a disturbing tale of child labour, poverty and Dickensian misery.

A 2004 survey commissioned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) found that 10,000 children aged five to 17 -- 1,000 of them younger than 10 and 29 percent of them girls

were working in the bangle industry in Hyderabad. Most of them come from poor homes with illiterate parents, dropping out of school because of poverty. 'I couldn't go to school after fourth grade because the whole family has to work to survive and our jobs coincide with school time,' said 14-year-old Mohammad Kamran. Pakistan's last national child labour survey in 1996 said 3.3 million children were at work. Since then, the overall population has risen by 30 million and charities say the figures are much higher. 'We believe these official figures are unrealistically low,' says Pakistan's Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child. The ILO survey said 86 percent of the children worked full-time and that nearly 58 percent spoke of sickness or injury. The children suffer from fever, skin disease, cuts, wounds, headaches and backache due to heavy loads. The study highlighted the risks of working for hours at a time near the furnaces used for moulding and joining, and also from toxic chemicals used in coating and painting. In a closed room of a Hyderabad slum, Fatima Ali, 35, cuts a cylinder of glass into batches of 300, then starts to smooth the bangles over a flame. 'I work along with my husband, three sons and two daughters (who are aged eight to 15) all day, yet we earn little more than 6,000 rupees (75 dollars) a month -- not enough to live a better life,' she said, Fatima said she wore a bangle just once -- at her wedding 18 years ago.' I can't wear it now, because I feel no attraction in its colours and glitter like other women,' she said.



Fig 91. This is a picture of workshop of bangles in Hyderabad, where young boys are working.

## Chapter 6

### CARPET WEAVING

The original home of the carpet industry is claimed to be China and Iran where it came into existence about 300A.D.<sup>177</sup> The specific evidence for this comes from the discoveries made by Russian archaeologists at the frozen tombs of Bashadar and Pazyryk in the High Altai region. The site of Bashadar produced a fragment of a pile carpet carbon dated to the sixth century B.C., unfortunately, no pattern is discernible on this fragment, but at Pazyryk another pile carpet was discovered damaged but virtually intact, datable to the fifth or fourth century B.C.<sup>178</sup> After conservation, its colour and design turned out to be nothing less than astounding. The centre of the rug had a king of chessboard design with small floral motifs in each square. The borders also had floral designs, as well as a frieze of horsemen, one of griffins, and another of fallow deer. The palette had rich reds, soft greens, blue, and gold, with a velvety pile.<sup>179</sup> Because of its design and technical sophistication, some scholars have doubted that the Pazyryk carpet was a product nomadic weaving. The frieze of horseman and the floral designs are clearly related to ancient Persian art, especially the reliefs at the great site of Persepolis. The weaving technique is also very fine, which, to some scholars at least, suggests urban workmanship or origin.<sup>180</sup>

The tradition of hand-woven carpets is said to have been introduced in the sub-continent by the Turku-Arab and Persian migrations, although the custom of resting on a floor covering is perhaps older than history itself. When exactly the (*ghilim*) carpet tradition set in, it is difficult to say. But history and archaeology suggest that the *ghilim* carpet was a booming

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<sup>177</sup> Arthur Upham, Pope, A survey of Persian Art, Oxford University press, London, 1939, p.2234

<sup>178</sup> Gans Reudin, E, Antique Oriental Carpets from 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, translated from le tapis de l' Amateur, by Richard and Elizebeth Bartlett, Thames and Hudson, London, 1975, p.10

<sup>179</sup> Sakhai, Essie, Persian Rugs and Carpets: The Fabric of Life, Antique collectors club, 2008, p 34

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p.36

export item of the Indus Valley Civilization, and that it adorned the palaces of the Pharaohs of Egypt. The use of royal purple as the main colour and the character of the designs, has led to the belief that *ghilims* were produced in Imperial workshops for the use of royalty.<sup>181</sup> Today, *ghilims* of new designs and patterns are popular for outdoor use, and for the staircase, lounge or verandah. The *ghilim* appears to have been succeeded by the *ghaleen* (Persian for carpet). *Ghaleen* is a woven wool carpet with a rougher texture. It is sturdier and less decorative. All the shades of orange dominate the background theme. But on, the corners, the centre and the sides, gorgeous shades of indigo, blue, white, red and yellow are used for contrast. *Ghaleens*, produced today in varying sizes, and popular for both indoor and outdoor use.



Fig 92 . This is believed to be oldest carpet found from Pazyryrk, Persia, photo courtesy by the website called rugidea.com

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid

The belief rests on the fact that the oldest surviving carpets, after the carpets produced by Iranian craftsmen in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when during the reign of Shah Abbas Safavi (1586-1628) they reached the peak of their glory. But the same period witnessed the rise of the Mughal carpet which forms a valuable part of the conglomerate of many national schools lumped together under the label of 'Persian carpet'.<sup>182</sup> The great Mughal ruler Akbar (1556-1605), is said to have been the patron of this craft,<sup>183</sup> had inherited his grandfather Babar's love of art and architecture, gardens and carpets, mobilised craftsmen in various media and one of his most ambitious projects was the founding of imperial carpet workshops at Lahore, Agra and Murshidabad. For this he pooled the talent not only of the carpet-weaving families settled in the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan but also invited master craftsmen from Iran and Central Asia. This happy combination of court patronage and craftsmen's ingenuity, over a long period of socio-political stability, resulted in the production of a large number of Persian style carpets in Lahore which attracted buyers from many foreign countries.<sup>184</sup>

Akbar after consolidating his empire settled down to the arts of peace. As noted in *A'in-i Akbari* the Emperor had sent for expert teachers and master-weavers to settle in his country to improve the system of manufacture. Abul Fazl recorded: "His majesty has caused carpets to be made of wonderful variations and charming textures; he has appointed experienced artisans who have produced many masterpieces. The carpets of Iran and Turan are no more thought of, although merchants still import carpets from Jushagan, Khuzistan, Kirman and Sabzwaar."<sup>185</sup> All kinds of carpet weavers have settled here and drive a thriving trade. They are found every town but specially at Agra, Fatehpur and Lahore, where imperial workshops were functioning.<sup>186</sup> Many other factors influenced carpet making during Akbar's period, the foremost being the constant diplomatic exchanges with Shah Abbas of Persia and inflow of gifts invariably including carpets. The innovations in design and technique in Persia could not have escaped Akbar's workshops. This point gains strength from the fact that Mughal carpets

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<sup>182</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export promotion bureau, Govt of Pakistan, Elite publishers limited, 1979, p.79

<sup>183</sup> M.M, Taqi, Pakistani minor Arts, Cultural Heritage of Pakistan, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1955, p.89

<sup>184</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export promotion bureau, Govt of Pakistan, Elite publishers limited, 1979, p. 79

<sup>185</sup> Abul, Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, translated by Jarret, H.S, Calcutta, p. 57

<sup>186</sup> Ibid



in their totality carry a closer impression of Safavid designs than those of Timurid. Besides, the monumental volumes of miniature paintings running into thousands of folios and illustrated manuscripts commissioned by Akbar led to formation of almost a regiment of painters illuminators, calligraphers and designers in three capitals who deeply influenced carpet cartoons for masters weavers.<sup>187</sup> This factor explains the close kinship that existed between the carpets as depicted in miniature paintings and actual carpets in real life.

Even if no carpets had survived from Akbar's period it would not have been difficult to visualise what they looked like from the legacy of his ateliers now scattered in folios all over the museums of the world. In the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, for instance, there is an illustration from Hamza Nama (No. 49.18) titled: '*Zardhank Khatni Brings the Ring to the Prison Keeper.*' The latter with his burly frame is seated on a cobalt blue carpet strewn with white, pink, powder-blue and red flowers; and its border is golden mustard with similar blossoms.<sup>188</sup> Carpets of this style are commonly found in Indian and foreign collections.

Mughal School that distinguish it from the styles evolved in Iran, the Lahore carpet-weavers adopted both the standard knots (Turkish and Persian) and some of the stylised motifs executed throughout the carpet making countries, they evolved their own patterns for the prized varieties-the hunting, garden or floral carpets. Not only were their trees and flowers, animals and hunters, drawn from life around them, they are credited with having achieved greater naturalism and mobility than their counterparts in Kashan or Isphahan. Also they were reproduction; it has as many knots as the 20 times bigger Isphahan original of the 16th century.<sup>189</sup> Today, hand-made Lahore carpets still maintain a high degree of traditional excellence. While *pashmina* and silk carpets are made mostly to order, a wide choice of wool carpets is laid before the buyer and the collector.

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<sup>187</sup> Riazuddin, Begum Akhtar, History of Handicrafts of Pakistan and India, National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1988, p.185

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p.186

<sup>189</sup> Rehman, I.A, Arts and Crafts of Pakistan, Export promotion bureau, Govt of Pakistan, Elite publishers limited, 1979, p.79-81



Fig 93. This is the original piece of carpet of the Mughal dynasty, 17<sup>th</sup> century, photo courtesy by Wikimedia commons and it is considered to be public domain is at Victoria and Albert museum.

## FLORAL CARPETS

Some fine carpets on record are from Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's times, and the majority is floral carpets painstakingly and meticulously classified as Mughal since for a long time some of them were mistaken for flower-rugs from Faraghan, Kashan or Kirman. Within this loose framework of floral carpets for there is hardly any category without flowers. The naturalistic flower carpets were the outcome of a tilt towards realism that the school of designers had acquired in their work during Jahangir's reign. And this "botanical concern for truth" was not owing to indigenous influence as believed by one or two writers but happened to be the direct result of the lead given by the Emperor, a perfect aesthete, during his enraptured stay in

Kashmir.<sup>190</sup>The tradition of frescoes and murals in ancient India had an exceedingly limited range of flowers - mainly lotus and sunflowers and an equally confined way of rendering nature without attention to accuracy. In fact it is this closeness to nature and faithful reproduction of its details that have helped to distinguish Mughal carpets from Persian ones. The chief distinguishing mark of this category of Mughal carpets is that flowers are not subordinated to arabesques nor impersonalized by geometry but appears to be fresh-picked from verdant vales and decked out in individual arrangements. There is no overcrowding and ample space has been given to set off each flowering plant.

A compact maroon piece trellised with bands serrated on either side or sparsely arrayed with dainty flowering shrubs, comes from the Salting Bequest to the Victoria and Albert Museum. This piece is obviously a part of a huge carpet whose remaining portions are in other collections. The *Journal of Indian Art* dates it as 17<sup>th</sup> century and another expert corrects it as 16th century, and if the latter view is correct this carpet may be one of the earliest Mughal pieces on record.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Skelton, R, *A Decorative Mughal Motif: Aspects of Indian Art 1971*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1966, p 147

<sup>191</sup> The Salting Bequest, Carpet, J.I.A., XI, Monograph, F.H. Andrews, April, 1906



Fig 94. This carpet is influenced by the Mughal patterns of floral designs, courtesy by arthonolulu.com

## PICTORIAL CARPETS

A carpet-weaver translating an artistic dream in woollen loops faces a tougher challenge than a painter reproducing a carpet on his canvas. Such expert weavers, probably commissioned or cultivated from Akbar's workshops, managed to produce outstanding vision of paintings executed in finest knotting to outline the minute details of facial expressions and bodily postures of animals and humans.<sup>192</sup> In the midst of innocent spring flowers are unleashed dreaded carnivores, winged horses and dragons gobbling up small game. The entire animal world-crocodiles, tigers, leopards, stags and rhinoceroses - is charged with energy, the hunter and the hunted both in rapid motion. Only the two dromedaries, oblivious to danger, are interlocked in mock combat. The centre-piece is a tame elephant with ornamented trappings, being gently led away by the turbaned rider. Even the borders of this long carpet have unusual cartouches set with human or animal masks in the shape of palmettes, alternating with quatrefoils containing birds.<sup>193</sup>

The decline of Mughal power caused a great setback to the families of renowned carpet-makers. While some managed to secure the patronage of smaller regimes that were rising and falling in quick succession, most found economic depression and the oppressive heat of the plains an unbearable combination.<sup>194</sup> A very large number of such families migrated northward to Kashmir where they could preserve their craft in a kinder climate. But the severe famine of 1840 forced those to return to the plains and thousands of craftsmen settled in the Punjab, and from that time the tradition of finer workmanship is associated with Kashmiri weavers. Within a few decades Amritsar developed into a leading centre of pile-carpets in the subcontinent, and by 1900 its export earnings had risen to one hundred thousand pounds sterling per year. The two world wars dealt serious blows to the flourishing craft and then came the dislocation caused by Partition and the mass exchange of population. The Amritsar carpet-makers came over to Lahore and other towns of the Pakistani Punjab to

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<sup>192</sup> Spuhler, F, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles in the Kier Collection*, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, p.27

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, p.28

<sup>194</sup> Rehman, I.A, *Arts and Crafts of Pakistan*, Export promotion bureau, Govt of Pakistan, Elite publishers limited, 1979, p.81

join the community of craftsmen already settled there. At present carpets are produced in and around more than fifty towns.<sup>195</sup>



Fig 95. The famous Kashmiri silk hand-woven carpet.

