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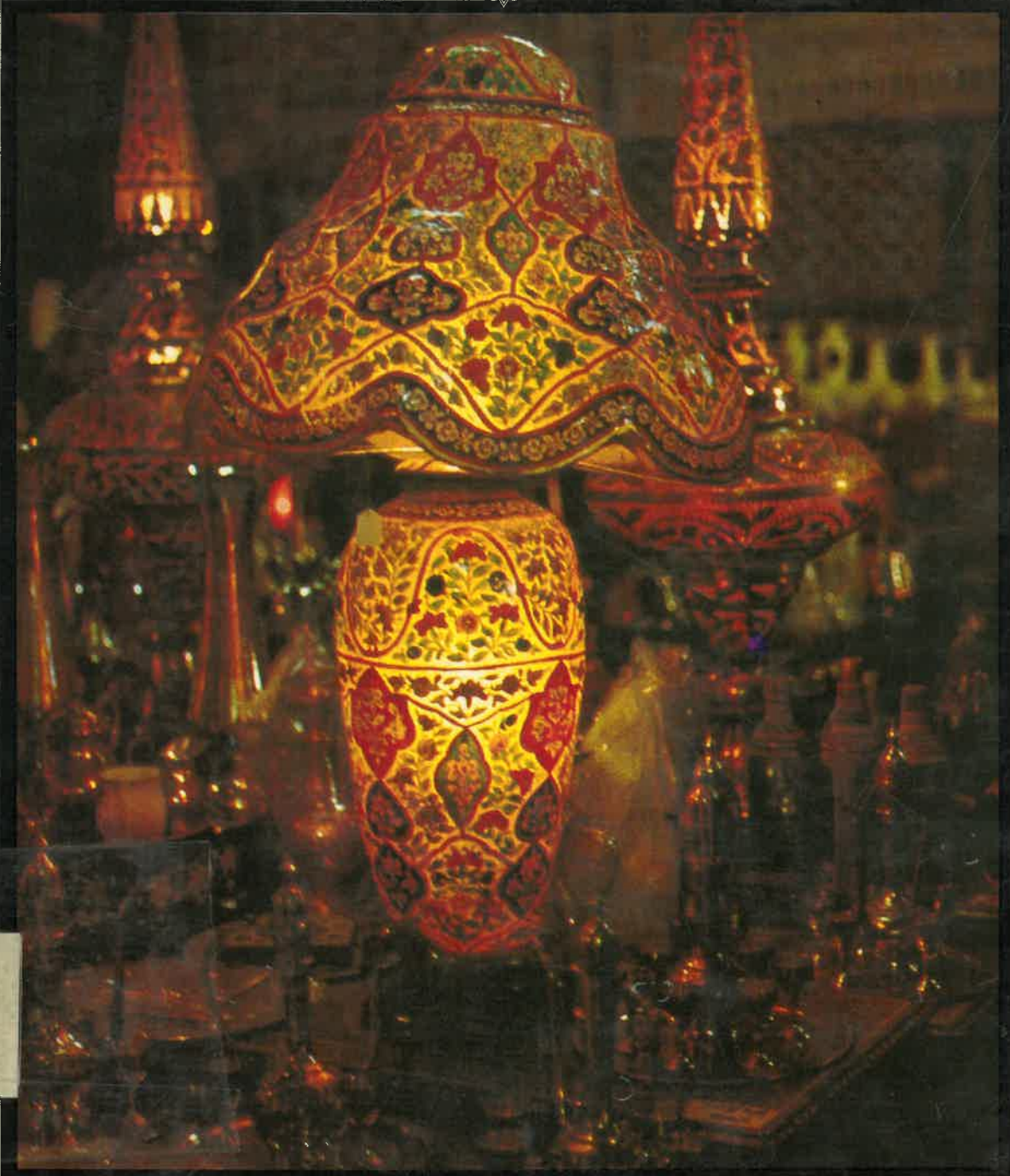
PAKISTAN



ARTS & CRAFTS PAKISTAN

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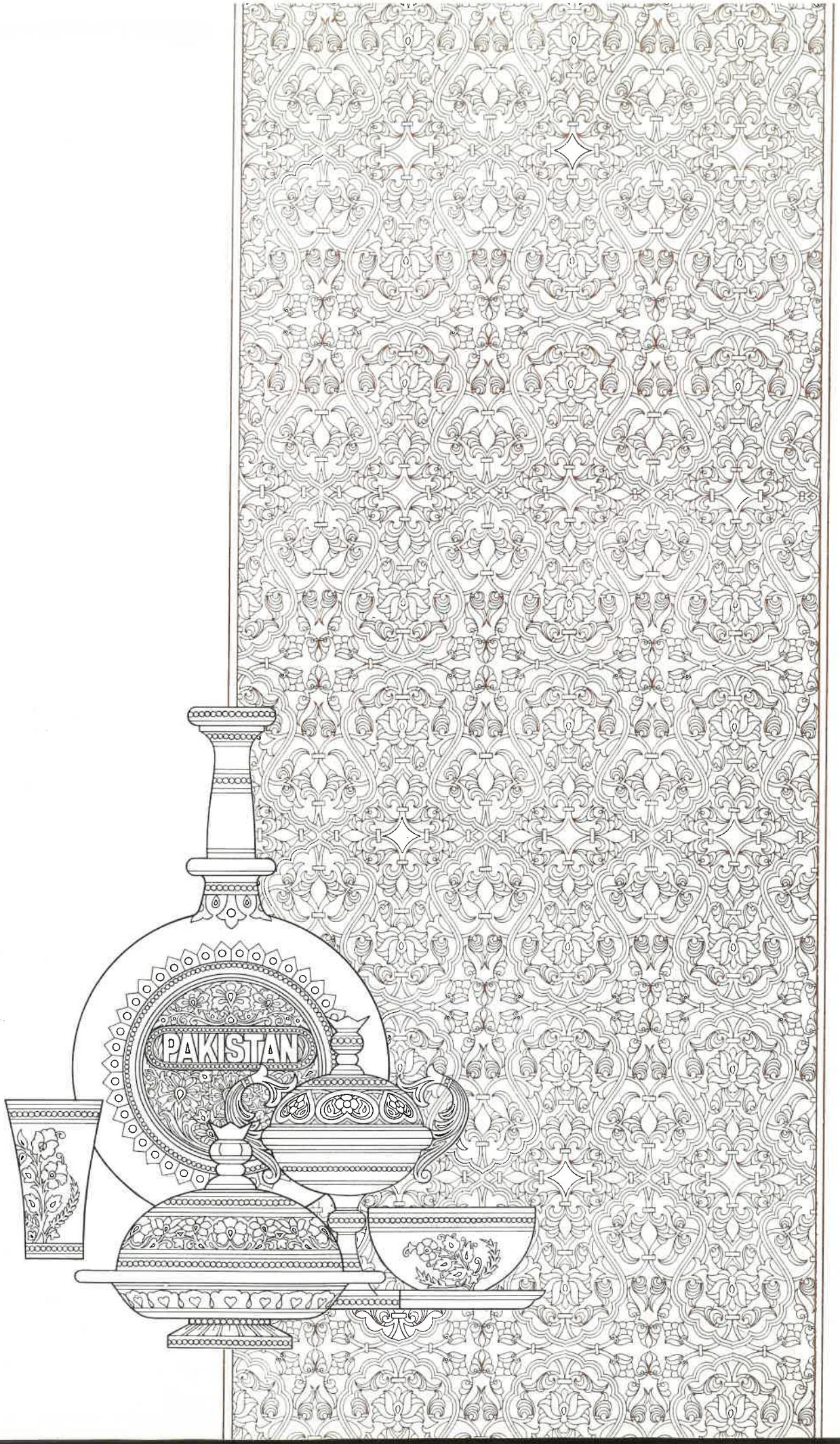
PAKISTAN

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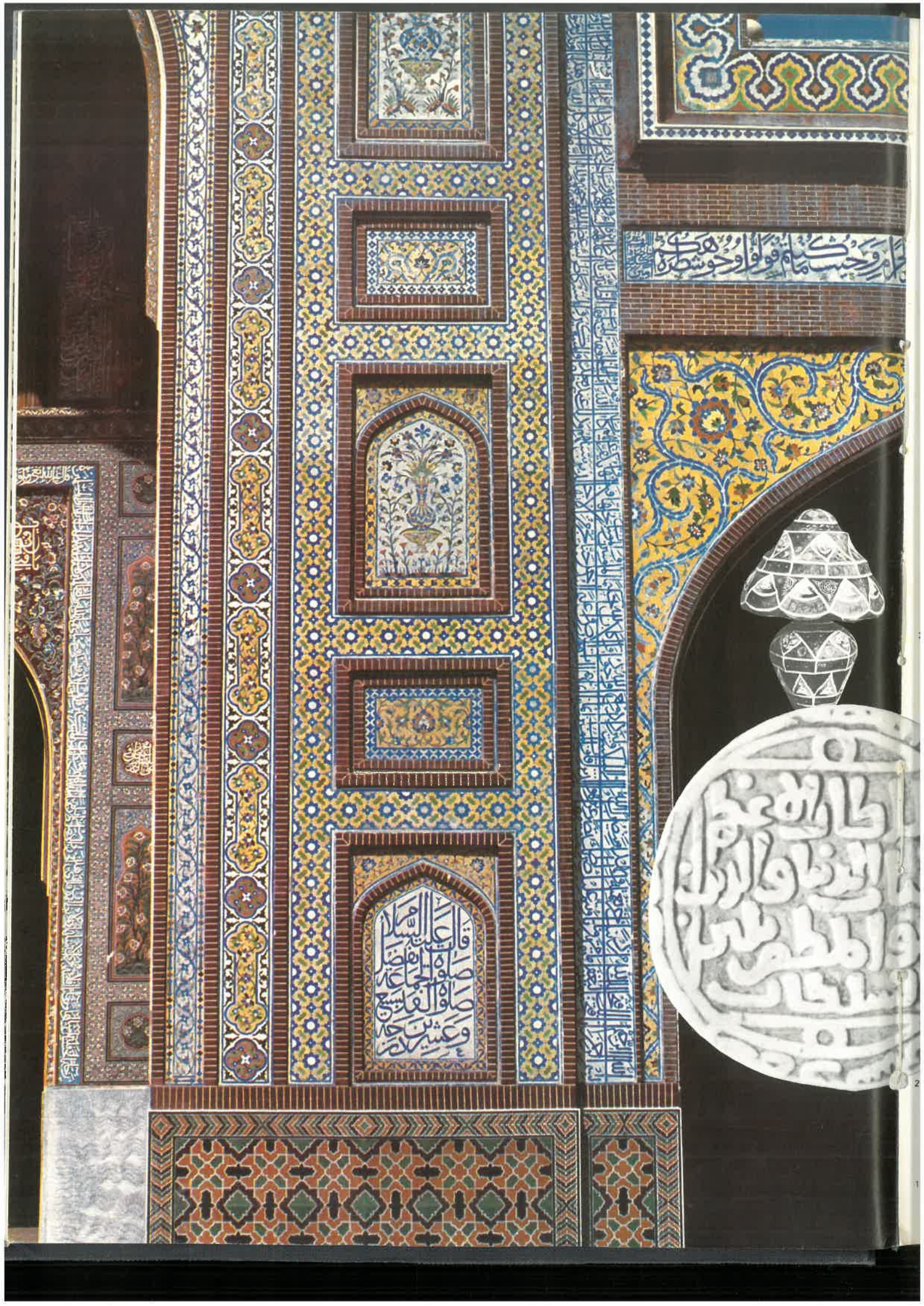
FOREWORD

Considering the wide variety of handicrafts produced in the country, the extensive use to which they are put, both as goods of utility and objects of aesthetic satisfaction, and the high level of art and craftsmanship reached by the genius of their creators, Pakistan could well be described as a land of craftsmen. A comprehensive account of all that is produced by the patient and ceaseless labour of Pakistan's craftsmen will require a far more voluminous publication than the present work, which should be taken as no more than an introduction to a fascinating field of study.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the world has tended to look at Pakistan only as the seat of an ancient civilization. Without belittling the significance of the Mounds of the Dead, it could be said that the pulsating life of the present-day Pakistani artists and craftsmen is no less worthy of attention and respect. In these pages one would find traces of many different traditions and influences and a great deal that distinguishes the crafts of one region from those of another. But there should be no difficulty in identifying the thread of Islamic ideals and cultural values that unite the diverse traditions and patterns into an integrated whole—the cultural personality of Pakistan—, inspired by the great faith of its people, their ideals and their social organisation. In presenting this volume we invite the layman and the scholar to share Pakistan's pride in the work of its distinghished sons who have learnt to use their hands to make living more convenient and pleasurable.