Although carpet business has become a vast enterprise with an investment of millions of dollars, the bulk of the production is still provided by craftsmen working on a small scale. A majority of them have installed looms in their village homes and often women and children provide unskilled support to the head of the family, who fills the role of the skilled operator and head of the team. Of late a growing demand for carpets has encouraged the growth of fairly sizeable units in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Hyderabad.

The whole process involved in the preparation of hand-knotted carpets furnishes a fascinating study of human ingenuity. To begin with the basic raw material wool- must be carefully selected. Fortunately, the sheep traditionally bred in Baluchistan, Northern Areas and Cholistan yield fine quality wool. In addition, wool tops are imported from abroad. The town-

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p.81

based craftsmen rely mostly on yarn spun on modern machines but in the rural areas the use of home-made thread is quite common. A crucial pre-weaving operation is the dyeing of wool in the desired colours. To say only that for centuries the craftsmen depended upon vegetable dyes and are now using synthetic varieties is to ignore the special skills developed by the dyers and on which the appearance of the carpet and the fastness of its colours depends.

## **TOOLS USED IN CARPET WEAVING**

The most essential part of the carpet-weaver's equipment is a wooden (or iron) loom which may be fixed to the ground horizontally, in the fashion adopted by the nomad weavers, or vertically, as is the case in most indoor units. Yarn for the warp, mostly cotton in Pakistani carpets though woollen thread is also sometimes used, is stretched from beam to beam. The length of the beam determines the width of the carpet though there can be no limit to the length of the beam itself, except for that imposed by the size of the working space available to the craftsman. The tools used by the weaver are: a knife to cut the yarn after the knotting; a comb to set the wefts; and shears to trim the pile.

## **The Material**

The material basically employed in Oriental carpets is wool. Goat hair, camel hair, cotton and silk are materials less commonly used, according to their geographic availability and local custom. Wool is the ideal medium for a carpet durable, warm, springy, and never becoming matted. Cotton being strong and less likely to lose shape is employed for the warp and weft, although instances of pure wool carpets are not unknown. Silk is one of the oldest of luxury materials, capable of high gloss and fine structure but impractical for a floor covering.

Silk carpets probably originated in China and were used by royalty and nobility - those persons who could afford to supply the weaver with the quantities of yam necessary for a carpet.<sup>196</sup> Often the weaver will use small quantities of white cotton to provide areas of sharp contrast, similarly goat, or camel hair may be used for their tonal qualities, and silk yarn is frequently mixed in with the wool in exclusive luxury carpets. The material used in the carpets is carefully selected for its inherent qualities of durability, resistance to chemical erosion and ability to absorb the correct quantity of dyestuffs. It is then sorted, scoured and spun.<sup>197</sup> Today, except among nomads, machine spun yarns are widely used.

## DYEING AND COLOURS

In the east, the dyer's craft was an ancient one, until about 1920, only natural dyes were used, made from plants, minerals and, occasionally, insects. The most pleasing quality of natural dyes is that they are never over-bright and they mellow with age, not changing colour or fading abruptly as with early aniline dyes, but growing softer and more pleasing to the eye. In the middle of the 19th century, the spread of cheap aniline dyes had a disastrous effect on quality. Not only were the colours harsh, they faded badly and changed hue. Worse still, they dried the carpet fibres making them brittle and fragile.<sup>198</sup> Modern chemical dyes have greatly improved, coming in a wide variety of colours and cost. The superior ones are not only as good as vegetable dyes, but in some instances even better in addition of course to being more convenient and cheaper. Carpets using natural dyes particularly those made by nomads, used to have colour variations, most clearly noticeable in the background where there were larger patches of one shade.<sup>199</sup>

In factories or large workshops, large amounts of yarn were dyed at the same time. The small workshop or nomad could only dye a small amount at a time. Moreover colour variations were an unavoidable outcome of nomadic life, as the same kind of plant may yield a slightly different shade because of differences of growing conditions, quality of water, or even texture

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<sup>196</sup> Pakistani Hand Knotted Carpets, Export Promotion Bureau, Karachi, 1978, p.5

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, p.5

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, p. 7

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, p.7



of wool. Such defects, however, are not scorned by connoisseurs, who see them as indications of genuineness and feel they give a life and charm to a design that might have otherwise become tedious.<sup>200</sup> "*Abrash*" as the phenomenon is called, is sometimes artificially and deliberately created - as is synthetic chemical washing not only to give sheen but to mellow, or as it were, age the colour.

The colours of Oriental carpets have important symbolic meanings, which often vary from region to region. For instance, white is the pan-Eastern colour of mourning and, because of its association with death, can also mean peace. Green signifies immortality, but it is also a colour associated with the Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him) and therefore rarely found in rugs as the devout hesitate to tread upon it; here, prayer rugs provide the exception.<sup>201</sup> Black is a universal symbol of sorrow, evil and destruction. For both this reason and because black in natural dyes had a corrosive effect on wool, it is rarely found in carpets. Conversely red, which often denotes joy and life is, not surprisingly, the most widely used colour. The "power" colours are gold, purple, Moghul blue, and yellow. Indigo blue denotes solitude. Rose or pink signifies divine wisdom, while brown, the colour of earth, stands for fertility. The colouring of Sindhi carpet is fine and has been admired by experts in glowing terms. Sir George Birdwood an English carpet critic has spoken of Sindhi carpets as "fine in design and colour".<sup>202</sup>

## **The Loom**

The loom on which the weaving and knotting are done is basically a wooden frame across which yarn can be stretched from beam to beam. The nomad works with the loom flat on the ground in front of him. He uses the simplest form of loom: a horizontal one which can be staked to the ground or supported by side pieces on the ground. This is ideal for nomadic people as it can be easily assembled and dismantled. Rugs worked on horizontal looms are generally fairly small and cannot be wider than the beams which, in the case of nomads, have to be small enough to be transported easily. The domestic or workshop craftsman sits with the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p.7

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>202</sup> Birdwood, George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi*, 1903, p.435

loom upright and facing him. The maximum size of the carpet is determined by the kind of loom. Settled craftsmen could produce larger pieces with their upright loom, working their way up by adding to the pile of stones on which they sat. Nowadays looms with rollers are used, making it possible to create carpets of any length without leaving terra firma. Looms do not vary greatly in essentials, though they vary a great deal in size and sophistication. There is no limit to the size of a carpet that can be woven as there is no limit to the width of the beam. In the Subcontinent in particular, very large looms have been recorded. There is no direct correlation however, between the size or sophistication of the loom and the fineness of the weaving. That remains a product of the skill of the artisans - and to some extent of his material.<sup>203</sup>

## KNOTS

There are basically two types of knots: the *Ghiordes* or Turkish knot named after a carpet-weaving city in Turkey, and the Persian or *Sehna* knot named after a Persian town.<sup>204</sup> The Turkish is knotted around 2 warp threads, the Persian around the warp and looped under the next. Each knot is tied by hand and in the finest pieces there may be anything between 5000 to 1000 knots to a square inch. In recent years some carpets have been tied with the *Jufti* or false knots. They are tied in the same way, but instead of utilising 2 warp threads they use 4 per knot. This obviously means a carpet woven in half the time, but also a coarse, loosely woven piece, which neither looks, nor wears as well as the more densely knotted carpet.<sup>205</sup> There is, in addition, the Spanish knot, which is looped around a single warp so the ends are brought out on either side. Spain is the oldest producer of pile rugs in Europe, underlining again the importance of Arab and Islamic influence on the art of the carpet. The finer the quality of wool, the finer and denser the knotting, the better the quality of carpet. Fine knotting also allows closer clipping of the pile without the ground-weave showing: another method of measuring carpet quality.<sup>206</sup> The *Sehna* knot is probably somewhat better adapted for fine knotting, though in the hands of a skilled craftsman the difference is not of much significance. In Pakistan, though the *Ghiordes* knot is also used, the *Sehna* is more common.

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<sup>203</sup> Pakistani Hand Knotted Carpets, Export Promotion Bureau, 1978, p.8

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p.9

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, p.9

<sup>206</sup> Campana, P Michele, European Carpets, Hamlyn Publisher, 1969, p.79

## **PATTERNS AND MOTIFS**

As mentioned earlier, the designs, motifs and patterns used in carpets are a common heritage, travelling from country to country through nomads, importation of weavers, and carpets themselves. The Tree of Life symbol can be traced as far back as the Mohenjo-Daro seals. Islam was a further unifying element. In addition to decoration various motifs symbolically represented life, eternity, peace, death, solitude or happiness.

### **Key pattern**

Though there is no specific prohibition in the Quran, the interpretations of later scholars led to the ban on the representation of figures or animals. Abstraction, ornament and geometry became the only approved modes of artistic expression. The arabesque could be called the basic Islamic ornament occurring in all the visual arts. The large medallion in the main field of the carpet is often built up entirely of arabesques. Of course, numerous Oriental patterns have evolved from the stylisation of plants, leaves and flowers (the latter may be in bouquets, in vases or in plants). The most important of these are palmette and rosette. A typical example of stylisation is the Turcoman carpet in which the rosette is reduced to a tablet shaped polygon called a *gul*. Persia remained outside the ban on figurative art. The result is seen in the flowering of the art of miniature painting and in the design of the carpets, such as the magnificent animal and hunting carpets.

The Persian floral carpet designs were adapted, and the Isphahan influence is clearly seen in the Moghul carpets produced in Lahore by the weavers of the Imperial carpet factory. Nomadic carpets are predominantly geometric, as the relative simplicity of the pattern facilitated its memorisation. In Timurid times, Persian carpet design closely resembled the Turkish: that is, it was predominantly geometric and arranged in an universal repeat pattern.

When carpet weaving was elevated to court taste, the vast repertoire of book illuminations, miniature paintings and tile and other patterns used decoratively in the field of architecture became a source of designs. Not only were the weavers in the towns gradually freed from tribal traditions, they were urged, by court patronage, to improve and elaborate designs to suit the more settled way of life and the taste for luxury.

The patterns and motifs used are far too numerous to enumerate in full. As mentioned earlier, many have origins in natural forms and plants. Trees and fruit, stars, crescents, lamps, combs, paisleys, swastikas, diamonds, medallions, script signs and inevitably, the arabesque, appear and reappear in countless variations, combinations and permutations. Human figures appear in stylized form in the geometric designs and in realistic form in the hunting carpets. The latter are mainly found in the Persian and Mughul traditions and are invariably fewer in number than the floral and other patterned types. The hunting carpets may be read on two levels: the purely pictorial, and the symbolic battle of good and evil. This latter is sometimes suggested by the verses woven into the carpet. In contrast to the Chinese artist's obsession with symbolism, Islamic artists have generally tended to move away from symbolism towards pure pattern. Of course certain flowers and forms represent certain properties (often these, too, vary from region to region and culture to culture). Similarly, animals are associated with virtues or are said to represent aspects of life. But whether the weaver always used the symbols with the meanings in mind is now being questioned by the scholars.