HAMID D. HABIB
Minister of State
for Export Promotion



INTRODUCTION

A TRADITION OF PEACEFUL LABOUR

The present volume has a very modest objective: to briefly introduce the general reader, both at home and abroad, to the living crafts of Pakistan. It is not intended, nor is it possible in the limited space available here, to discuss in detail the evolution of these crafts through the ages. A brief recapitulation of Pakistan's past, nevertheless, appears necessary.

As present-day collectors, especially foreigners, move through Pakistan's markets and discover the wide range of its popular crafts, they are struck by the similarity of designs, patterns and motifs—in ceramics, metal-work, textiles, etc.—to those used by artisans of this land thousands of years ago. This has led some historians to suggest that the culture of the Indus Valley, unlike that of the Nile or Euphrates, has continued unchanged down the centuries. The survival of some, even most, crafts or skills developed in ancient times does not necessarily denote cultural stagnation or a people's inability to generate forces of change, though it may underline the innate strength of the crafts rooted in the soil and their capacity to retain their place in successive cultures. If Pakistan's crafts have developed, as anywhere else in the world, within the framework of possibilities offered, and constraints imposed, by the country's geographical features and the pattern of life as determined by the climate and the modes of productive activity, they have also been influenced by the various cultural movements on its territories and the faiths and beliefs that have at different times inspired its population.

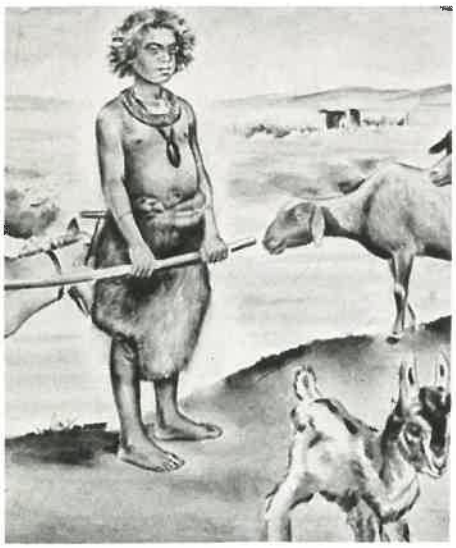
1. Wazir Khan Mosque, Lahore
2. Sultan Balban coin
3. Camel-skin lamp, Multan
4. Unicorn on Mohenjo Daro seal
5. Embroidery, Chitral
6. Brass-ware, Karachi
7. Glazed pottery, Hala

Unfortunately, Pakistan, the 32-year-old State occupying the northern and north-western top of the South Asian subcontinent, has had too little respite from the

pressing problems of the present to be able to take a proper look at its past. The kind of effort needed to compile comprehensive data on the life and achievements of the ancient inhabitants of this land is yet to be launched. However, evidence already available, scanty in many respects though it is, compels attention to certain characteristics of the old societies of Pakistan, in so far as they affected the practice and growth of various crafts.

The modes of living and working in Pakistan lands were largely shaped in ancient times by its geography—vast stretches of fertile land, watered by a large network of rivers. The land and the climate were ideal for farming, making permanent settlements possible. The ease with which man could live off the land bred contentment and inhibited the search for non-farming means of livelihood, including crafts. The mild climate did not impose the compulsions of staying indoors for long periods, unlike the early craftsmen in cold countries who were forced to concentrate on minute objects for months on end; here a craftsman could finish his work and take his goods to the market within a short period. The success of the old agricultural societies in meeting their essential requirements from the land conditioned them to a life of peaceful labour within their means rather than covet treasures abroad. There is no evidence to suggest that at any time they adopted an aggressive posture to conquer alien lands. They did not live in isolation but trade with the outside world was conducted mostly by foreign merchants who came to buy and re-export the prized goods produced by artisans in this part of the world.

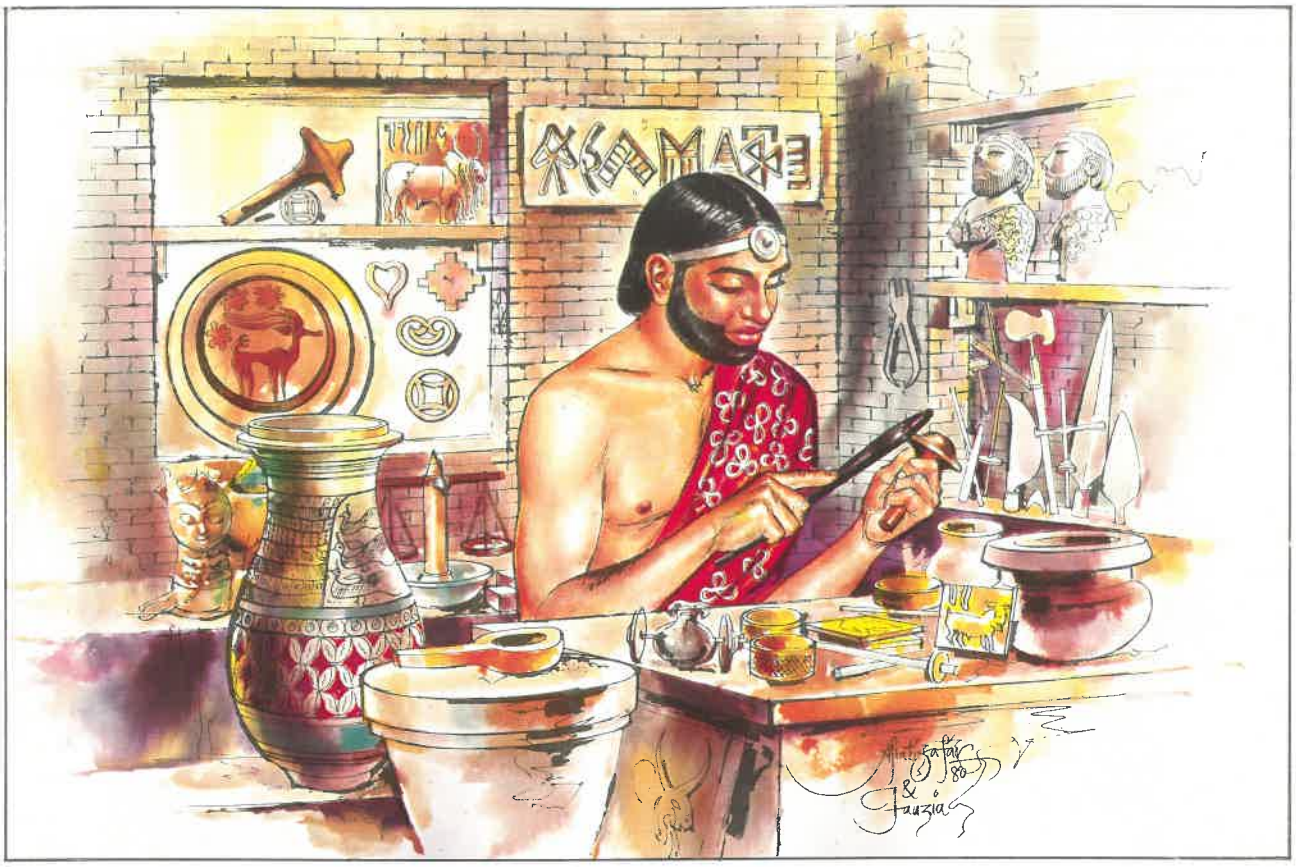
But the possibilities of farming and a hospitable environment attracted, for thousands of years, nomads looking for pastures, tribes fleeing from tyranny, and warriors spurred by ambition. Large-scale immigration and frequent invasions, and the disruption of labour and loss of acquisitions that they portended, restrained the artists and craftsmen from rising above a utilitarian application of their skills. The adage that crafts flourish in a society capable of maintaining peace, political stability and productive economic activity for long periods is fully borne out by the history of Pakistan's crafts. Further, for most of the period about which something is known, the people of this land were staunch followers of one faith or another, which made a decisive impact on the scope available to and the forms preferred by craftsmen.



Nature was generous

Not far from the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, runs a small river, Soan. By the side of this river have been found a large number of pebble tools, estimated to be more than 500,000 years old. These tools, believed to have been designed by the primitive anthropoid types, furnish the oldest traces of human life on the South Asian subcontinent.

Nothing is known about the evolution of life in this part of the world during the thousands of years that elapsed between the microlithic culture, traces of which have been found in the Frontier region of Pakistan, and the emergence of permanent villages. Evidence so far collected by archaeologists shows that the first villages in the subcontinent were established in Baluchistan and lower Sind in the closing period of the fourth millenium. These village communities were sustained by developed agriculture made possible by abundance of water from several rivers, a fertile plain, and dense forests. Unfortunately the region from Brahui Hills to Makran in Baluchistan and its extension into lower Sind has not received due attention from archaeologists and anthropologists, and it is not possible to reconstruct the life patterns of these early village societies or identify the crafts in which their ingenuity found expression. Still, sufficient evidence has been found to indicate that they used stone in the foundations of their mud-brick houses, possessed some copper implements, and made good pottery which they had learnt to paint well. Pieces of pottery, terracota figures, and soft-stone boxes, found at Kulli, Nal, and Zhob, tell of contented agricultural communities.



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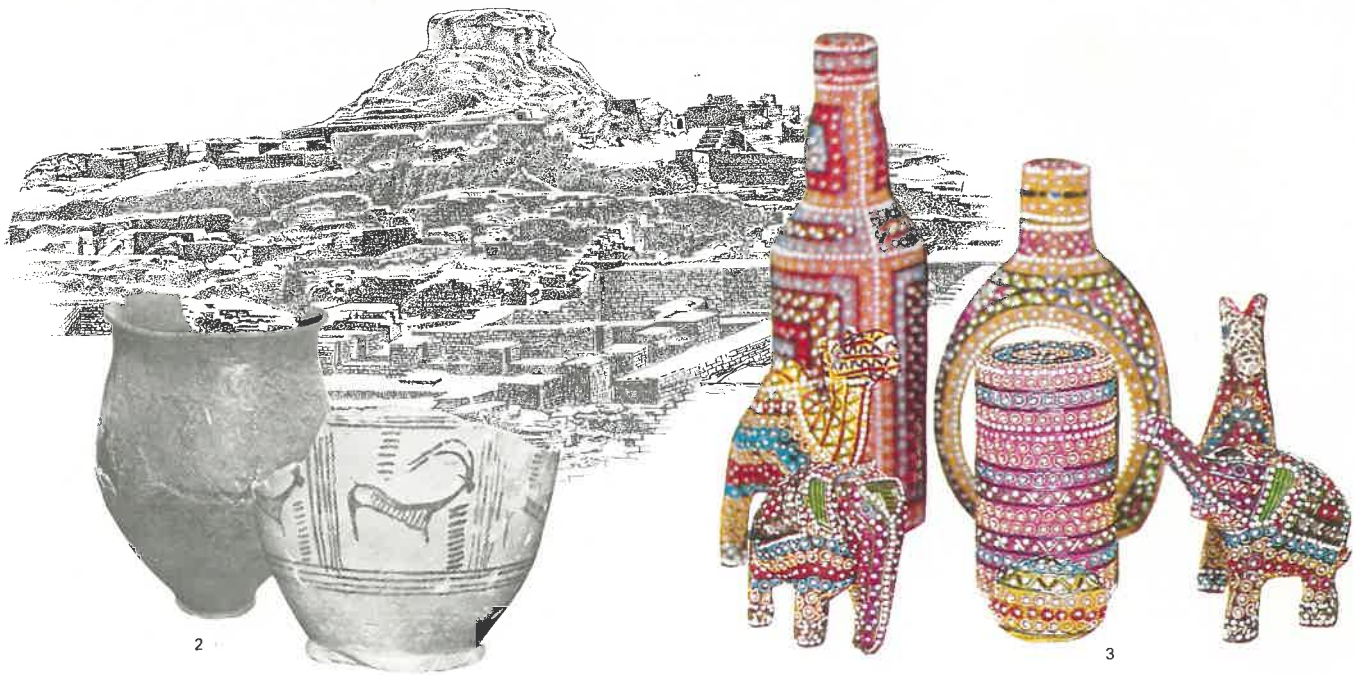

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Archaeological finds at Kot Diji indicate that only a few hundred years after the emergence of village communities in Baluchistan, settlements along the Indus started developing into cities and not long afterwards there arose the largest river civilization of ancient times—the Indus Valley civilization. Identified mainly by the two principal cities of Mohenjo Daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab, this

1. Artist's reconstruction of a Mohenjo Daro workshop
2. Potsherds from Mohenjo Daro
3. Sindhi bead-work

civilization covered more than 950 miles from north to south. Since it has not been possible to decipher the Indus civilization script, found mainly on Mohenjo Daro and Harappa seals, archaeologists are still arguing as to what actually some of the structures uncovered at these sites were meant for, and whether the uniformity in town planning implies the existence of a centrally-controlled State administration. However, for the purposes of the present volume it is sufficient to note that these ancient cities had a developed brick-manufacturing industry, and the elaborate system of drains, sewers and soak-pits points to the availability of efficient masons. Besides, there were artisans who worked in precious stones, silver, conchshell, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and jadeite. A more popular craft appears to have been the preparation of steatite seals, which have now become the mark of identification of

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the Indus Valley civilization. The fine and realistic engravings on these seals show craftsmanship of a high order and use of precision tools that were probably designed by leading artisans themselves. The art of sculpture was also quite developed and some of the pieces that have survived are proof of the sculptors' advanced knowledge of human anatomy as well as their impressive craftsmanship.

Another field in which the Mohenjo Daro-Harappa craftsmen have left a treasure is that of terracota miniatures—monkeys, squirrels, bullocks, deer, birds, statuettes of women, carts, etc.—, designed probably as toys for children though some seem to have been clearly meant for use as ornaments. It has been suggested that people of the Indua Valley culture had developed especially high skills in carpentry and were perhaps ahead of their contemporaries in the other river cultures of Egypt and Iraq. They are also credited with having designed a saw with undulating teeth which allowed the dust to escape freely from the cut.

Above all, cotton was grown first in the world in the Indus Valley and the discovery of fine cloth at Mohenjo Daro and a similar piece in Iraq confirmed that spinning and weaving were among the popular crafts perfected in the first cities that arose in the region.

During the thousand years or so that elapsed between the destruction of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa and the age of the Buddha (born about 572 B.C.) the territories of Pakistan witnessed the arrival of a large number of Aryans. Among other things, they further developed the crafts of carpenters, bronzesmiths, jewellers, goldsmiths, metal-workers, basketmakers, ropemakers, weavers, dyers and potters.

In the sixth century B.C. the Frontier region of Pakistan was annexed to the vast Achaemenid Empire. Excavations in Mardan, Swat, Dir and Bajaur indicate that even prior to the arrival of Iranians, Peshawar Valley, called Gandhara in native language, boasted a prosperous agricultural community and was famous for its fine sheep wool. The description of this Iranian acquisition by Herodotus as the last and richest of the satrapies could have been justified only on the basis of wealth produced by the region's farmers, sheep breeders and artisans. Charsadda (old Pushkalavati) and Taxila were prosperous cities and excavations at Taxila's Bhir Mound have revealed the use of iron in the sixth century B.C. Two centuries after the Iranian invasion came Alexander (327 B.C.). Although the first phase of their

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1. Mohenjo Daro: a life of peaceful labour
2. Buddha head, Gandhara
3. Chiselled with devotion

occupation was very brief, the Greeks made a deep impact on the mind of the people and introduced them to new skills which flourished under the Mauryan

kings and then under the Indo-Greek rulers who took over the region after being pushed out of native Bactria. The crafts that particularly flourished in this period were carpentry, sculpture, pottery, jewellery, and the minting of coins. Great pieces of art and craftsmanship were produced during this period.

Throughout the first four centuries of the Christian era the region was exposed to foreign invasions, from both north and south, and although considerable progress in architecture and civic management was achieved under the Kushans and the

Guptas, there is not much evidence of any fundamental changes in popular crafts. The surviving stone and metal works suggest that during this period conditions were stable enough to attract craftsmen from Iran, Bactria and Central Asia, whose work provided a strong impetus to the indigenous workers to develop their skills further

Meanwhile, in the Mohenjo Daro-Harappa region peasant societies reorganised themselves and revived their traditional crafts of pottery, dyeing and weaving. Their produce was carried by boats to distant lands in western Asia and Europe.

Between the eighth and the twelfth centuries A.D., the territories of Pakistan came under the influence of Islam. Sind was conquered by the Arabs in 712 and, after successive raids by Mahmud of Ghazni, Mohammad Ghori brought the whole region from Khyber to Delhi under Muslim rule towards the close of the twelfth century. The rise of Muslim power in the subcontinent made a qualitative change in the patterns of people's living, their social mores and aesthetic values. For the next six centuries, whether the entire region was governed by a single powerful emperor or it was divided into a number of independent principalities, this subcontinent formed part of the world of Islam that extended in the west to Spain and Sicity. It was exposed to all the movements in the field of arts and crafts that developed in the various parts of this world at different times. Among the talented people its prosperous kingdoms attracted from all parts of the globe, especially

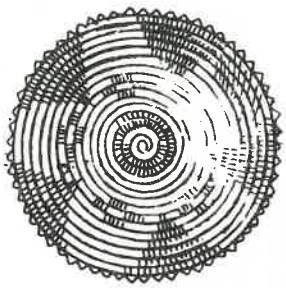
Carved wood chest Swat style, Lahore

other Muslim countries, were not only scholars and savants but also craftsmen of repute. It had a share in the achievements the Muslim people were making in architecture and woodcrafts, ceramics and metal-work, in Iran, Central Asia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Turkey. But, as elsewhere, the Muslims in the subcontinent did not scorn the native arts and crafts; in many cases they grafted their peculiar traditions on to the existing ones. The art of sculpture and painting of human figure received a setback for obvious reasons, yet several rulers encouraged painting to an extent that the miniatures executed under their patronage rank high in the world's treasury of art. At the same time they brought new ideas and forms in the fields of architecture, tile-making, calligraphy, and ornamentation. Producing a synthesis of the traditional and Muslim arts, the craftsmen touched the peaks of glory during the Mughal period when they produced some of the finest specimens of workmanship,

and the fame of indigenous carpet-makers, weavers, tile-makers, copper-smiths, etc., spread to far away lands. As modern scholars dig into old records and the people of this country struggle to grow out of colonial hangover, they are beginning to appreciate the great contribution of the native artisans and craftsmen to make their land one of the richest and most developed countries of the world in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

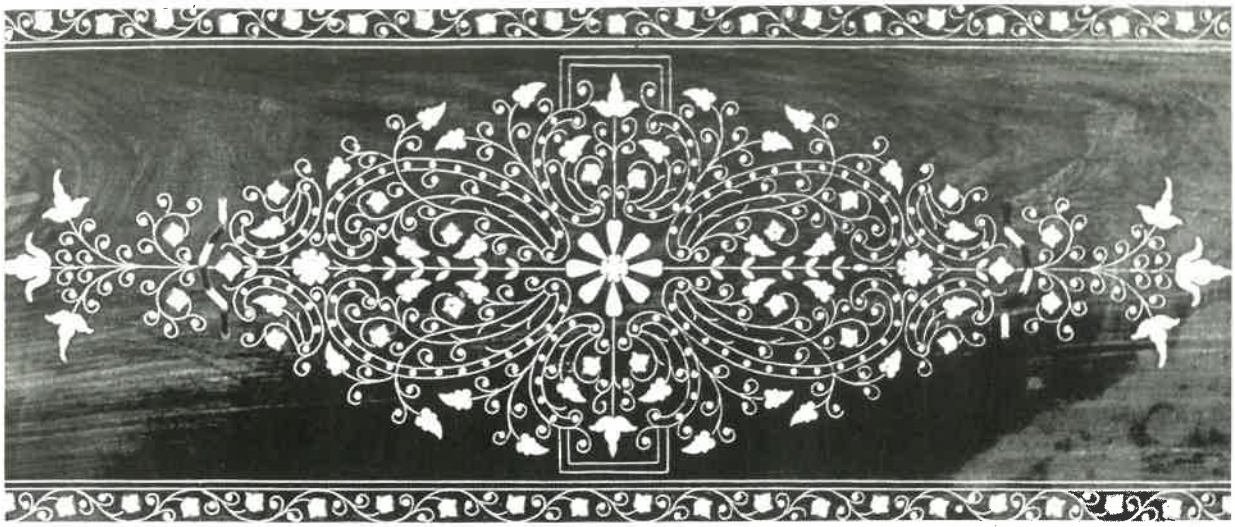
Loss of political independence in the middle of the nineteenth century dealt a severe blow to the existing crafts. This is not the place to describe how decades of colonial plunder were marked by a systematic destruction of native crafts and how this home of gifted artisans was reduced to a dumping ground for the manufactures of the industrialised West. If the crafts survived at all it was largely due to the enormous needs of a huge population which the nascent industries of the colonial power were unable to meet. Indeed even the considerably stepped-up industrialisation of the country since independence, though it has certainly affected some sectors, has left the community of craftsmen free to pursue their utilitarian role. In the villages and towns of Pakistan a majority of the population still rely on hand-made articles of daily use, from pots and pitchers to fabrics and jewellery. Many of these products possess such irresistible beauty that they find their way into the luxurious apartments of the modern urbanites and leave foreign connoisseurs of hand-crafted goods breathless with wonderment.