### **The Labour**

Among both the nomads and the village craftsmen, women are the most common weavers of carpets and even more often children, particularly girls. The reasons may be one, or all, of many. Children cost less to maintain than adult workers, are superior to adults in knotting, with their nimble fingers, small enough to tie the finest knots. Children remain, even today, an important element in the production of the Oriental carpet.

After the carpet is complete, it is cut down and the warp threads knotted to form a fringe. It is then clipped again, by experts wielding large shears. This is an art in itself even and closes cropping being the goal. The exception in this case being China, where the carpets are clipped around the designs and decorations, so that they stand out in relief to the background. After finishing, the ends of the carpets are knotted to create a fringe and the long sides of the carpet are bound with threads of wool to make firm edges. The carpet is then washed in cold water, often in a running stream or river - to carry away excess colour and make it colour-fast. The properties of the water are crucial to the final quality of the carpet, making it soft and lustrous or stiff and rough, according to the minerals present. Shrinkage, if it takes place, is not considered undesirable as it further tightens the weave of a carpet. The widespread use of synthetic dyes has been favoured by a technique which mimics the fading of naturally dyed materials the reduction bath. This chemical process tones down the colour without damaging the carpet threads. If carefully controlled, this pseudo-aging process can give effects rivalling those of natural ageing. So with the final grooming and searching inspection by discriminating craftsmen, the carpet is pronounced ready for the warehouses and thence onwards to the international markets where the demand for hand knotted carpets continues to grow.

## SINDHI CARPETS

In the sand- swept deserts of Sind, the leather-carpet called *nat* (deer skin) is perhaps an echo of the Stone Age man's animal hair or skin carpet.<sup>207</sup> Before modern carpet weaving was introduced in Sind, the Sindhi craftsmen were producing two kinds of indigenous coarse carpets, namely *Khararri* and *Farasi* (both used as bed-spreads). *Khararri* is made out of goat hair, whereas camel hair and cotton are mixed in *Farasi*. In the *Sindhi nat* of today pieces of leather are dyed, mustard, red or brown, stitched together, and beautifully decorated with stitched bands of embroidered floral borders. *Farasi* are made by *Sindhi* and *Baluchi* women in the villages of Hyderabad, Tharparkar and Sanghar. The designs of these carpets have a pronounced Turkish influence, and are cleverly conceived when they are worked in a combination of camel hair, sheep's wool and cotton yarn.<sup>208</sup> In the past, carpet weaving was practiced in Hyderabad, Tharparkar, Khairpur and Dadu districts where raw material, cotton and wool, was easily available. Bubak (Dist. Dadu) was reputed for its carpets and has been spoken of highly by travellers and scholars.<sup>209</sup> Pakistan produces ninety-five per cent of its carpets for export, and therefore the designs are determined largely by the taste of the foreign buyers. A wide repertoire of Turkoman, Persian and Caucasian designs can be found, often with variations and modifications adopted by the local weavers.<sup>210</sup>

## HAND KNOTTED CARPETS OF THARPARKAR

Tharparkar is known to produce woven carpets made from wool and silk having oriental, Mori, Kafqazi, Shikargah, Seneh, and Jaldar bokhara designs. Hand knotted carpets is sign of luxury, warmth and richness. The product is more than necessary commodity and is exported to USA, EU, Fareast and other regions of the world. In Tharparkar this cottage industry of carpet is spread throughout district and some parts of district Umerkot. The Tharparkar people depend mainly on livestock rearing and rain fed agriculture, which are often affected

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<sup>207</sup> Mirza, Anis, Handicrafts of the West Pakistan, West Pakistan industrial development corporation, Karachi, 1964, p. 36

<sup>209</sup> Smyth, J.W, Gazetter of the province of Sind,1943, p.38

<sup>210</sup> Pakistani Hand Knotted Carpets, Export Promotion Bureau, Karachi, 1978, p.11

by atmospheric conditions so the hand knotted carpets are other important economic factor for the living of people over there. The carpet industry was promoted in Thar in the 1960s by Sindh Small industries Corporation (SSIC) after which market demand for Thar carpets grew rapidly. Tharparkar carpets are among the finest quality carpets in Pakistan backed by excellent craftsmanship and having steady demand in international markets.<sup>211</sup>

## **PROBLEMS FACED BY CARPET WEAVERS**

Currently this craft is suffered by unorganized management, open market loans on huge interests, contractor system and credit cycle and due to this craftsman of this cluster wont able yet to develop their lifestyle above the line of poverty. In district Tharparkar and Umerkot there 80 % population engaged in carpet manufacturing and related business activities and this cluster has strong capability for improvement & growth.<sup>212</sup> Most of the small entrepreneurs lack raw material availability, looms and holding power of stocks during low demand phase. About 70 % of micro entrepreneurs looms are mortgaged to market lenders against average borrowings of 4000/ loom.<sup>213</sup> There is a lack of funds for small exporters. Quality assurance and consistency is the major problem due to inadequate supplies of high quality raw material on favourable prices.

### **Infrastructure Issues**

- Many weavers face problems of looms, seating arrangements, proper environment conditions depend on basic utilities.
- Lack of management & control during production operations.
- Lack of knowledge due to non availability of new market trends, techniques & designs.
- There is no dedicated training institute for this cluster for enhancing the capacity building of the entrepreneurs of this area.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>212</sup> Ibid

<sup>213</sup> Ibid

## Potential Areas of Improvement

To promote the cluster stake holders especially local weavers and their skills to give them opportunity to compete in the markets and improve their quality of life there should be immediate attention required to develop and execute a comprehensive plan with the focus to initiate:

- Training and capacity building of the weavers.
- Enabling them to meet demand of national and international markets by improving the quality of the product.
- Awareness and exposure with the new market trends and business techniques.
- Development of linkages of this cluster with the consumer markets.
- Establishing of well equipped training facility exclusive for the capacity building of this area.
- Free access of quality material to this area through a strong reliable logistic system.

In the recent years, carpet business has become a vast enterprise with a turnover of millions of dollars and the entire production is controlled by merchants. The bigger traders have installed looms at their workshops and hire labour to work there. Although the number of weavers so employed is around ten per cent of the total in the country, the vast majority of weavers working on looms installed at their homes in villages also depend on the traders. Usually a weaver enters into a contract with a merchant who provides the carpet designs and raw material. In many cases women and children provide skilled and unskilled support to the head of the family. Since more than one person may work on a carpet and the amount of labour required to complete it depends on its size and design, the wages are generally calculated on the basis of the total number of knots a piece has. In the case of labour working at the traders' workshops a worker is paid a stipulated amount per 1,000 knots. While most of the carpet-weavers learn the craft in their homes at an early age, the community is receiving about three thousand entrants every year who are trained at more than a hundred carpet centres linked with an institution for teachers set up in Lahore in 1956.



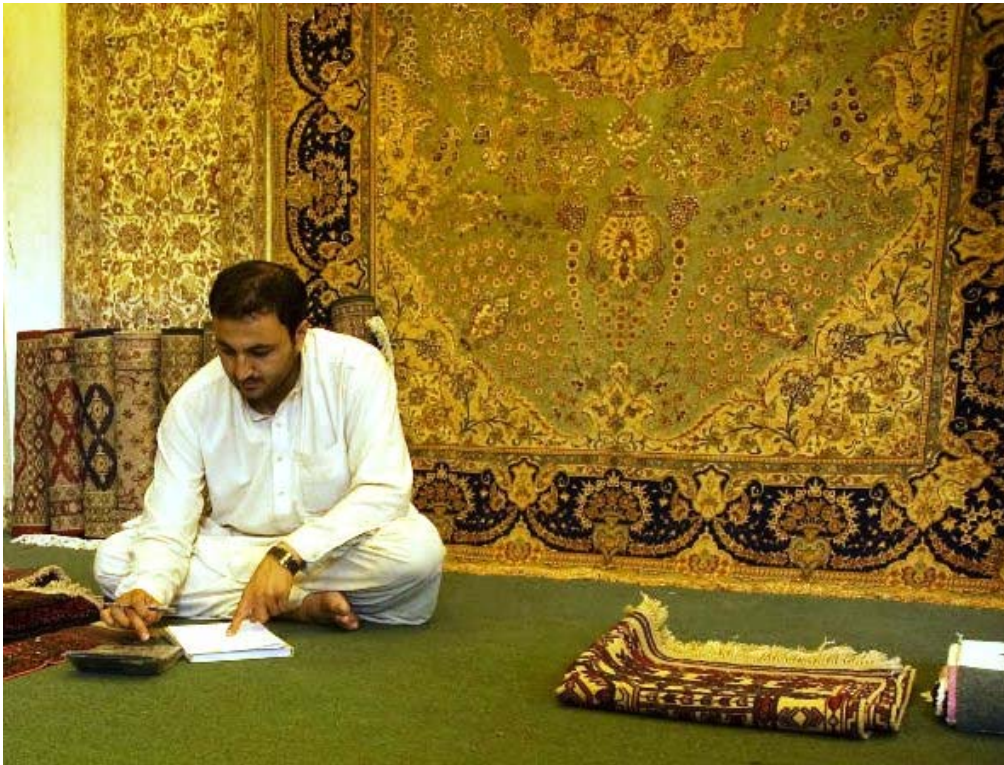


Fig 96. This picture show a carpet seller at his lavish shop in Karachi city.

However these craftsmen may have been trained and wherever they may be working, the essential fact is that they have to follow the instructions of the merchants who have their eyes on the burgeoning demand in the overseas markets. The carpet-weaver's art has become subservient to the caprice of consumers with different social traditions and aesthetic tastes. The compulsions of producing carpets that suit the taste and purchasing capacity of the average foreign buyer have inhibited creative experiments in designing. Since a large part of the clientele has a tendency to prefer reproductions of the acclaimed patterns on old carpets preserved in museums all over the world to newer conceptions, such copies are made in large number in every carpet-producing country. The rising costs of labour and materials discourage craftsmen from attempting superfine work. Considerations of cost have also affected the production of carpets of pure wool or with piles of silk and wool, though the latter variety is still made in considerable quantity. If one kept these factors in mind it would

not be difficult to understand why Bukhara-style carpets are produced in a large number in Pakistan than the Persian-style carpets. The former have fewer knots than the latter and use only five to six colours as against fourteen to over fifty in the latter variety.

The ever-growing competition in the world market and the differences in popular tastes in the different countries have already persuaded the bulk producers to trust their designers a little more than before. They are trying to evolve colour schemes and designs that satisfy modern sensibilities of the affluent world. For example, one finds carpets in which none of the traditionally liked bright colours has been used or the traditional '*gul*' or medallion has been replaced with simple arabesque or motifs like '*Ainai-Gul*'. Native legends, like *Sohni Mahiwal*, can be found on pictorial carpets hanging beside variations on the classical *Takht iSuleman* or *Umar Khayyam* themes. The prayer rug displaying the design of the famous tile panel from Thatta represents an attempt to make the carpet reflect the culture that developed within the country and some of the latest designs reveal a conscious effort to liberate the Pakistani carpet from the rigours of tradition and the dictates of a not necessarily discriminating clientele

## **CHILD LABOUR IN CARPET WEAVING**

In Pakistan, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 children between the ages of four and fourteen work full-time as carpet weavers. UNICEF estimates that children make up 90% of Pakistan's carpet industry. Boys aged seven to ten are preferred for their dexterity and endurance. They earn one-quarter to one-third the salary of adult weavers, and they are obedient. They are from Pakistan's poorest families, sold by their parents to put food on the table. The parents are on average paid about \$200 for five years of their sons' labour. After the expenses for a child's food, training, tools, and raw materials are taken out, the balance is paid to the parents in instalments as long the child is working, in some cases up to ten years. Child labour is epidemic in Pakistan. 11-12 million children work full-time, half of them under 12 years of age. Only one-third of school-aged children attend school. The children of the poor,

especially the lowest castes, begin to work as soon as they can walk, ploughing fields yoked together and seeding and harvesting crops. Brick factories, sports-equipment factories, steel mills, and stone-crushing plants employ children. They have no education, no sanitation, and no health care. Children are a commodity -- bought and sold like cattle, but unlike cattle, they are smarter, and they are cheaper to run than a tractor. In fact they are treated worse than tractors or cattle.

High-quality carpets may cost \$2,000 in the US -- more than a child working 14 hours a day, six days a week, could earn in ten years. These carpets are intricately-woven tapestries with more than 1,000,000 knots. Children as young as four years of age squat before looms, weaving. They are thin, malnourished, and small for their age. Their backs are curved from lack of exercise and from bending to the looms. Their hands are scarred and callused from the repetitive work. They often have difficulty breathing due to cotton dust, and from tuberculosis. The monotony of tying thousands of knots is torture, like a death sentence, which it is for many of them. Most suffer from "captive-child syndrome" which kills half of Pakistan's working children by age 12.

As a result, the task of abolishing bonded labour in Pakistan has been left to the human rights community, the most well-known and effective organization being the BLLF (Bonded Labour Liberation Front), founded by Ehsan Ulla Khan. Ehsan Khan and his workers visit factories, giving the child workers information concerning their rights under the Bonded Labour Act, telling them that bonded labour has been abolished, and letting them know that they are free to leave if they wish. Since 1988, the BLLF has liberated 30,000 adults and children from brick kilns, farms, tanneries, and carpet factories. In addition, the BLLF has established its own primary schools and has placed more than 11,000 children in them.



Fig 97. Small girls weaving carpets in a workshop at Karachi. (Photo from Web )

Iqbal Masih was one of those freed from slavery in the carpet factories by the BLLF. He had been bonded to a carpet manufacturer at four years of age by his parents who could not afford to care for him. His parents were paid a meagre sum for his services. He bent to his loom for six years, but at the age of ten, he was saved from his life of monotony, deformity, and ill-health by Ehsan Khan. He proved to be a special child, became a BLLF worker, and freed many children as he himself had been freed. Ehsan Khan saw in Iqbal a child of superior intelligence and great courage, with a unique personality and energy. Under his tutelage, Iqbal became a spokesman for the bonded children of Pakistan, and traveled to the US and Europe to convince potential buyers of Pakistani carpets to withhold their money until Pakistan enforced its child labour laws.

**Rugmark** now known as GOOD WEAVE is a network of non-profit organizations dedicated to ending illegal child labour in the rug making industry. Founded in 1994, responding to concern about violation of children's rights during the eighties, human rights

organizations in Europe and India, along with UNICEF-India and the Indo-German Export Promotion Council (IGEP) , a German government agency, developed the *RugMark* program to provide assurance to consumers that the oriental carpets they were purchasing were made by adults rather than exploited children, and to provide for the long term educational and rehabilitation of children found working illegally on looms. Rugmark was formally launched in India in the fall of 1994. ***Rugmark*** has organized to make consumers aware of whether a carpet they are considering buying was made by children. The *Rugmark* sign is featured on child-labour free carpets and it guarantees the carpet producers' obligation that they produce their carpets without employing illegal child labour.



Fig 98. A training workshop for the carpet weavers was organized by the American Embassy, Islamabad, in 2010.

## Chapter 7

### PRESERVING THE HANDICRAFTS

The different regions of Pakistan have been known for a variety of arts and crafts since times immemorial. The region of the Lower Indus valley of Sind has a long established tradition of indigenous arts and crafts of which pottery and terracotta carving date back to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization uncovered at Moen-jo-Daro, Amri and Kot Diji. There are historical references in the works of the Greek writers and in the Bible to the *Sindon* cloth which, as its name indicates, was made in Sind and exported to the Middle Eastern and the Mediterranean countries.<sup>214</sup> Not only fine textiles but also exquisite pieces of other arts and crafts were fondly imported from Sind by the Sassanid Iran and, later, by the lands of the Caliphates of Damascus and Baghdad. Dyed leather from the port of Deball and embroidered Sindhian slippers for the ladies<sup>215</sup> were a popular commodity in the markets of Baghdad.

From the 8th century onward, the territories of West Pakistan in general and Sind in particular became a permanent home of the Muslim artisans and craftsmen who opened up a new era combining the artistic tradition of the Middle East, Iran and Central Asia with the indigenous craftsmanship. This new tradition of Indo-Muslim arts and crafts gradually spread to the whole of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent and reached its climax during the Moghul rule (16th to 18th century). Thatta, Hyderabad, Sehwan, Khairpur, Rohri, and Shikarpur were the well known centres of arts and crafts in Sind during the pre-British period. These centres had a network of smaller towns which, in turn, were connected with villages in the rural areas, thus forming sub-regional units known for their typical art and craft manufactures which were exported abroad to Europe and Central Asia. Although, artisans and craftsmen were joined together by the bonds of kinship and professional family traditions, organization of distinctly professional groups became possible due to the inter-dependence of village-town

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<sup>214</sup> Mentioned by Abu Hanifa al-Dainawari (10th century A.C.) in his *Kitabal-Nabat* (Book of Plants).

<sup>215</sup> Mentioned by al-Jahiz (10th century A.C.) in his *Kitab al-Tarbi*. Abu Tayyib al-Washsha' in his *Kitab al-Zuruf wa al-Zurufa* has quoted romantic verses in Arabic about embroidered Sindhian Slippers which were a fashion of the day in Baghdad.

economy and the pupil-master (*shagird-ustad*) relationship which joined the members of different families to the same professional group. The ideal of *kasb-e-halal* (clean lawful earning), purity in thought, honesty in work; and faith in the Supreme Creator enhanced their creative genius, imparted an exquisite quality to their craftsmanship, and united them in higher professional ethics.<sup>216</sup> The existence of the traditional *kasbnamahs* setting forth (in rhyme) the ideals, purposes and practices of various trades, indicates a kind of organization of professional groups into guilds. There is evidence to show that during the pre-British period, each typical professional group in Sind and the Punjab regions in West Pakistan had its own *kasbnamahs* joining the co-workers into professional brotherhood.

Traditional organization of artisans and craftsmen began to disintegrate with the British occupation of Sind in 1843 A.D. Local handicrafts slowly succumbed to the competition of machine-made goods imported from England and Europe. Local raw materials which had been the mainstay of the indigenous cottage industry began to be exported abroad, thus making them more expensive for the local artisan. Subsequently, machines were imported and slowly the small scale mechanized industry became another competitor with the cottage industry in its own home. Local arts and crafts continued to suffer due to lack of patronage, paucity of cheap raw materials, dependence on foreign manufactures and the consequent loss of local techniques (due to disuse) in colour, design, and yarn.<sup>217</sup> Hence a general decline in craftsmanship set in, and the traditional high quality and workmanship continued to lose ground.

Indigenous arts and crafts suffered a further set-back at the end of the British rule. Craftsmen originally belonging to Sind region and other areas of Pakistan as well as those who migrated to Pakistan were left helpless in the wake of partition. The tremendous shift in population created other urgent problems which engaged the attention of all. Even the Central and Provincial Governments could not adequately attend to the needs of the cottage industry

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<sup>216</sup> Burton, F Richard, *Sindh and Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, reprinted by Indus publications, Karachi, 1988, P 61.

<sup>4</sup> Akhtar, M.S, *An introduction to Sindh under the Moghuls*, National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Department of Culture, Government of Sindh, Islamabad, 1990, P 34.

within the first decade of independence. Despite great set-backs during the last 150 years or more, the traditional craftsman in Sind and other regions of Pakistan has survived. This is due to his tenacious adherence to his ancestral trade and a continued demand for his products in the vast rural areas which had not yet been invaded by modern manufactures.<sup>218</sup> Thus, the remnants of old skill and craftsmanship are still there, and these could be developed provided concerted and organised efforts were made to rescue them from their present precarious condition.

Lack of patronage, impact of modern manufactures, change in tastes, paucity of raw materials, and failure to channel the traditional forms and designs into modern tastes have been the main factors contributing to the set back suffered by the traditional arts and crafts. Conservatism of the artisan and craftsman to stick to the traditional forms and designs, however, need not be disparaged. It has been as much an asset as a liability. But for his tenacity, the traditional designs might have been entirely lost. While new designs and forms conforming to modern taste need to be introduced, the traditional design motif must be preserved. It is more important to improve the technique and method of production, rather than replace the traditional designs with the modern one.

The handloom and other cottage industries which require cotton and wool yarn still occupy a predominant position. Carpet weaving, metal-work, woodwork, tanning, leather-work and pottery have held their ground against manufactured products. In towns and cities, machine has been introduced in such traditional handicrafts as weaving, hosiery, tanning and leather-work, and metal-work. The role played by handicrafts in the economy of a developing country is very important aspect. In Pakistan, cottage industry provides livelihood to a considerable portion of urban and rural population. Mechanised products, no doubt, are responsible for mass production and rapid economic growth of a developing country, but they also lead to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. It is not the mass production but production by masses which brings prosperity to the nations.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Baloch, Dr N.A, Welcome address of the seminar held by Mehran Arts Council, Hyderabad, 1966, P 13.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, P 15.



Since the establishment of Pakistan, development of small scale and cottage industries has engaged the Government's attention, since 1949, official agencies have been set up and administrative machinery has been provided to assist cottage and small-scale industries in the procurement of raw materials, marketing finished products, giving technical advice and helping in there-orientation of designs. Steps have also been taken to rehabilitate the refugee artisan, organise 'Sales and Display Centres' and 'Show Rooms'. The Provincial Department of Industries has rendered useful services in this respect. Greater attention has also been focussed on the indigenous arts and crafts through industrial exhibitions and official publications. The Industrial Investment Schedule provides money for the development of handicrafts and cottage industries. Besides, a number of schemes for the development of handicrafts is included in the Five-Year Plan, e.g. Export Promotion House, Common Facility Centres, Cottage Industries Development Centres, Research, Institutes etc. The Provincial Government has taken the following steps for developing the crafts in Hyderabad Zone (Hyderabad & Khairpur Divisions). Six centres have so far been established for the development of the following crafts, Pottery work, Lacquer work, Weaving, Cane furniture & basketry making, Leather work, Mechanised & Forging, Electroplating, Carpet making. These centres provide, Training facilities, Research in the better use of locally available raw-materials, Demonstration of the new designs & patterns, Apprenticeship facilities to successful trainees, marketing facilities to the craft.

The West Pakistan Small Scale Industries Corporation established under Government of West Pakistan Ordinance No. XXX of 1965 serves as a liaison between the craftsmen and Government. The main job of the Small scale industries corporation is as follows:

- Arrange credit facilities for the development of small, cottage and other industries.
- Prepare and submit schemes to the Government for the development of cottage, small and other industries.
- Organize co-operative societies.
- Take appropriate measures for integration of small industries with large industries.
- Undertake census and surveys of cottage, small and other industries.
- Organize fairs, pavilions, sales and display of products of cottage and small industries.
- Establish Small Industries Estates.

- Procure and distribute to cottage and small industries, raw-materials, machinery and spare-parts.
- Introduce better means of production and new designs including proto-types.
- Arrange for grading and standardization of products of small and cottage industries.
- Work out entitlement of raw materials of cottage, small and other industries.