While studying the evolution of Pakistan's crafts one must not ignore the constraints imposed at all times on craftsmen working with imported raw materials, like copper. brass, steel and gold. Unlike other craftsmen who could obtain clay, sandstone, cotton, wool, hides and wild grass at home, and whose work was related to the primary needs of their people, they could function only within the limits prescribed by the means and tastes of the rulers and the nobility and the overall scope and level of the State's economic organisation. A more decisive role was played by the economic status of the craftsman. In the primitive society the pursuit of a craft was not a wholetime calling; the agriculturist, when he was not busy producing food, used his hands to make something he needed. When wholetime craftsmen appeared they met the agricultural community's needs of such essentials as pots and clothes and implements on barter basis. Even when craftsmen's guilds took shape, of which some evidence has been found as early as the Maurya period, their workmanship was determined less by their own genius than by the demands of the consumers. Under the Muslim rulers the best craftsmen worked as hired labour in the imperial workshops. As many as 17,000 artisans were employed in the 'karkhanas' (workshops) of Allauddin Khilji, and the weaving shops of Mohammad Tughlaq had about 4,000 workers. Of all the Muslim rulers Akbar was the greatest promoter of crafts. He established a number of workshops and took special steps to encourage shawl and carpet-weaving. He not only invited foreign craftsmen to settle in his realm but also sent special missions to study the crafts of neighbouring countries. Lahore was one of the few cities which developed into major centres of indigenous crafts. The fact that Akbar spent thirteen of his mature years (1585-1598) in Lahore contributed much to the growth of this city to a level that a European traveller could say that "in 1581 it was not second to any city in Europe or Asia" and another European found it to be larger than London.



Bidri work, Lahore

Thanks to Akbar's initiative, his successors could command the services of thousands of craftsmen in various fields. A revealing account of the imperial workshops in the days of Aurangzeb is provided by Bernier: "Large halls are seen in many places called kai-kanays or workshops for the artisans. In one hall embroiders are busily employed, superintended by a master. In another you see the goldsmiths; in a third, painters; in a fourth, varnishers in lacquer-work; in a fifth, joiners, turners, tailors, and shoemakers; in a sixth, manufacturers of silk, brocades, and those fine muslins of which are made turbans, girdles with golden flowers..." The nature of the ownership of these workshops and the conditions of



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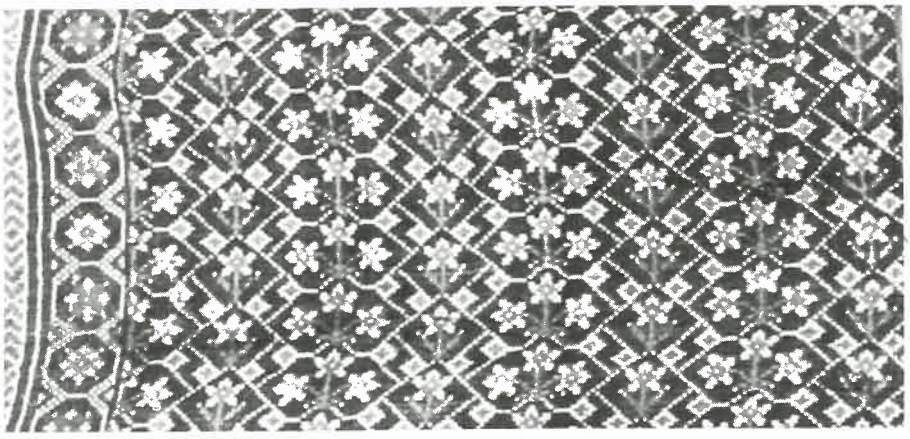

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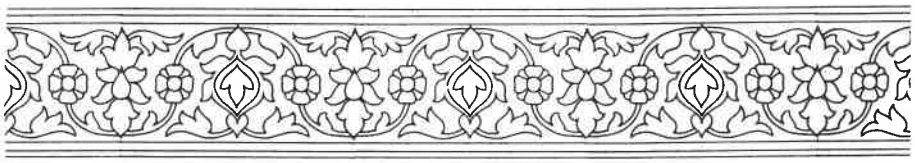
employment of the artisans explain the setback to crafts with the decline of the royal court. Only a small number of master craftsmen who had risen to the status of rich merchants and could employ less resourceful artisans had any means of continuing the tradition, but they too wilted under the onslaught of European manufacturers. During the colonial era the very nature of colonial exploitation sealed the fate of indigenous crafts. In the post-independence period, however, the revival of crafts has required substantial State help and initiative. If present-day craftsmanship in any field sometimes does not compare favourably with older models or does not represent the full genius of the native craftsman, the reason should not be difficult to ascertain. As regards the future of arts and crafts in Pakistan, the proven capability of the craftsmen remains a source of unextinguishable hope. But the extent to which their talent can find expression will depend on the resources and, more than that, the good sense of those who lay down economic and cultural priorities.

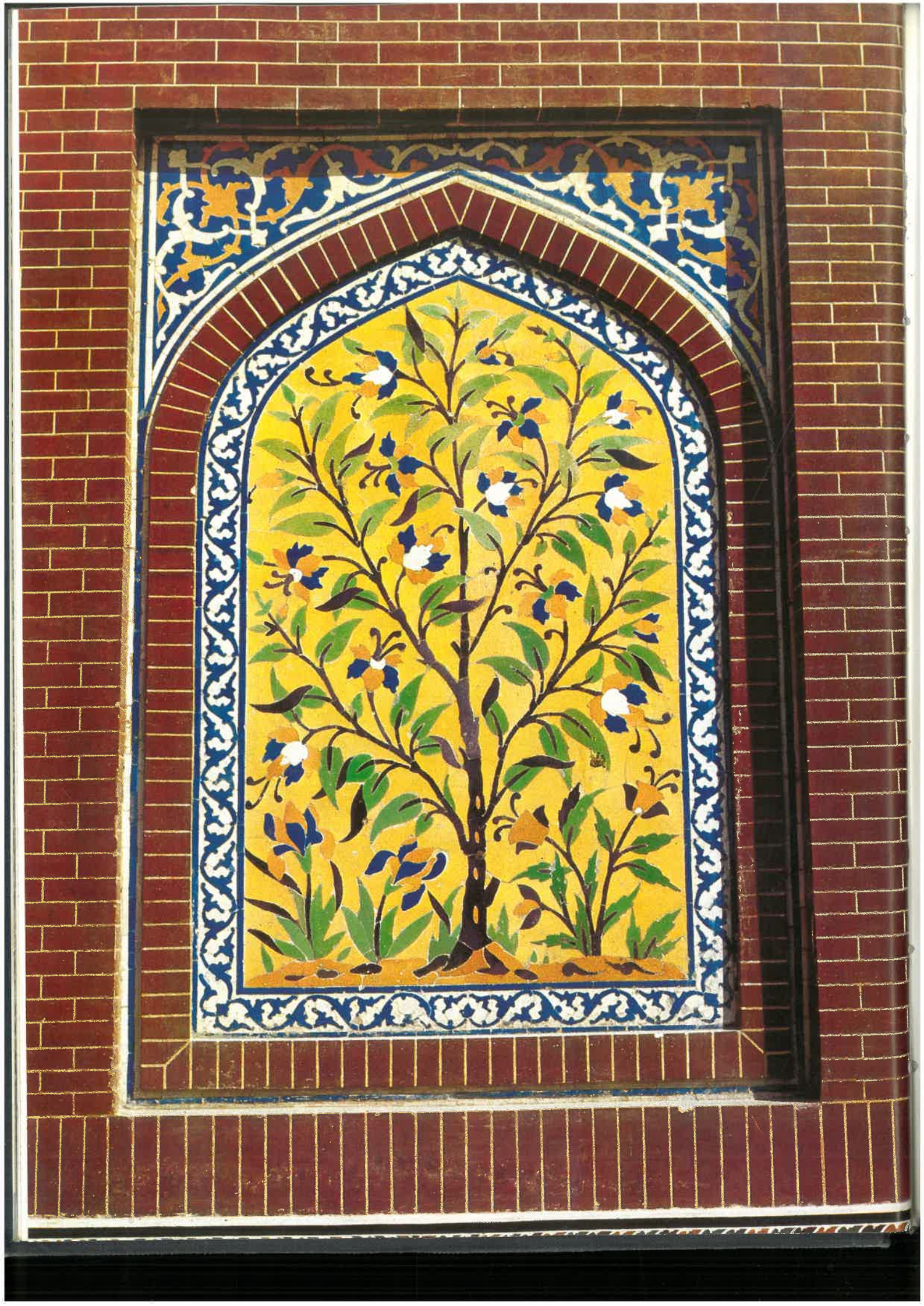
Finally, a few words about the scheme of this book. It deals with all the arts and crafts that are practised in Pakistan, except those somewhat arbitrarily classified as fine arts. Arbitrarily because the present writer agrees with those who acknowledge as art the large body of work lumped together by the privileged and often snobbish cataloguers under the label of 'minor arts'. As for the expression 'folk art', it is used only to indicate the social background of the craftsmen and the consumers; otherwise everything that is shaped by man's hands and imagination and satisfies the people's aesthetic sense, by its form or design or colour scheme, and represents a craftsman's successful pursuit of beauty, is a work of art.

A word of apology is due to the specialists who may find the work wanting in many respects. The reason lies partly in the writer's inadequacies and partly in the dearth of literature on Pakistan's crafts. Reliance had often to be placed on second-hand opinions of lay writers and this has kept some of the formulations at the level of tentative suggestions. But if this modest attempt could provoke more knowledgable experts and students of the subject to produce an authoritative work, the labour expended on it would not have been in vain.



5

1. Ivory inlaid table top, Peshawar
2. The family of Pakistan craftsmen
3. Glazed pottery, Hala
4. Ajrak pattern, Hyderabad
5. 'Kaghazi' pottery, Bahawalpur



1

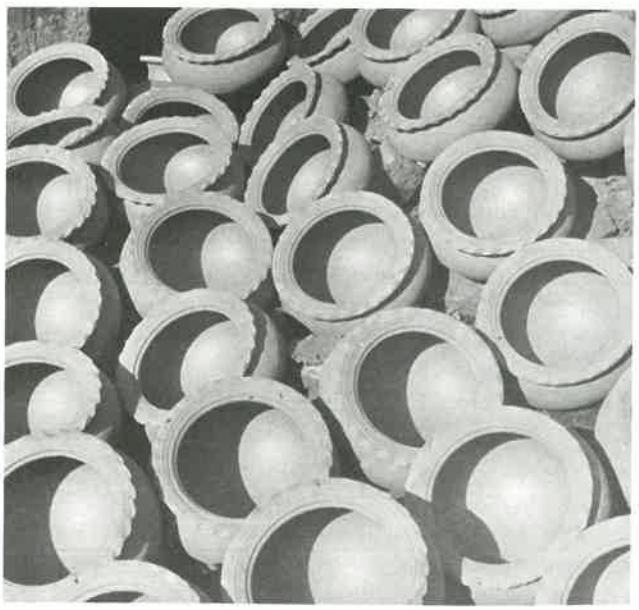
clay

kashi to ceramics

The craft of turning clay into articles of utility and objects of art has a tradition in Pakistan spread over thousands of years. But Pakistan's pottery commands attention not only on account of its age, or its large-scale usage, or what may strike one at first sight as an unchanging tradition. The present-day village potter may appear to have walked straight out of the pages 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. But while such outward appearances reflect the strength of a craft born out of man's most basic requirements, the changes brought in different periods, in shapes and motifs, and the ever growing range of modern ceramics testify to the craftsmen's capacity to respond to the changing needs and tastes of the community.

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, Gujrat, 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. Recently deposits of China clay have been found in the northern areas of the country. At all these places communities of potters have been developing their skills almost uninterrupted for centuries.

As pieces of pottery found at Kulli, Zhob, Nal, Mohenjo Daro, Harappa, Kot Diji,



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1. Enamelled tile panel, Wazir Khan Mosque
2. Earthen pots for a vast population
3. China clay lampstand, Lalamusa

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Amri, Mardan, Charsadda and Taxila show, the potter's craft grew out of the need to meet the community's demand for utensils for cooking and service, 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 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.

Glazed pottery, Multan 1
Hala vase 2
Vessel with spout, Bhambhore 3
'Kaghazi' jar, Bahawalpur 4
Embossed motifs on 'surahi', Cholistan 5
Bahawalpur vase 6
An uninterrupted tradition 7

Many of the early forms designed by the ancient potters survive to this day—the rounded pitcher, the half-circle bowl, the cooking pot—but, of course, with changes incorporated under the impact of successive cultural influences. Most of the pre-history pottery comprises short-rim vessels of small height, except for large pitchers used probably for storing grain. Under the Persian and Greek influences the production of long-necked, narrow-based vessels became popular. The

discovery of a broad-based vessel with a short spout, to facilitate the pouring out of water, at Bhambhore indicates the beginning of a Muslim style which was to be developed to a point where the designing of elegant spouts became the hall-mark of a master craftsman. Similarly, the motifs painted on pottery went through sharp changes. Simple lines and figures of animals that roamed the ancient forests were replaced by Greek geometric patterns, stylised floral motifs, and finally arabesque.

The continued use of earthenware, even in villages, cannot wholly be explained by its low cost and the slow rate of increase in the people's incomes. Its suitability for a number of requirements in the rural areas (vessels for the water wheel, pots for churning milk, fodder troughs for the cattle, some music wares, rain drains for rooftops, tubs for kneading flour) has kept the craft of unglazed pottery alive. It has also been helped by the belief that fired-clay vessels are absolutely clean and hygienic. Another important factor that has contributed to the continued popularity of earthenware is its property of resistance to heat. For people living without artificial cooling devices, there is nothing better than an earthen pot for storing water or milk products. Pitchers and bowls in different sizes and shapes are turned out in large numbers for populations exposed to long and harsh summers. And not only in villages, for in the metropolitan town of Karachi one can see earthen water containers fitted with taps of plastic or stainless steel. Also the earthen tub ('koonda') remains the ideal vessel for preparing curds throughout the country. Likewise, 'kheer' (rice pudding) is traditionally cooled in earthen saucers and the lovers of 'qulfi' (indigenous ice-cream) insist on using earthen cones.

While the shape of the common water pitcher was determined by the village women's preference for vessels that could be balanced, three or four one upon another, on their heads, much attention has been paid to the shape of the long-necked water container ('surahi') used by well-to-do families. The rounded pitcher is kept permanently on a stand made of bricks or wood, but the 'surahi' is meant to be kept indoors in daytime and in the open at night, and till recently formed an

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essential part of travellers' luggage. This necessitated the fixing of a small circular stand to its base and launched a style of ornamentation on the neck and the belly of the vessel, mostly in the form of raised floral patterns. While most of the common pitchers are plain, a good proportion of them bear simple designs and motifs in different colours.

Also surviving, mostly among nomadic tribes, is the tradition of making terracota

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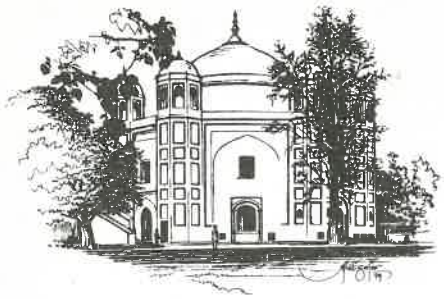
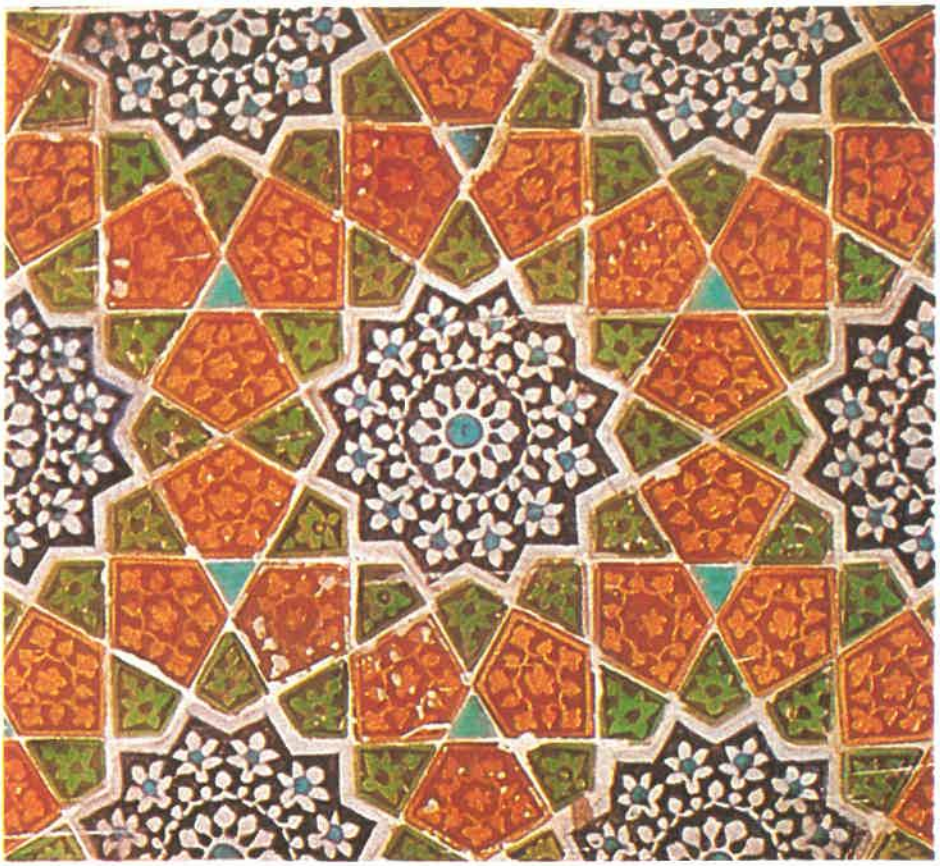


toys. Some of their horses, oxen, elephants, tigers, carts and catapults are indistinguishable from the centuries-old models. Of late the possibility of reproducing ancient motifs on terracota pieces in new shapes, or putting new motifs on traditional ware, has been attracting the attention of modern designers.

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 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.

Only a little less widely produced is glazed pottery. More durable, better looking and easier to clean than unglazed earthenware, it is also valued for its suitability for

Calligraphy in tile-mosaic, 1
Wazir Khan Mosque
Glazed pottery, Hala 2
Glazed pottery, Sehwan 3
Painted motifs, Bahawalpur 4
Thatta tile 5
Hundreds of pieces make a panel 6
A craft revived 7



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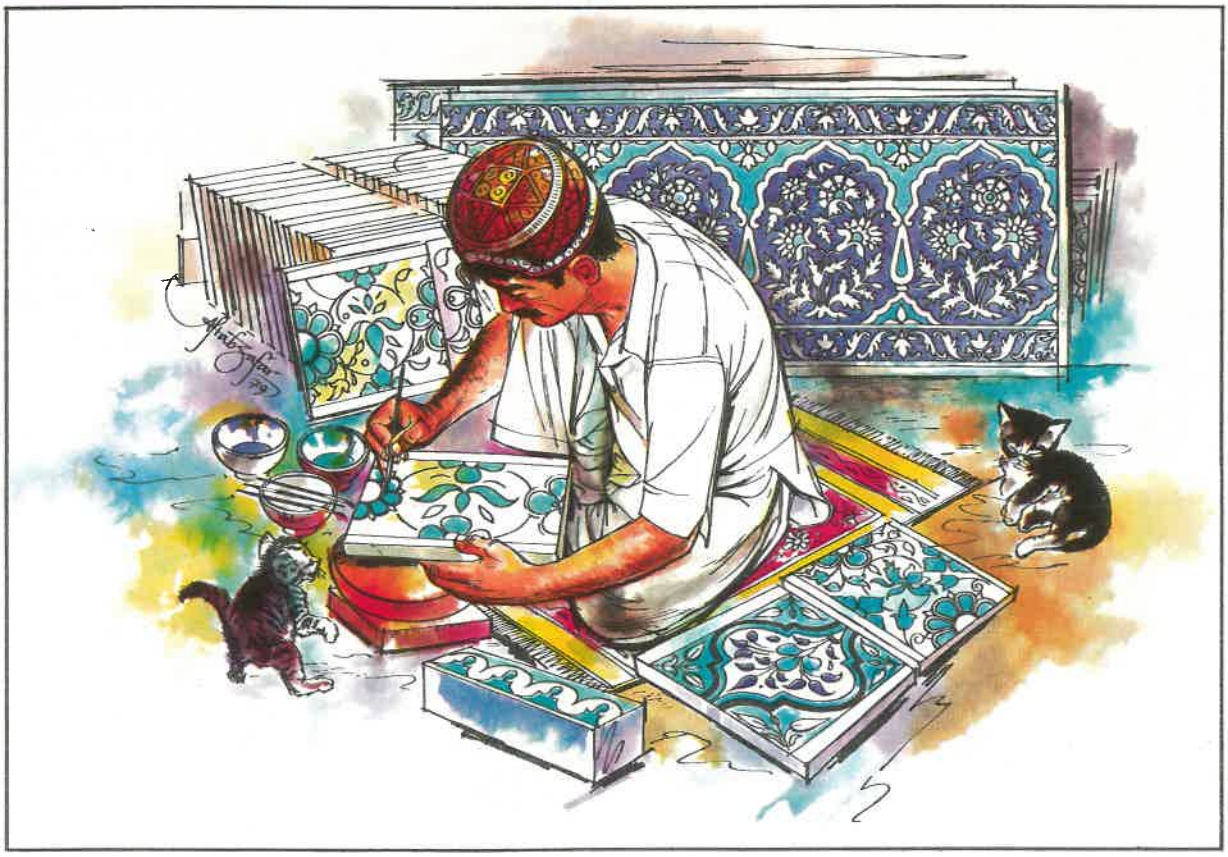

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cooking and conserving food. People have learnt from experience that milk and cooked foods stay fresh longer in glazed earthen pots and dishes than in metal containers or that meat cooked on slow fire in a glazed earthen pot tastes better than