**Some development schemes that are working for the development of small scale industries and handicrafts.**

- Small Industries Estate, Hyderabad.
- Handicrafts Development Centre (Desert Embroidery), Mfrpurkhas, District Tharparkar.
- Common Facility-cum-Service Centre & Artisan Workshops for the promotion of Footwear Industry at Kotri, District Dadu.
- Textile Common Facility Centre, Khairpur.
- Handicrafts Development Centre (Glass Bangle), Hyderabad.
- Handicrafts Development Centre (carpet making) at Nagarparkar, District Tharparkar.
- Service Centre for Crank Shaft Grinding and Head Treatment at Sukkur.
- Handicrafts Pilot Project (Munj Products) at Sahra, District Khairpur.
- Handicrafts Pilot Project (Munj Products) at Kandhkot, District Jacobabad.

The main difficulty of the craftsman is marketing and procurement of raw material at village level, the Corporation is mostly dealing with urban areas. This difficulty can be solved through the active cooperation of the Basic Democrats. Each Union Council should reserve some funds for the development of traditional handicrafts in its villages of Union Councils and arrange marketing their products through various private and public agencies. Thus far, facilities provided by the Government have benefited mainly the cottage and small-scale industry in cities and towns. The traditional artisan and craftsman of the village lacks initiative and is too isolated, too poor, and too illiterate to take advantage of these facilities, his main problems, availability of cheap raw materials and a ready market for his products on

the spot, still remain to be solved. As far as governmental policy is concerned, there is need for giving the same importance to the development of traditional arts and crafts as is given to the large scale industries. The centres for training handicrafts are often set up away from the habitats of the artisans and craftsmen. These new centres, if they are to flourish at all, must be located nearest to the homes of the workers. No achievement is possible without their whole-hearted co-operation. They must be met more than halfway.

There is need for better publicity and marketing facilities. It is often suggested that the Union Councils should be entrusted with this responsibility. In essence, it will be just changing one middleman to another. The best possible solution, perhaps, lies in the development of the professional organizations of the artisans and craftsmen themselves. The procedures of recruitment to the various fields of employment, governmental or non-governmental, which are related to the development of indigenous arts and crafts, need improvement. The recruitment should be made on the basis of professional skill rather than mere academic qualifications. The policies and procedures for giving aid should be simplified so that the aid comes directly within the reach of the craftsman and he becomes the real beneficiary. Co operative societies of the real professional workers in the field should be organized and the aid should be channelized through them. But even such an effort is likely to be defeated, unless the whole approach is rationalized and made more pragmatic. However, the middleman must be eliminated.<sup>220</sup>

It is often argued that the traditional arts and crafts and cottage industries have to compete with the mass production by the large scale industries. This is true, but it does not seal away the future of the indigenous arts and crafts. The type of product and the interest of the consumer are clearly present. However, the Department of Small Scale Industries and other Government agencies should study the problem and resolve the conflict, if any, so far as formulating the policy is concerned.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid, P 19.

Traditional crafts are endangered. The attention focused on craft today attests that we recognize this fact. Artisans struggle to earn wages that may not even equal those of manual labour. The social status of the artisan is still sadly low. Moreover, the social mobility of artisans is limited by chronically low levels of education; and the perceived irrelevance of the education available perpetuates the status quo. A spectrum of Government offices programmes and schemes, as well as non-government organizations are trying many ways to save traditional crafts. There are various forms of subsidy, bazaars and fairs organized for marketing, awards, and seminars to raise awareness and respect. But something is not working. To foster genuine sustainability, to restore the vitality of traditional craft, these issues must be addressed by artisans themselves. To enable this, we must address the most pressing need today: relevant education for rural people. Traditional crafts existed integrated into local social systems. Some crafts, typically those done by men, such as block printing, hand weaving and pottery, were professional. Others, typically those done by women, such as folk embroidery, were personal and never thought of in commercial terms. Regardless of commercial orientation, the user of the craft was intimately known. Design was an integral part of craft. The artisan was designer, producer and marketer simultaneously. S/he knew which design would be used by which person, because there was a direct connection between aesthetic style and culture. Designs evolved; innovation is critical to living art. But the changes were slow, subtle innovations within a tradition.<sup>221</sup>

## **CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING MARKETS**

In the last few decades, these traditional crafts have undergone tremendous change. As local villagers seek cheaper mass produced functional wares, artisans are compelled to find new markets. Fortunately, at the same time sophisticated urban markets have welcomed the concept of traditional crafts. However, traditional work is often not saleable because the object itself, its colour, style or price is not appropriate to the current market. These crafts must adapt to their new clientele. Since the new market is no longer local, nor are crafts

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<sup>221</sup> Frater, Judy, A New Approach for Revival of Craft, Seminar 523, March 2003. New Delhi.

necessarily produced for utilitarian purpose, the functional basis that drove innovation is altered. In addition, since the market has expanded, innovations must now be faster and less subtle. Instead of varying the pattern within a pattern, the pattern itself must be changed. A different consciousness is essential for craft to succeed in this market.

## **THE DIVISION OF ART AND LABOUR**

With these major changes in the market for handmade products, it has been recognized that new design is needed to make craft sustainable. Conventionally, this has been perceived as a need for design intervention. It is assumed that intervention takes place in the form of trained designers giving new designs to artisans, the implication being that designers have knowledge that enables them to conceive of aesthetically appropriate products, while artisans have the skills to produce such designs. Artisans are asked to make what someone else tells them to make, rather than work from their own sense of aesthetics. This can result in disempowering artisans if it is done without explanation or means of access.

Judy Frater tells an incident in which patchwork cushion covers were being sorted by staff and designer into good and bad piles. One senior artisan, observing, became increasingly agitated. When her own piece went into the reject pile, she visibly resigned, exclaiming, "Then just tell me what to do; I don't know what you want." In another instance, a group of women who do cross stitch embroidery and had been working commercially on block printed patterns for some time refused to take on new work without a pattern printed on the cloth.<sup>222</sup> They had given up their confidence in their traditional art, which of course is worked out by counting. One further concern about the separation of design and execution of craft is that it supports the factory model. This seems to emanate from an assumption of an industrialized society. If craft tries to compete with industry, it will surely fall short, in terms of manufacture and in terms of price. The personal character, the intimacy, the handmade quality itself is what will enable craft to survive in an industrial world. The strength of hand craft is that it expresses a whole world. This concern invokes the long-standing discussion on the distinctions between craft, art, and design. Craft implies skill, doing, a hobby or practical

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

profession. Art implies creativity, imagination, expression. Design implies mediation. Craft has always been design based because it relies on a consumer. Craft, like design is fundamentally based on satisfying the user's aesthetic needs, rather than purely expressing feelings.<sup>223</sup> But in a sense, traditional craft was really traditional art, in that the maker managed concept as well as execution. Depending on the level of professionalization, labourers would then be employed. All crafts persons are designers, but all designers are not crafts persons.<sup>224</sup> Surely, design input is needed for new markets. Neither the concern for this problem nor the schemes are wrong. But the approach to the problem needs to be altered. Designers must learn to think like artisans, someone suggested. But the real problem is that no one wants to be a labourer. If we want craft to flourish, we first have to attend the artisan. Craft must be re-integrated and the artisan must be significantly involved in both design and craft aspects.

## **PRESENT SITUATION OF HANDICRAFTS OF SINDH**

Handicrafts in Sindh were once a major source of livelihood for millions of people, majority of them women. But the rising cost of inputs, difficult access to credit and poor marketing network, have brought the industry to its present dismal state. Handicrafts were mostly made by rural women inside their homes, who formed an active domestic labour force, and contributed over 50 per cent to their overall incomes. Nearly 65 per cent of women earned their livelihood from handicraft work. Now 90 per cent of these women are jobless<sup>225</sup> said Nawab Pirzada, assistant chief of industries section in Sindh Planning and Development Department. These jobless women artisans had shifted to other trades, mainly agriculture and livestock breeding. Unfortunately, during the last 15-20 years, handicrafts production has witnessed a nose-dive because of falling demand, absence of strategic planning and vision for revival of the indigenous crafts, says Khair Mohammad, president Larkana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI).<sup>226</sup> If cottage industries were set up at tehsil levels and locals

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Sind's sagging handicraft business" Daily Dawn, Business and Economic section, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

were employed to produce new batches of artisans, it would have surely helped revive the traditional arts and handicrafts,<sup>227</sup> Falling profits and rising costs of materials has reduced the handicraft-making activity, said Ahmed Raza Chandio, a Sukkur-based Ajrak maker. According to the later there were some 700 ajrak makers but their number had reduced to 10-15 only.<sup>228</sup>

An old cloth-weaver of Hala, Allah Bachayo Memon, recalling the heydays of the province's handicraft industry, said there were around 10,000 workshops in Hala town alone, and thousands of cultural and traditional handicrafts were made and sold here every week. But, their number had dwindled now to a few. Besides Hala, a hub of handicrafts manufacturing, Shikarpur, Kashmore, Khairpur Mirs, Khanot, Matiari, Sekhat, Sehta, Badin, Thatta, Mithi and Nagarparkar were also flourishing handicrafts centres, where many people, over 70 per cent of them women, used to work and earn their livelihood through this craft.<sup>229</sup> Allah Bachayo Memon blamed the Sindh Small Industrial Corporation for the plight of the industry as it failed to promote and effectively market the indigenous handicrafts at local and international levels.

The SSIC was established in early 1970s to explore new markets and strengthen Small Industrial Estates (**SIEs**). Rampant corruption in **SSIC** and provincial industries department, and lack of government support to artisans ruined the once booming industry, complained Ejaz Ahmed, a prominent handicrafts trader in Karachi. Some 15 years back there were around 200 handicrafts shops in the cooperative market in Saddar area of Karachi, and customers, mostly foreigners, thronged these shops. But, now only a couple of shops had been left. Revival of the province's handicrafts industry, however, lies in the development of **SIEs**, provision of financial support to artisans, establishment of direct links between buyers and artisans, elimination of middlemen and improved marketing facilities.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Dilbar Jan, a handicraft exporter in Karachi, said he used to export handicrafts worth millions of rupees every month and explored new markets in Russia and other countries. But, the attitude of government, including the 'Trade Development Authority' towards handicraft exporters and SSIC proved a major obstacle to the development of Pakistani handicrafts, which is at the lowest level as compared to that of South Asian countries.<sup>231</sup> We can invest billions of rupees for setting up cottage and agro-based industries in different districts, which can not only help generate employment but also revive economic activity. But, facilitation fee demanded by the SSIC officials and their delaying tactics in issuing NOCs prevents us from launching our projects.<sup>232</sup>

But, officials in SSCI's finance department deny the allegations of business communities and say that a number of uplift plans have been put in place for the promotion of indigenous handicrafts and cottage industries. There are some 18 SIEs all over Sindh but they lack basic infrastructure facilities and none of them is properly working. A proposal for establishment of artisan colonies in Hala, Thatta and Sukkur has been sent to the government for next fiscal year's ADP, where artisans would be provided plots for residence and workshops through balloting, informed Abdul Rasheed Solangi, Managing Director SSIC.<sup>233</sup> Although, he agreed that a number of artisans have switched over to other means of livelihood, he insisted it had not impacted the handicrafts production; rather it had gone up.<sup>234</sup> He also said, 'a Rs500 million proposal has been sent to the provincial government for approval under which the artisans would be given small interest-free credits to establish new workshops at artisan colonies'.<sup>235</sup>

There are five 'display and sale outlets' of SSIC in Sindh, which directly procures handicrafts from artisans. But, all of the SSIC display and sale outlets are in pathetic condition. Limited variety of traditional handicrafts and lack of parking facility at the PIDC handicraft centre are major problems faced by visitors, the number of handicraft display and

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.



sale outlets should be increased and set up at district levels and also at all railway stations, airports, hotels and at major stopovers on highways.

The Sindh Indigenous and Traditional Crafts Company (Sitco) was set up under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance 1984 with seed money of Rs800 million to promote indigenous crafts globally. Eighty-five per cent of the seed money would be used as an endowment fund and deposited in a bank and its profit would be used for empowerment of the poor artisan and revival of handicraft industry by providing wooden weaving machines and other handicraft-making equipment to the poor artisans, particularly women, said Mohammad Iqbal Lakho, project manager in Poverty Alleviation and Public Private Partnership Unit of P&D department.<sup>236</sup> The Sitco would also establish direct linkages between local and foreign buyers and artisans and would receive orders from potential buyers and market handicrafts locally and internationally. Exhibitions of handicrafts would also be held at national and international levels.<sup>237</sup>

Artisans in Sindh may have managed to set up their small handicrafts shops but when it comes to expanding the business, their hands are tied. Muhammad Haroon, owner of a pottery store, cannot even think about expanding because he does not have access to credit. “We can’t get money from banks. They are not interested in us because we can’t guarantee payback,” Haroon said, disappointed that “even if we are able to find a loan, our profit margins are not large enough to pay back high interest rates”.

According to a study conducted by Tufts University Institute of Global Leadership, cottage and handicrafts industries are often neglected in national discourse about economic growth even though they informally employ thousands of people. For centuries, families in Pakistan have been making traditional goods, such as ceramics, bangles, jewellery, ajrak and rilli. Pointing to his collection, Haroon said that “these pots are birthed from earth, which

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<sup>236</sup> ,Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

makes them resilient”. He feels craft businesses represent an untapped market in Pakistan that has potential, not only for greater growth within Pakistan, but also abroad through exporting. To reach that potential, however, the industry will have to overcome serious challenges. Many handicrafts shops are informal, often with no roof and are located on land leased to them by the government. “Any day, officials can come here and tell me to move all my things, pack up and leave, and I will have no choice but to obey,”

## **AHAN:**

Realising these needs of the cottage industry, *Aik Hunar, Aik Nagar (AHAN)* [**One Village, One Product**], a non-profit organisation, is working towards removing barriers faced by poor artisans and craftsman in rural areas. Primary objective of this project is to alleviate poverty in rural and semi-urban areas of Pakistan by supporting rural micro and small enterprises engaged in non-farm products. Thus, AHAN aims at providing the much needed non traditional work opportunities in rural areas by adopting and indigenizing the One Village One Product concept. AHAN Project was formally initiated in July 2006 after its approval by the Planning Commission. During a short period of one year it has actively started work in all four provinces in collaboration with Provincial / District Governments, RSPs, Microfinance Institutions and other stakeholders. The project has adopted two pronged approach. On the one hand it has started pilot projects in different clusters of artisans and poor producer groups while on the other hand it has also started research and analysis exercise to discover the potential in this area and to see how a long term strategy can be developed for creating sustainable income generation opportunities to a large segment of our society living in rural, semi urban and small cities and towns of Pakistan.

The idea is to use a holistic approach at the grass roots level by creating synergies through network of rural enterprise initiatives. The project is catering to both supply side and demand side: On Supply-Side, it aims at building on capacity of crafts persons, involving well-known designers, to produce contemporary products while assuring quality; and On Demand-Side, arranging/participating in exhibitions nationally & internationally, display set up, designers’ outlets, developing linkages with exporters, etc. There is a link missing between craftsmen, who work in rural areas, and markets, which are situated in urban areas,”

said Shakeel Abro, **AHAN** manager in Sindh. “Craftsmen in rural areas are not acquainted with modern trends and fashions, so that is where we step in”. Ahan is modeled after the One Village, One Product programme that started in Japan and has been replicated in many countries. The organization selected geographic clusters in Pakistan where they provide training and backup support for artisans and their products. It also subsidizes transportation and raw material costs. “We work on behalf of artisans by helping them make brochures, websites so that buyers can come into contact with us and we link them to craftsmen in the village,” said Abro, adding that **US Aid** has also expressed their interest in the organization and placed sample orders. Yasmeen Mirza and 25 other girls received training in making jewellery from **AHAN** and now they are getting orders. “I just completed an order of 12,000 pieces,” she said proudly. While few microfinance banks started helping artisans and small businesses, their reach is still very small. Ahan aims to attract international buyers because of limited Pakistani markets and the best method is to sponsor local artisans at expos around the world. Yasmeen Mirza wishes to see her crafts sold around the world. “I often think of selling them to Malaysia or America one day,” she said.

## **AHAN – AREAS OF INTERVENTION**

### **1. Product Development and Design**

AHAN assists crafts persons by providing capacity building services to the cluster in product design, quality improvement and quality sustenance through technical assistance, production management training and product design training.

### **2. Marketing**

The intervention includes development and implementation of marketing strategy including market analysis, product selection, brand development, promotional campaign, test marketing and distribution system for rural non-farm products of Pakistan.

### **3. Enterprise Development**

Crafts persons and artisans are introduced to effective ways of enterprise development of their products. It aims in supporting employment generation activities by providing

awareness and exposure to entrepreneurs in marketing of their products and managing their businesses.

#### **4. Linkages with Microfinance Institutions**

AHAN is developing networks between rural entrepreneurs and microfinance institutions to provide support to clusters in obtaining easy credit facilities for their growth and development.

#### **5. Sustainability of Projects**

AHAN has designed its interventions in clusters with the objective of ensuring sustainability of the benefits achieved through pilot projects. Effective exit strategies are designed to allow continued cluster development in the post intervention phase.

#### **6. Baseline Studies and Impact Assessment**

Great emphasis is laid on conducting initial assessment surveys of clusters under baseline study phase to not only measure effectiveness of pilot projects but also to document current status of identified regions / products for intervention. On culmination of the project AHAN would conduct Impact evaluation in collaboration with respective Partner Organizations to evaluate benefits received by crafts persons. In this regard, consultants have also been hired to help AHAN augment this area.

#### **7. Monitoring and Evaluation**

AHAN realizes the importance of effective monitoring systems for both internal evaluation and pilot project assessment. Consultants have been hired to assist in modification of monitoring mechanisms to ensure maximum efficiency of AHAN; both as a project and a team.

AHAN has recently initiated 25 pilot projects after completion of Phase-I of 4 pilot projects. Another 14 pilot projects are in pipeline. Hence, AHAN intends to provide assistance directly to more than 6,832 beneficiaries through its network of 44 pilot projects in all four regions.

58% of the beneficiaries are craftswomen, thereby ensuring adequate support to females of rural areas. AHAN encourages participation from stakeholders of the clusters. Budgets of ongoing pilot projects are being shared with respective partner organizations on an average of 40:60. This not only ensures ownership of the partners for pilot projects but also helps in sustainability of the activities after the project period is over. AHAN has collaborated with private sector partners for incorporating their expertise in product development and design innovation. In addition to this some partners have also provided reasonable businesses and entrepreneurial opportunities to crafts persons of various clusters.

### **Private Sector Partners**

Deepak Perwani  
Amir Adnan  
Rizwan Baig  
Irum Zia  
Ruby Jewelers  
Taneez  
Noorjehan Bilgirami

AHAN has involved Educational Institutions to provide capacity building services such as consultancy on product design, product range development and respective trainings.

### **Educational Institutions**

National College of Arts  
Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture  
Beacon House National University  
Centre of Excellence in Arts & Design (CEAD)  
Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University (SBKWU)

AHAN has engaged assistance from all the listed Government Organizations, Associations and Chambers and Non for Profit Organizations to maximize its outreach in rural areas.

## **Supporting Organizations**

1. District Governments
2. Chambers of Commerce and Industries
3. Punjab Small Industries Corporation
4. All Pakistan Handloom Association
5. Bahawalpur Rural Development Project
6. Balochistan Rural Support Program
  
7. Sindh Small Industries Corporation –Sindh
8. Sarhad Industries Development Board– NWFP
9. Rural Support Program Network(RSPN)
10. Balochistan Small Industries
11. Directorate (BSID)

## **NGOs / RSPs:**

1. Karvaan Crafts
2. Development Empowerment Women Association (DEWA)
3. APWA (All Pakistan Women Association)
4. Mashal Skill Development Center
5. National Rural Support Program
6. Sindh Rural Support Organization
7. Thardeep Rural Development Program
8. Islamic Relief
9. Al-Falah Foundation
10. Lead Pakistan
11. Catholic Relief Services
12. Cholistan Development Council

13. Behbud Association
14. Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)
15. Shaur Development Organization

## **STORIES DEPICTING POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH**

### **A. FARASI CARPETS**

The pilot is located in village Baghli, Taluka Golarchi, District Badin, Sindh, Pakistan. Farasi rugs come under the category of hand-woven Carpets / Rugs made of camel and sheep yarn. A six month Pilot of “Farasi Carpets / Rugs” is focusing on product diversification and skill base enhancement inclusive of new designs, color combination, use of raw material and processing interventions. A visit of Japanese exporter – Mr. Khalid ul Hassan (Karizua Gallery) facilitated under AHAN who was highly impressed with the product and purchased samples of more than Rs. 1,000,000. A German consultant - Mr. Beck also visited the village and examined the product and found the product excellent. He suggested interventions in design, color and size marketable for international market. Last but not the least, at this stage of beginning of AHAN interventions, craftswomen are receiving the placement of international orders. The order has been placed by Karuizawa Japan for preparing first consignment of Camel wool rugs.

### **B. TEXTILES – AMIR ADNAN**

FNKASIA – Amir Adnan is a six monthly completed pilot project of AHAN through which craftswomen were trained as Master Craftswomen at Amir Adnan. Two groups of eight craftswomen from Dadu and Johi in support with Social Welfare Department got trained in Karachi at Amir Adnan factory and produced the products like Necklace, Bangles, Earrings, Kurtis, Purses and etc. Followed by the Training of Master Craftswomen, in the back end some sixty girls were further trained. The craftswomen received an order by Amir Adnan amounting Rs. 108,000 to produce the products consisting of more than 1,600 necklace, 620 sets of necklace and earrings, 750 mobile pouches, 200 wallets and 300 bags. Ms. Farzana

Soomro - a craftswoman from Johi after completing the training from Amir Adnan got an opportunity to train more craftswomen of Choondko and nearby areas of Taluka Nara, District Khairpur. She was working with Women Skill Development Organization Dadu and vocational training centre at Johi. Her monthly income was Rs. 5,000. On basis of her experience and Training of Master Craftswomen from AHAN, she was considered eligible by Indus Resource Centre (IRC) to work as Trainer at Vocational Centre Choondko established by OMV Pakistan. She is appointed as Trainer with effect from 5th December 2006 with monthly salary of Rs. 20,000.

### **AHAN – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT & QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT**

Product development and quality assurance department has been created to provide necessary support to craftsmen and artisans currently working on age old designs and products. It provides support to the craftsmen in areas of product design, raw material sourcing, product diversification, quality and consistency assurance.

Some of the sectors that Product Development Department has taken major initiatives in are:

1. Textile sector in collaboration with NRSP (Bahawalpur)
2. Rugs (Multan) in collaboration with Senior Expert Services, Germany
3. Lacquer work (Silanwali) in collaboration with local Association
4. Hand Embroidery, Embroidery Rilli (Sukkur), Khes (AMB), Swatti Embroidery (Bint e Malakand)
5. A design range has been developed in Silverware and home textiles (Rilli, Cholistan)

Product Development Department has a limited in-house capacity of designers. A successful model of hiring designers on Short Term Assignment basis has been applied to develop products in different regions such as Rilli, Silverware and Hand Embroideries in Bahawalpur, Lacquer Work in Silanwali, Paper Mache in Muzaffarabad, Ceramics in Talagang. One of the initiatives undertaken by the Product Development Department is to create linkages and develop functional relationships with educational institutes of Pakistan. MoUs are being shared with educational institutes namely; Beacon house National



University, Pakistan School of Fashion Design, National College of Arts, Indus Valley School Of Art & Architecture. Product profiling and cataloguing of existing craftsmen and their products is vital for the survival of these crafts. Product Development Department has been working on creating a database of crafts and craftsmen working in different parts of Pakistan. Product profiling exercise has been conducted in Women Expo – March 2007 (Lahore), Provincial Fair (Balochistan) and Lok Virsa (Islamabad).