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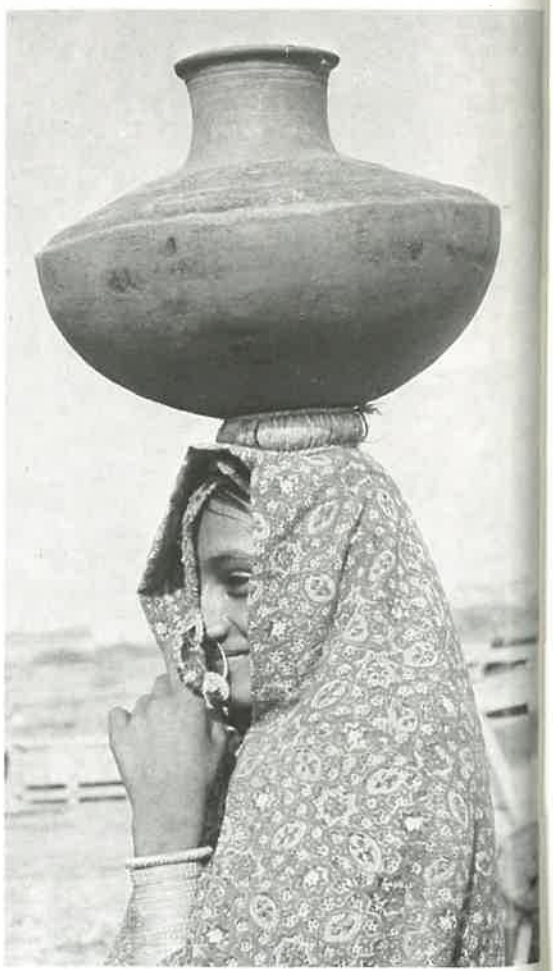

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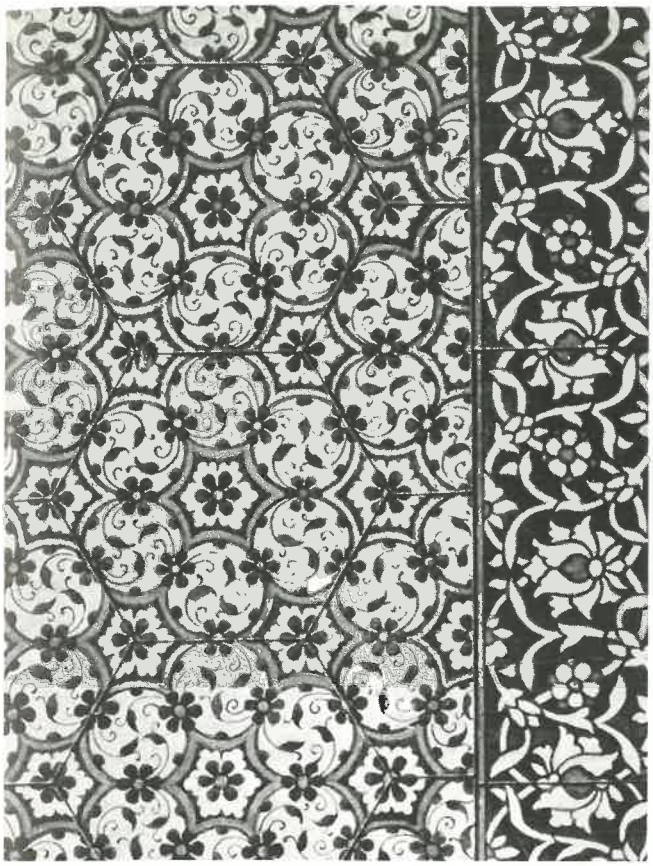

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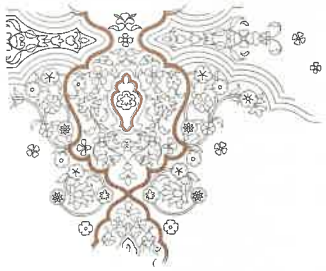

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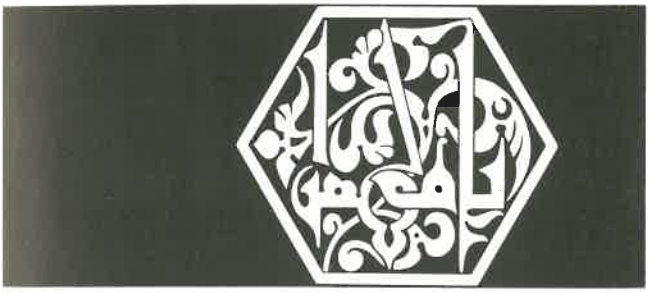

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that quickly stewed in metal utensils.

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' 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'. 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. Recent changes in eating habits have generated a demand for new items of table-ware. 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.

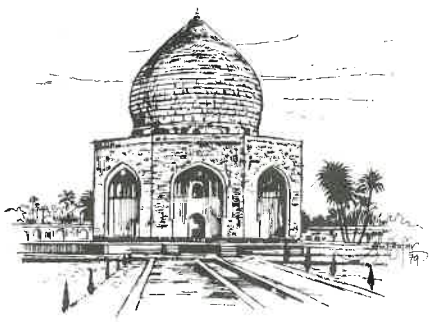
The variety of colours in which glazed pottery is available reflects the divergence in landscape presented by the different regions of Pakistan. The two most famous centres of glazed pottery, Hala and Multan, lie in sandy plains. At both places the

1. Relaxing with an earthen 'hookah'
2. Instinct for colour, Wazir Khan Mosque
3. Traditional pitcher, Sind
4. Thatta tile, Shahjehan Mosque
5. Tile: intricate designs
6. Floral designs on modern Chinaware
7. Painted pottery, Sehwan

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. 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 Gujrat 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.

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. When Sir John Marshall described this tomb as "one of the most splendid memorials ever erected in honour of the dead", he was moved no less by the beauty of its tiles ("superlative surface decorations," in the words of a latter-day authority) than the overall design of the building.

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. The floral patterns and scrolls in glazed tiles in the mausoleum of Jani Beg Turkhan (d.1601) at Makli are specimens of superb craftsmanship. 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 at 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.



In Lahore the tile-craft flourished under the Mughals who brought their own traditions from Central Asia and also drew upon the indigenous pool of talent that had grown up in Multan, Uchh and Thatta. The picture wall at the Lahore Fort, covered with panels of enamelled tile mosaic during the reigns of Jehangir and Shahjehan, displays craftsmanship of the highest order. The motifs vary from floral designs to figures of birds in flight, camel fights, and majestic elephants on the move. A great many of the monuments that were decorated with tile work have perished but patches of original work can still be seen in several buildings, like the Dai Angah Mosque and the Chauburji. The best example of exquisite tile decorations is found at the Wazir Khan Mosque, built a little earlier than the Shahjehan Mosque at Thatta. The rich variety of patterns and motifs here is simply overwhelming. The leaves and flowers used in panels look like the collection of an observant traveller between the Oxus and the Ravi, and there are long panels of Arabic and Urdu calligraphy in different styles. The colours of the tiles are mainly white, blue, yellow and

green. To quote Percy Brown: "The fertility of design and the diversity of colour in the scheme are amazing, and although in its present state a somewhat vivid yellow is inclined to predominate, each panel, spandrel and border is in itself a work of art, rivalling in the brilliance of its hues, the sheen of the blue jays and green parrots which flit above its walls. There could be no finer illustration of that ardent desire for a display of exuberant colour innate in East than these glazed tile buildings of the Punjab."

The craft came to Pakistan from Iran and is still called Kashi work, indicating the original home (Kashan) of the craftsmen who started large-scale tile-making here. 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

1. New ceramic design, Lalamusa.
2. 'Surahis': for long summers.
3. Painted 'surahi', Hala.

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 terracota 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.

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.

The tools required by the potters and the tile-makers are very few and most simple. The potter uses only a rod to set the thick, circular plate in rotation and transforms the lump of kneaded clay into desired shapes with his fingers. For firing pieces of unglazed clay he still relies on earthen-roofed kilns. The process of glazing the tiles is a little more complicated. Soft alluvial clay is put into moulds of desired sizes and dried in the sun for two to three days. Purified stone powder is then applied on the tiles to serve as the ground for design. The tiles are next treated with an oxide of cobalt, chrome or copper. In the glazing stage a paste of glass-like sand and 'bajra' flour is applied on the tiles which are then burnt in a kiln, with all the holes closed, at 800 degrees centigrade. This operation is continued for eight to nine hours after which the kiln holes are opened one after the other and the cooling process begins. After about twenty-four hours the tiles can be taken out of the kiln for distribution.

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'Kaghazi' pottery, diverse shapes. 1
Painted and perforated. 2
Water pitcher. 3
'Starry vault', Shahjehan Mosque. 4

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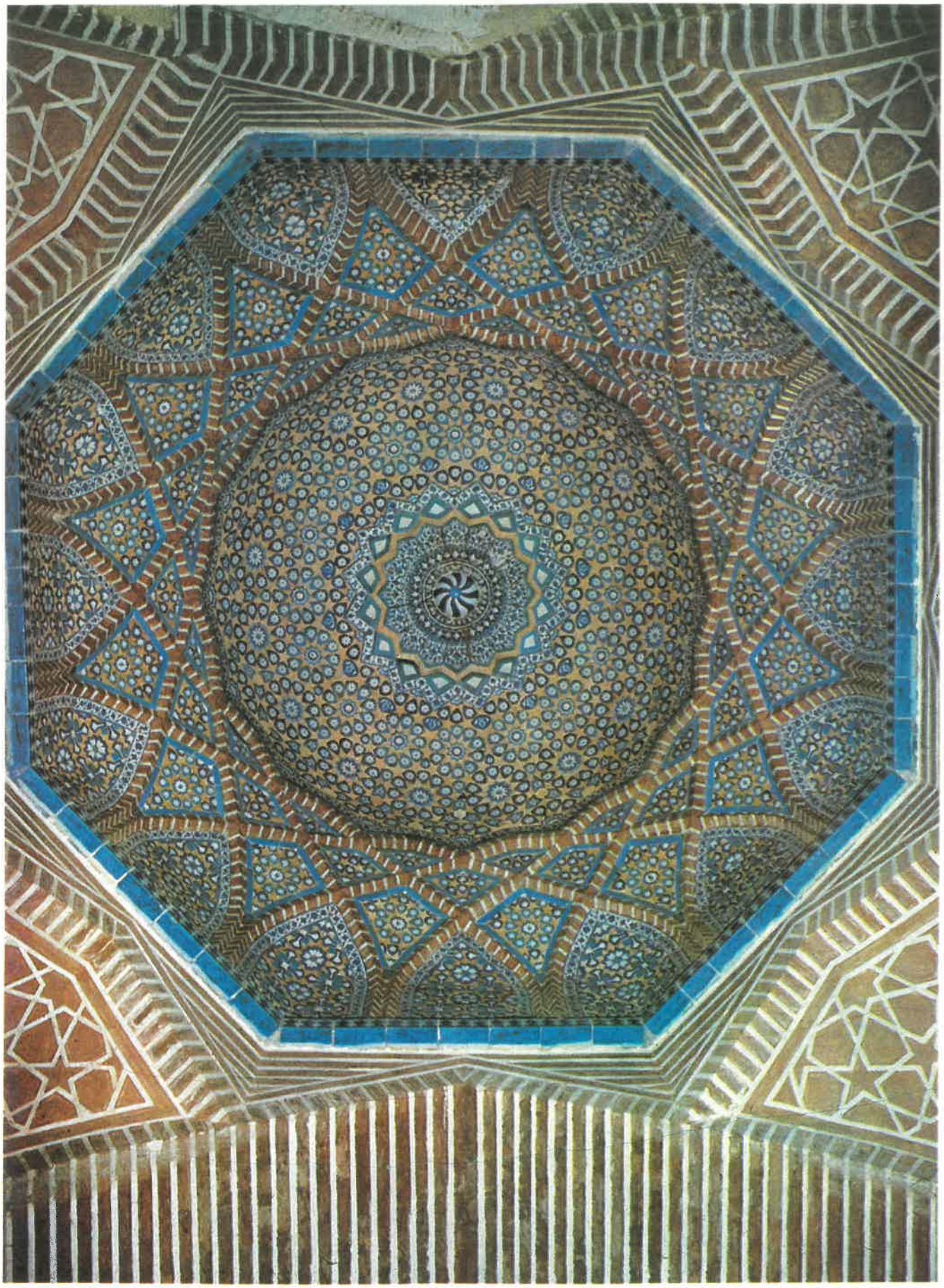

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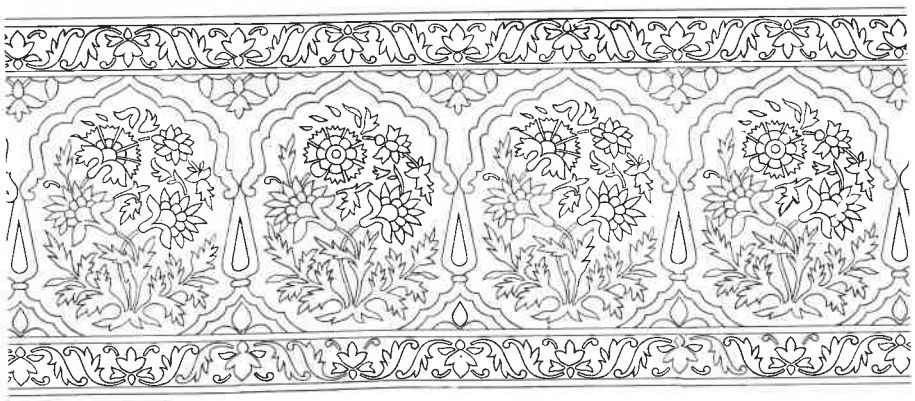
For a long time the producers of glazed pottery and tiles used, besides indigenous material for glazing, dyes prepared from local plants and stones, but subsequently they started using chemical dyes. These dyes, however, did not prove to be entirely satisfactory and at present the better craftsmen prepare special colours by mixing natural extractions with chemicals.

During the British period tile-making suffered a sharp decline and came to be confined to a few families in Hala, Sehwan and Multan. It is only in the last few years that the craft has shown signs of revival. To some extent this trend has been encouraged by the efforts of intellectuals who consider the indigenous craft traditions as a vital part of the people's living culture. Today glazed tiles are used not only to adorn mosques and tombs but also to beautify house-fronts and wall panels. The work of repair and renovation at old monuments has given a fillip to the traditional craft. For instance, in the last weeks of 1979 one could see scores of craftsmen replacing the worn out tiles at the Wazir Khan Mosque with new ones. The process would begin with the tracing of the original design on paper. Then the design would be transferred to a flat wooden desk painted white and a skilled craftsman would cut tiles on a turner into petals, flowers and letters. Besides, attempts are being made to produce tiles in non-traditional colours and decorate them with motifs that appeal to modern sensibilities. Some fine examples of scientific application of modern knowledge of clay and dyes and glazes are provided by the work of Dabir Ahmad, Salahuddin (both of them teaching at the National College of Arts), and Sheherzad Akhlaque. While Dabir Ahmad has concentrated on the quality of the glaze and variety of design on traditional objects, the latter two have displayed an instinct to use the medium for a free expression of ideas. Some of the pieces designed by them are studies in abstract sculpture. Unfortunately, rehabilitation of an old art demands much more than the resources even the most talented can muster on their own. Such innovators often find it impossible to compete with imported tiles manufactured on a mass scale by big industrial units.

Besides the late discovery of China clay a number of other factors inhibited the growth of porcelain-ware crafts in the country. Conscious of the need for meeting the population's demand for porcelain-ware from domestic resources the Government has set up an Institute of Ceramics where young craftsmen are exploring the possibilities of enriching ceramic traditions through innovation in design and adaptation. But since the final word in the selection of designs and motifs belongs to the manufacturers the scope for experiments is not as large as one would wish. Considerably more original experiments are being carried out by the students of the Design Department at the National College of Arts. One can see bold attempts to blend the traditional styles with modern taste for free lines and mellow colours. The glazed tiles, vases, table-ware and bowls made by the students and teachers at the college hold out the promise of a bright future for Pakistan ceramics. The impact of such efforts is already visible in the new designs being marketed by the leading manufacturers of ceramics.



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Enamelled tile, Lahore, old motif new glaze. 1
Tile, new motif. 2
Tile panel design, Thatta. 3
Painted pottery, Saidpur. 4
Glazed pottery, Saidpur. 5
Glazed tile, Sind. 6
Blue on white, Hala. 7
'Naqqashi' on plaster, Sehwan. 8

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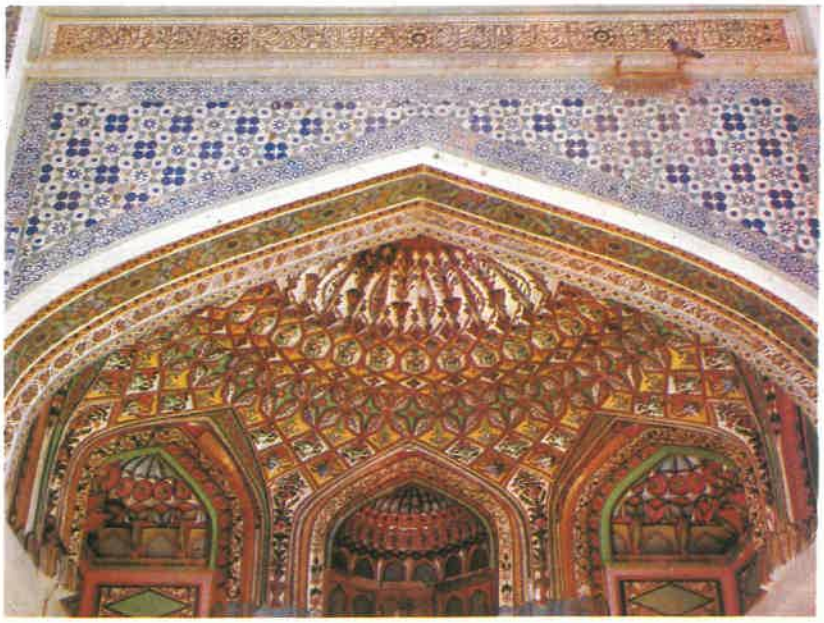

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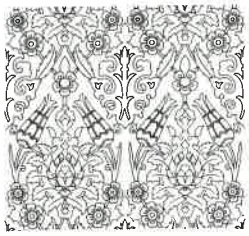

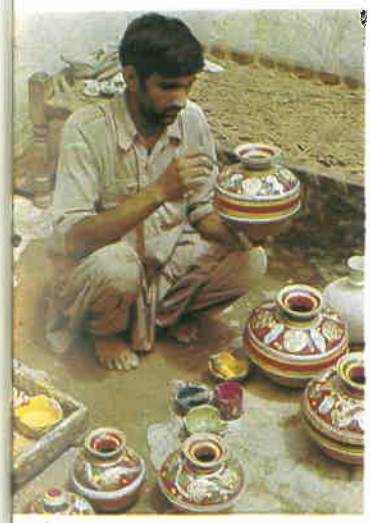

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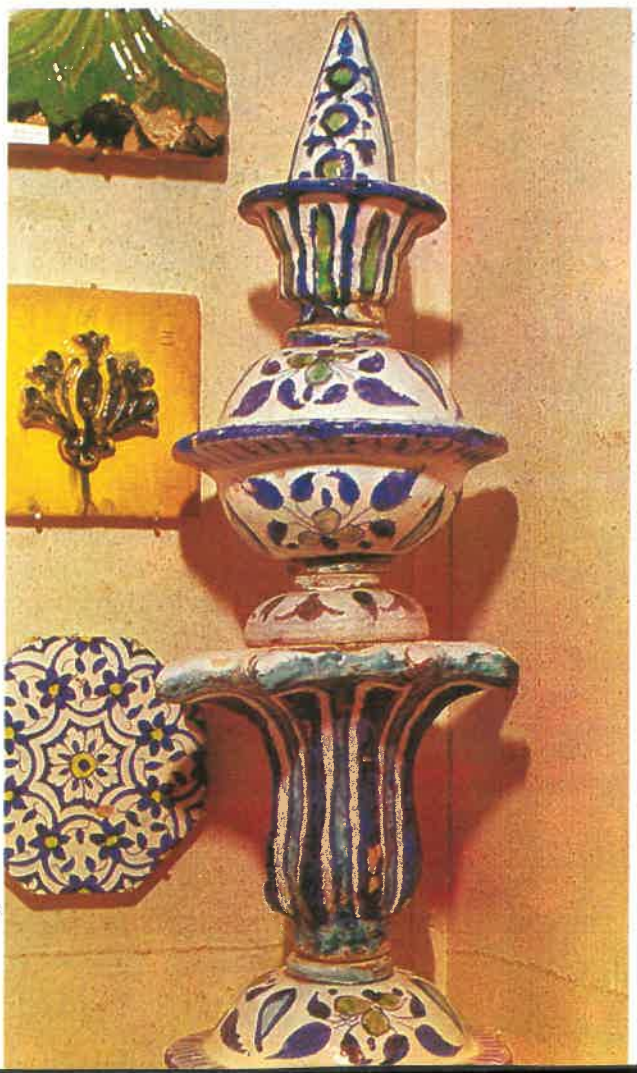

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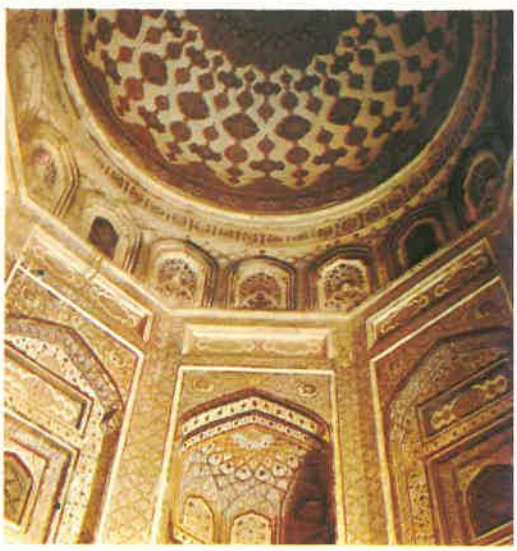