## **AHAN – MARKETING DEPARTMENT**

Marketing Department has been set up to provide marketing support both to AHAN as a corporate entity and to AHAN's target clients i.e. Crafts workers and micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the country. MSEs in Pakistan have always faced some kind of marketing constraints due to lack of support services or their relatively higher unit cost. Marketing department is responsible for providing comprehensive marketing support programs, which would improve MSEs' competitiveness through better market planning. Support programs are classified into internal and external support programs.

Some of the activities of the department are:

### **1. Marketing Input in Strategy Formulation**

Marketing department, during this stage' proactively assists the pilot teams whilst ensuring that the strategy is properly conceptualized and is ready for implementation from a marketing standpoint.

### **2. Marketing – AHAN**

Marketing AHAN as a corporate entity clarifies its role and helps create a conducive environment for its working. This is done through AHAN website ([www.ahan.org.pk](http://www.ahan.org.pk)) and printed material related to overall project. Linkages are created with stakeholders including Chambers of Commerce & Industry, microfinance organizations (e.g. Tameer bank, Pak-Oman) etc.

### **3. Marketing of Pilot Projects**

AHAN has participated in Women EXPO 2007, Hassle Free Business Environment and its products were also displayed at OIC Economic Forum

### **4. Craft Bazaars**

AHAN Steering Committee has recently decided to test a model of craft bazaar at one place to provide market access to rural artisans and help them sell their products in existing form. Planning is being done to implement the decision. Retail survey of handicrafts has been initiated to analyze demand for handicrafts in national market.

## **AHAN – PROJECTS DEPARTMENT**

Projects department has been set up for the overall selection, management, monitoring and evaluation, baseline study surveys and impact assessment of pilot projects undertaken by the four regional offices in addition to initiatives taken by other consulting departments. The team works in conjunction with all regions and departments to create synergies internally for maximum efficiency. Standard templates and forms are made available for all departments corresponding with their work objectives in order to make the system as time efficient and user friendly as possible. The team is also responsible for identifying primary areas and methods for database formation and impact assessment of all initiatives taken by AHAN.

Some of the key activities include:

1. Assessment, monitoring and evaluation of pilot projects
2. Baseline survey
3. Impact assessment survey
4. Product mapping
5. Costing / Pricing of projects

## **AHAN – SHELL TAMEER WORK SHOP ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Shell Pakistan launched Shell Live WIRE in 2003 with the local name Tameer with the aim of helping youth across the country to achieve their socio-economic development. Shell Tameer encourages young people (aged between 18-32 years) by enhancing their capacity building to start a business. A one-day workshop on entrepreneurship orientation program was conducted in Balochistan and Sindh, involving beneficiaries of the pilot projects and participants from partner organizations of AHAN. The work shop provided awareness among people on entrepreneurship, which includes; setting up & managing a business (micro enterprise activity), knowing about banking procedures in terms of availing credit for micro enterprises, etc.

As part of future initiatives;

- a. Consultants are being hired for conducting research leading to sub-sector studies for identifying potential areas of growth and expansion, monitoring & evaluation and baseline studies for impact assessment of pilot projects. This would make the projects more workable in the long run and consequently would provide concrete grounds to replicate successful models in other areas.
- b. AHAN may set up display outlets in all major cities supported by a broad distribution system.
- c. AHAN may participate in an international exhibition at appropriate stage
- d. AHAN may consider the option of establishing Craft Bazaars for existing products in one place as a test case so as to provide market access to poor artisans on regular basis. This bazaar may follow the “Dehli Haath” model of India.

## **CRAFT AS SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD IN RURAL PAKISTAN**

The artisan is an important factor in the equation of Pakistani society and culture. By performing valid and fruitful social functions for the community, they earn for themselves a certain status and position in society. S/he is the heir to the people's traditions and weaves them into his/her craft. Most craft people have learned their skills from their fathers or mothers since caste and family affiliations, rather than training or market demand. The handicrafts sector is a home-based industry which requires minimum expenditure, infrastructure or training to set up. It uses existing skills and locally available materials. Income generation through craft does not (and this is important in a rural society) disturb the cultural and social balance of either the home or the community.

Many agricultural and pastoral communities depend on their traditional craft skills as a secondary source of income in times of drought, lean harvests, floods or famine. Their skills in embroidery, weaving, basket-making are a natural means to social and financial independence. The craft sector contains many paradoxes. Artisanal contribution to the economy and the export market increases every year and more and more new crafts-people are being introduced into the sector - especially women - as a solution to rural and urban unemployment. At the same time mass-produced goods are steadily replacing utility items of daily use made by craftspeople, destroying the livelihood of many, without the concomitant capacity to absorb them into industry. However, with ever-increasing competition from mill-made products and decreasing buying power of village communities due to prevailing economic conditions, artisans have lost their traditional rural markets and their position within the community.

There is a swing against small scale village industries and indigenous technologies in favour of macro industries and hi-tech mechanised production. Traditional rural marketing infrastructures are being edged out by multinational corporations, supported by sophisticated marketing and advertising. The change in consumer buying trends and the entry of various

new, aggressively promoted factory produced commodities into the rural and urban market, has meant that craft producers need more support than ever if they are to become viable and competitive.

As a socio economic group, artisans are amongst the poorest. Research shows that households headed by artisans, in general have much lower net wealth and almost all (90%) are landless as against 36% for households headed by others. The average income derived by a crafts person is Rs 2000 per month for an average family of five members. In the face of constant struggle, most artisans have given up and moved away from their traditional occupations. The skills, evolved over thousands of years, are being dissipated and blunted.<sup>238</sup> Research indicates that neither the crafts persons, nor their progeny want to join the crafts sector, only a lack of available alternatives forces them to do so. They would not mind the tradition coming to an end. In one of the studies reveals that in more than half the traditional leather artisan households, several family members have given up leather work, and are working as casual labourers. There are number of reasons for the craft peoples current state: from the lack of capital to invest in raw materials to a scarcity of raw materials and their availability at reasonable rates; from the absence of direct marketing outlets to difficulty of access to urban areas that are now the main markets for craft products, from production problems to a lack of guidance in product design and development based on an understanding of the craft, the producer and the market - the constraints are many and varied.

### **Disappearing markets:**

Craft is basically a commercial activity. In order to make a living from craft production, the artisan needs to sell his/her products regularly, realise a viable income from each sale and be assured of regular sales in the future. Production for home consumption is radically different from production for a commercial market. Given changing and competitive markets, the traditional craft skill, however beautiful, needs sensitive adaptation, proper quality control, correct sizing and accurate costing, if it is going to win and keep a place in the market. In other words the right combination of

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human, financial, physical and social capital is essential. There has been a dramatic shift in consumer choice from artisanal goods to factory made ones. For example, hand woven cotton fabrics have lost out to mill-made synthetic ones; plastic, china and glassware have wiped out the market for earthenware.

### **Wages and capital:**

Wages for the craft people are meagre. Even the highest wages are low relative to the earnings of many others in the agriculture or other non- farm activities. Irregularities in the supply of work mean that there is forced underemployment. Quality of work can only be sustained if the craft people can obtain a living through working for the market. The combination of low wages and insufficient work tends to exacerbate poverty among craft people. The demand for a consistent market needs to be complimented by an availability of social networks and accessibility to financial and physical capital. Creating employment is not a matter of creating jobs, but of strengthening these workers and producers to overcome structural constraints and enter markets where they would be competitive.

### **Working capital**

Working capital is another most pressing need of artisans. Capital investment is the key not only to the development, but also to the continuing survival, of artisans and their craft. Lack of finance and cash flow is almost always the crux of craft peoples problems.

### **Technological obsolescence:**

Modern technology has enabled machines to imitate even the most intricate designs that were once the exclusive domain of the artisans, developed and perfected over centuries and passed down from generation to generation. Any form of innovation implies an element of risk and investment of capital. Artisans live on the margin of subsistence; they have virtually no reserves to invest in technological innovation (physical capital).

Both economic gain and a dignified status in society for craftspeople are necessary and possible if they are to be recognized and supported in the many roles they serve. A holistic approach to the development of the crafts sector is needed; focused around livelihoods, social development and environment of the artisans. The many and varied constraints, including the lack of capital, scarcity of raw material, disappearing markets, declining wages and technological obsolescence need to be tackled to improve the production capacity and to assist the artisans. Emphasis needs to be on a much greater effort at widening and strengthening policies to sustain livelihoods in which craftspeople are already skilled and productive.

## **TRAINING PROGRAM FOR WOMEN ARTISANS**

Significant numbers of women in Pakistan are engaged in handicraft and tailoring activities including, for example, up to 30-40% of women in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). In poor households especially, female artisans can be important economic providers. Unfortunately, their economic contributions have not translated into a higher socioeconomic status. Poor women's human development indices in Pakistan are very low even by developing country standards. Inequalities between women and men and boys and girls are seen in every aspect of life. Despite some improvement in women's status in the last 30 years, the position of indigent women in Pakistan remains dismal. There is an urgent need to improve the socioeconomic status of poor female artisans as one strategy for improving the

socioeconomic status of poor women in general, yet there are major barriers to the development of handicrafts as a form of income generation.

- Female artisans typically work at home where they must juggle production with household responsibilities
- They often lack confidence due to their lack of education and resources
- They lack experience outside the home due to gender segregation, restricted mobility, and the prevailing belief that men represent the household in public
- Poor female artisans often have no access to credit with which to buy new materials or to increase their production
- They tend to reproduce traditional patterns and colour schemes familiar in their local communities and have little understanding of product development and changing market conditions
- Given their general isolation from other female artisans, markets, and craft networks, they are easily exploited by middlemen and women who pay them very low prices for their work

## **HAWWA ASSOCIATES**

Hawwa is an NGO, registered with Social Welfare Department in 1991, Hawwa in collaboration with UNICEF, UNIFEM, TVO, Action Aid Pakistan, DFID, RSPN, ILO and now with AHAN provides alternate professions to women to be home-based entrepreneurs. Hawwa is providing skill development opportunities to women of slums of Lahore in handloom weaving, stitching, cutting, screen printing, block printing and embroidery crafts for last 25 years. The trained women who belong to different localities of slums come to Hawwa center and take orders for their livelihood. Hawwa is committed to the pursuit of socio-economic development. Hawwa initially identify poorest women who had potential of crafts but had no facility to orientate their skill in to financial capacity. Identified potential craft women are provided skill training as they operate home-based entrepreneurs or provide support to the family through establishing home based training unit. Facilitate craft women



sale procedures and create leadership capacity through training in mobility and dialogue in marketing sector, also how to make bill, identify cost input, open bank account and understand the legal aspect of family laws and marriage.

Hawwa Associates has been addressing the needs of poor female artisans in Pakistan for 20 years. From their Craft Sale Cooperative in Islamabad, they have provided craft training, sales and marketing advice, gender awareness training, and market links. Hawwa's limited resources have, however, made it difficult to deliver craft training, capacity building, and market links to female artisans in more remote parts of Pakistan such as NWFP and Balauchistan Province. With Asian Development Bank funding, Hawwa was able to strengthen regional and national links among female artisans through a series of training workshops held in Dera Ismail Khan (NWFP), Quetta (Balauchistan) and Hyderabad (Sindh).

### **Project Objectives and Scope**

The project comprised three workshops, one each in Hyderabad, Dera Ismail Khan (D.I.K.) and Quetta, to train 90 women in craft making. The objectives were the following:

- to develop the concept of self-help groups as a mechanism for strengthening women's confidence and to deliver capacity training in areas such as business and marketing skills
- to encourage the adoption of new product designs in line with more marketable styles and colours while drawing on women's existing skills and knowledge of traditional styles
- to strengthen national links with nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and market networks, including market links with *Hawwa* Craft Cooperatives as an alternative sales outlet
- to raise awareness of the legal and social rights of women in Pakistan
- to identify regional/provincial craft styles for documentation and study visits.

Prior to the workshops, Hawwa visited each area in order to survey the various craft styles and to identify potential workshop participants. Artisans were asked to prepare products for sale and display and, where receptive, to also prepare products in new designs, shapes, and colors. The training coordinator of Hawwa advised interested women on popular types of cloth, embroidery threads, and designs drawing on her knowledge of Pakistan's urban markets. In addition, she consulted with designers and fashion experts on her return for their advice on how to remodel traditional cross-stitch designs and colors from D.I.K. and Quetta. The challenge to conduct pre-training visits and deliver such training to all three areas was considerable requiring prior consultation with men in the different communities in order to get their permission for women from their communities or families to be involved. In the case of Baluchistan, six men were allowed to sit in as observers so the women from their families could participate in the training.

The three training workshops attracted a range of female artisans including the following:

- women who wanted to begin to sell their products but lacked confidence, know how, and/or connections
- individual micro-entrepreneurs interested in Hawwa as an alternative sales outlet to shopkeepers and middlemen/women
- members of an existing self-help group who lacked business and marketing skills
- Highly skilled artisans seeking innovative approaches to product design and operational support
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There was very good feedback from all participants on the content of training which covered topics such as female entrepreneurs, selection of materials, design, quality control, basics of finished products, pricing, billing, budgeting, credit and savings, marketing, and women's legal and social rights. Significant outcomes were achieved in this project from both an economic and empowerment perspective.

## Outcomes of Project

The following occurred as a result of training.

- A number of women have formed self-help groups based on proximity and craft type in order to facilitate sales and marketing. For example, female embroiders and basket weavers from D.I.K. formed a total of five self-help groups. Representatives of these groups visit Hawwa every 3 months for further craft training
- A number of women have opened bank accounts or have accessed loans. For example, 3% of the workshop participants at D.I.K. opened a bank account to organize earnings and savings. Twenty percent of participants from D.K.I. have taken out loans from the Agricultural Bank/Khushhali Bank or from the First Women's Bank. The First Women's Bank in Quetta has committed to lending up to Rs.10,000 to women in semi-urban areas
- Thirty-four women from the three areas are sending consignments to Hawwa Craft Cooperatives in Islamabad. Seventeen women from Hyderabad area are each earning between Rs.1500 and 3000 per month from this transaction. The three embroidery groups send items once a month to Hawwa's cooperative in Islamabad through male family members who collect sales advice and cash for any items sold that month
- Home-based entrepreneurship has expanded and multiplied in all sectors. Following the successful relationship between Hyderabad and Hawwa, other NGOs in Sindh are developing craft and home-based income generating projects for women. In Balauchistan, the Directorate of Social Welfare made a commitment to establish a craft centre for women

- Women are keen to adopt new materials, colors, and designs as they recognize the value of producing goods attractive to consumers. Craft styles that have been modified in line with market needs include modifying the traditional colors of D.I.K. cross stitching; production of Balauchi embroidery as wall hangings, cushion covers, and evening bags; and adopting *Rallee* work (native to Sindh) for dress designs
  
- Female artisans who supply Hawwa are keen to receive its on-going written advice on style, colour, shape, and number

## CONCLUSION

Spanning centuries-old traditions, the handicrafts of Pakistan are marked by their intricate embroidery, complicated production processes and their use of natural ingredients like dyes, wood, clay, cotton, silk and various plant-based products pottery making etc. The nature of the handicrafts is interwoven with the inherent culture of the people of Pakistan. The artisans of Pakistan are hard-working, colourful, and creative and dedicated to their traditional art-forms which have been passed down from one generation to the next. Unfortunately, these artisans have had to struggle to allow their crafts to survive in an industry controlled by middlemen who often give paltry returns on the handicrafts that they buy from them. It is because of this situation that the production of handicrafts has dwindled and many artisans have been forced into other fields to survive.

Some of the traditional handicrafts of Pakistan include hand-loom fabrics, embroidery, lacquer work, tile work, terracotta pottery, bangle-making, *rilli*-making (traditional quilts), leather products, wood products as well as traditional print-making on cotton known as the *ajrak*. Sindh, the southernmost province of Pakistan, is the site of age-old traditional handicrafts including the *Rilli* (or quilts) made in intricate patterns with vibrant colours in which strips of cloth are joined to make beautiful designs on bedspreads and cushions. This traditional handicraft is being revived and suited to modern tastes through the artistic guidance of designers working at **AHAN**(aik hunar aik nagar)(one village one product) to ensure that the products made meet market demand and thus get higher prices.

Adorn features children's t-shirts embellished with traditional *rilli* patchwork patterns in vibrant shades. Embroidery is one art-form that has been practiced all over Pakistan by talented artisans who excel in needlework, bead-work, hand-made and machine-made stitches. Each province has its distinctive embroidery traditions from Islamic motifs to images from nature and art. These are then used to embellish a diverse range of items from home accessories to fashion accessories to ladies clothes. Adorn showcases several distinctive items from cushion covers to bags to runners which are embellished with traditional embroidery. *Ajraks* are another traditional handicraft of Sindh. In its effort to support the handicrafts industry, organizations like **AHAN** and **Adorn** are doing their part to enable artisans and their crafts to flourish. Without these support structures, this industry and its workers are vulnerable to exploitation, dwindling market demand and eventual decline. Because the handicrafts of a country tell its story to its own people as well as to the outside world, this would truly be a devastating cultural loss.

To supplement these efforts and to initiate programmes through Public- Private participation for the preservation of Sindh's artistic, tangible and intangible heritage that are endangered and to take necessary steps for its restoration and conservation, the Government of Sindh has constituted a trust to be known as **Endowment Fund Trust** for Preservation of the cultural heritage of Sindh, but this is only working toward the preservation of the physical heritage of Sindh, so there is a dire need from the government to introduce a separate fund programme for the artisans and the projection of their crafts.

We have the potential and the local expertise in the field, as people of our area have been involved in handicraft-making from times immemorial, but what we lack in is an enthusiastic interest on the part of the government to develop this sector. Compared to us, neighbouring India scores wonderfully well. The central as well as provincial governments of India have started many initiatives for the up gradation and promotion of arts and crafts. For instance, they support their artisan community through various programmes, with the result that India is now considered a brand, internationally as well. The government of West Bengal

provides their artisans with soft loans, organises programmes for training and revival of languishing crafts and for diversification, in every district year after year. It has also set up design and service centres for the artisans. The artisans above 60 years of age are also paid pension. Pakistan, on the other hand, remains largely negligent of its craftsmen and artisan community.

The Indian government made a special team right after the partition with a mandate to locate the craftsmen all over the country. These teams went to rural areas and mapped the handicraft potential and expertise of different areas. In the second phase, these artisans were provided with financial and technical assistance on their doorstep and it helped a lot for the revival of handicrafts. "India has also adopted craftsmanship without associating it with a certain religion because they know how to use culture to promote their business.

It is true that the government of Pakistan has made a few efforts in the recent past to help the craftsmen. On the provincial level, small industry boards are considered responsible for the promotion and up gradation of handicrafts, whereas the federal government in 2007 with **AHAN** support and train artisans in different parts of the country. This project is the first proper effort on the part of the government for which a grant of Rs 200 million has already been announced.

Handicraft is a very important sector, but one needs to invest a lot of time and resources to improve the quality. They have established outfits for artisans but they have not worked for the up gradation of the product. The main issue at present is quality and **AHAN** has been trying to address this. They have Pakistan's top designers to train the artisans but so far they have not been able to do so at the mass level. They need more financial support from the government but the government remains largely indifferent to the promotion and up gradation of handicrafts and the craftsmen and the artisan community.

The Art and Craft Village Artisans inaugurated in 2010, in Islamabad is the culmination of a vision jointly shared by the CDA (capital development authority) and the Indus Heritage Trust. It celebrates and showcases the rich cultural heritage of a country that dates back 10,000 years. The purpose behind setting up of the village is to encourage traditional crafts and textiles. The unique feature of the village is that it would offer employment opportunities to hundreds of skilled craftsmen. The authority has also planned to replace one group of artisans with the other, most likely after every two months. The Art and Craft Village aims at reserving a place for artists and artisans from across the country, where they can make their contributions to preserve Pakistan's cultural heritage.

It would provide an opportunity to the foreigners and domestic visitors to visit the village and see regional cultures and traditional crafts at one place, said Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Tariq Mahmood Khan. He made these remarks after a presentation, given by Indus Heritage Trust (IHT) at CDA headquarters, on the village being constructed opposite to the Rose and Jasmine Garden, Shakarparian, Islamabad.

Artisans are surely a country's valuable asset. They work with devotion, and they must not be forced to walk away in search of greener pastures. The government must provide their craft a flourishing market, national as well as international. Bangladesh has made a village for the artisans where 4000 of them are living, working and exporting handicrafts, and prospering. I suggest that, we need a model like **Art and Craft Village** or *Dilli Haat* (see in last chapter) in Karachi also, which can boost up the economy of the artisans and respectively for country. Fairs and exhibition on yearly basis are good for the encouragement but not enough for the artisan's better financial condition. By having a model like *Dilli Haat* in a cosmopolitan city of Karachi, will provide a permanent place for the crafts persons to exhibit their masterpieces. It would be easier for the Sindhi artisans to come to Karachi to exhibit and



gain profit, it may take time to establish , but sooner the better because already we are losing international market , so to revive and handicraft culture and promote our artisans locally and abroad government have to start working on this very project. The flood in 2010 has caused huge destruction to the houses and workshops of people, they are left with no money and no place to live, the only thing they have with them is there craft and with it they sure can live and built everything that, they have lost, but only if they get appropriate support and mostly financial help by the government and other organizations, which has been given at some levels but it is very small, it needed to be on big scale in order to save this intangible heritage.

Innovation comes only with exposure and knowledge. An average worker in Pakistan has little exposure to incorporate new themes in his work and experiment. Ayesha, a local entrepreneur who works both with handicrafts and other pieces, says it is the gulf between the designer and the worker that had stopped innovation. Unless and until the two come together, she believes, there is little possibility that newness can be brought in. This is true since each has what the other doesn't -- the designer has the education and the training and the craftsman has, of course, the craft. The complaint that aesthetically the quality of our handicrafts has deteriorated holds true for many objects mainly because their demand has almost diminished with time. And when the demand and supply chain is broken it naturally becomes impossible to sustain that specific genre. The reasons -- there is no patronage from private or public organisation, the worker doesn't get acknowledged and respected for his craft, cheap and durable replicas of these objects (Multani tiles, for instance) demean the value of the original piece, the crafts are dying because the next generation is going for more practical options.

Rizwan Beyg, one of the country's leading fashion designers, has been working for the past couple of years with workmen from Haripur, Hazara, North Bahawalpur, Multan and Kot Adu reviving the dying craft of Phulkari, blue pottery and ceramics. The designer says that through his project he has been able to eliminate the role of the middleman and "virtually doubled the cash flows that the embroidery workers were receiving." His patronage has

automatically brought innovation to the age-old craft of these workers. This kind of patronage is indispensable for bringing freshness in our handicraft.

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