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STONE

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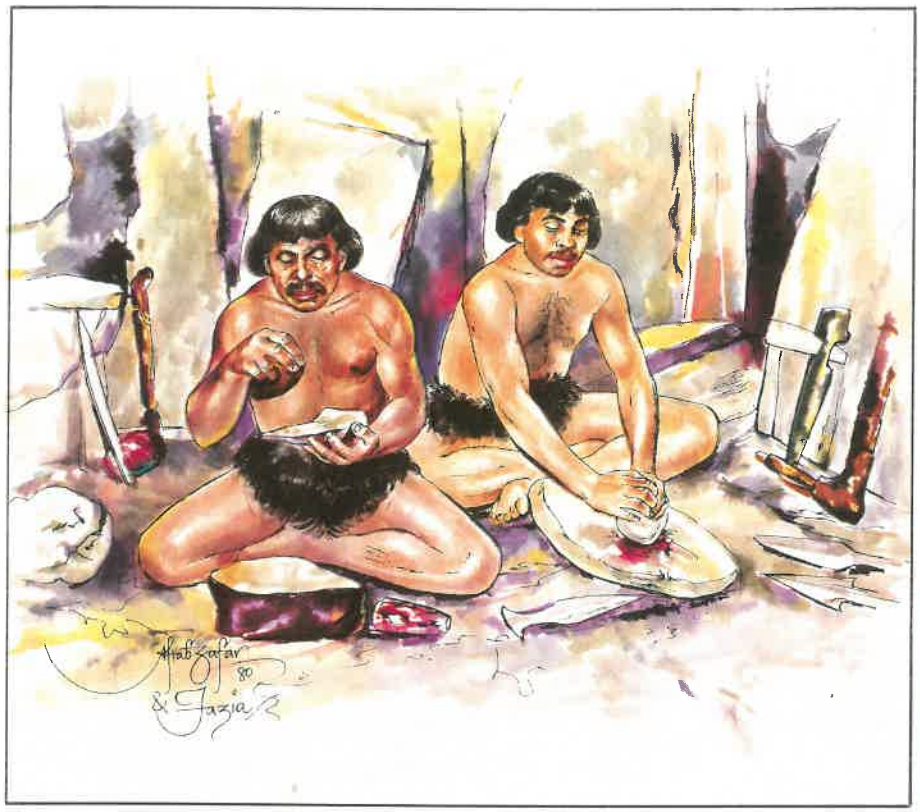

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Nature has blessed Pakistan with a fair variety of stone—sandstone, slate and limestone in various formations—and its tradition of stone-crafts stretches back into the mists of antiquity. The basis of these crafts can be said to have been laid in this area when man learnt to help himself with stone patiently beaten into the shape of a working tool or a weapon for hunting. A number of such rough and crude implements have been found in the Soan Valley of Potohar and, as noted earlier, furnish the earliest traces of life in this region. The men who made these implements, called 'choppers' and 'hand-axes', knew how to whittle down rough stone till it acquired the desired shape or a sufficiently sharp edge. Excavations at Sanghao, a village in the Frontier province, have revealed a number of quartz tools, schist fragments and hammer stones belonging to different periods from the stone age to the Buddhist period. Stone implements from the pre-historic period have also been found at Sarai Khola, near Taxila.

The earliest use of stone for purposes other than digging and hunting is found in the latter Zhob and Nal settlements when it was chosen not only to buttress the

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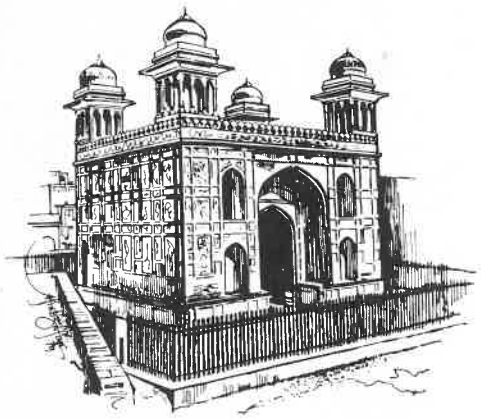
1. Like a painting.
2. By the river Soan, Stone age craftsmen.
3. Gandhara sculpture.

foundations of mud-brick houses or protective walls surrounding the villages but also to make small boxes. The fact that these boxes were exported to Mesopotamia shows that the craftsmen had learnt to use their primitive chisels to satisfy the needs and tastes of their foreign patrons. By the time the great Indus Valley civilization reached its zenith the stone-carvers and engravers had developed their craft to an astonishingly high level. Their finest achievement was the tiny steatite seal. Most of the seals found so far are square in shape, the length of the side varying between three quarters of an inch and a little more than an inch. What has earned for these seals the appellation of masterpieces is the sharpness of detail in the sunken patterns, to create which the craftsmen must have designed extremely fine chisels and drills. Among other things these seals have left most valuable evidence of wild life in the Indus Valley—tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, antelopes, crocodiles, and those ox-like, one-horned creatures generally accepted as unicorns. If the inscriptions in the pictographic script on these seals had been deciphered they could have told us much more about the life of the Indus Valley people, their values and beliefs, their customs and literary attainments, and spared the experts the trouble of arguing whether the seals were merely marks of personal identification used by artisans and traders or were meant for more positive purposes. In any case patterns on the Mohenjo Daro and Harappa seals continue to inspire designers and artists to this day. Their unicorn may or may not have existed, though on the authority of Aristotle one should conclude that it did, it has survived in stone and metal and can be seen adorning galleries and drawing rooms round the world.



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Unfortunately not many pieces of the Indus Valley stone sculpture have survived, but even the few fragments that have been retrieved. like heads of priests or kings and human torsos, have convinced the experts that the native craftsmen were not influenced by any contemporary civilization and that they were adept at the art of transferring the feelings of joy and serenity or a mood of thoughtfulness to the barely drawn features of their subjects.

About a thousand years later, the land of Pakistan produced the master sculptors of the Gandhara school. For several centuries hundreds of families of craftsmen were busy carving from hard rock the story of Buddha and the men among whom he lived and died. Working on a variety of material—bluish slate, green phyllite, soapstone, lime plaster—they left a lasting mark of their ingenuity in the form of huge statues and miniature figurines. A considerable part of their work was meant

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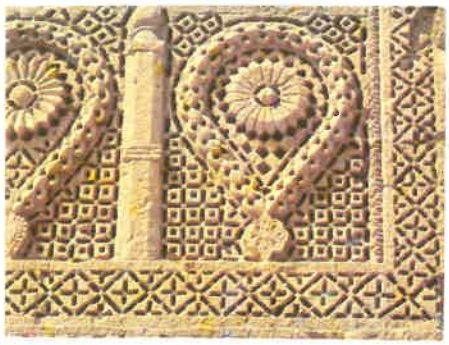

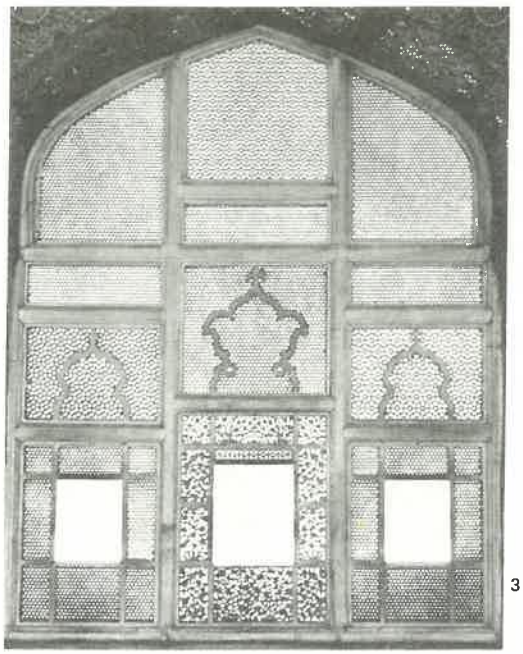

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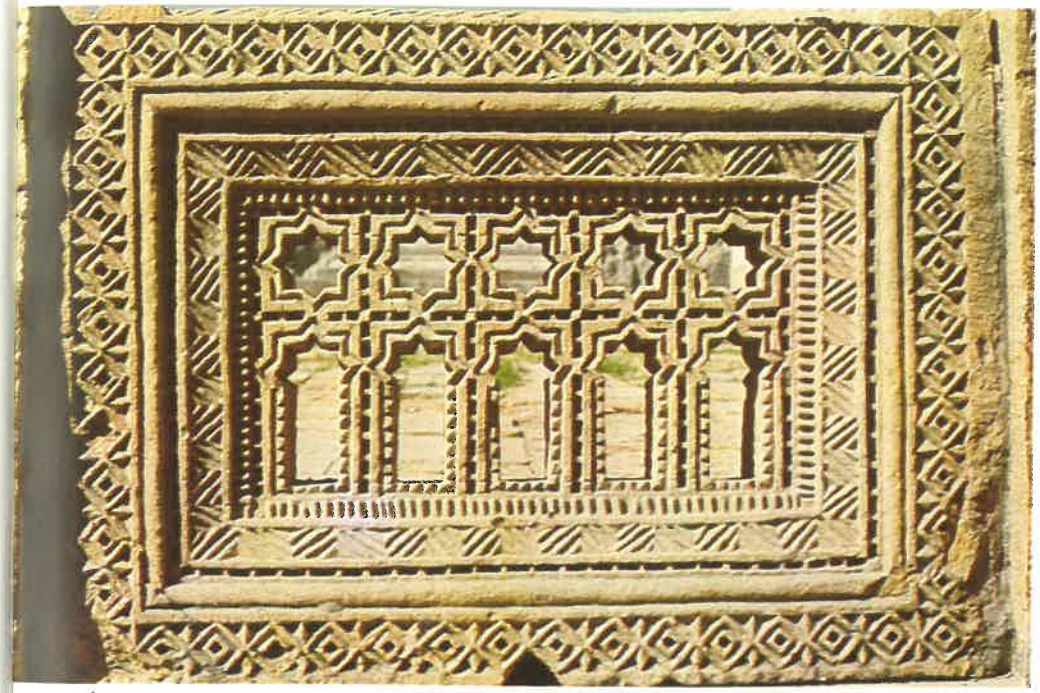

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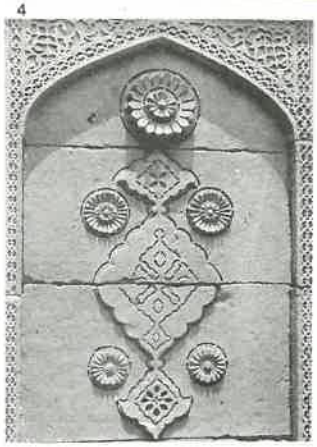

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1. Buddha's renunciation, Taxila.
2. Carved for identification, Chaukundi.
3. Marble 'jali', Shish Mahal.
4. Sandstone screen, Thatta.
5. Lace in stone, Thatta.
6. White marble, Swat.
7. The laughing lion, Swat.

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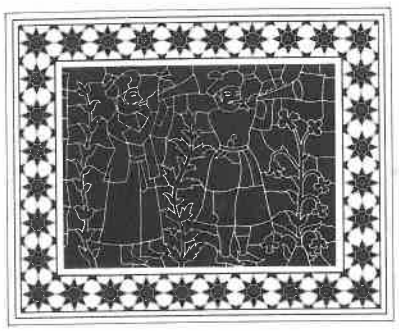
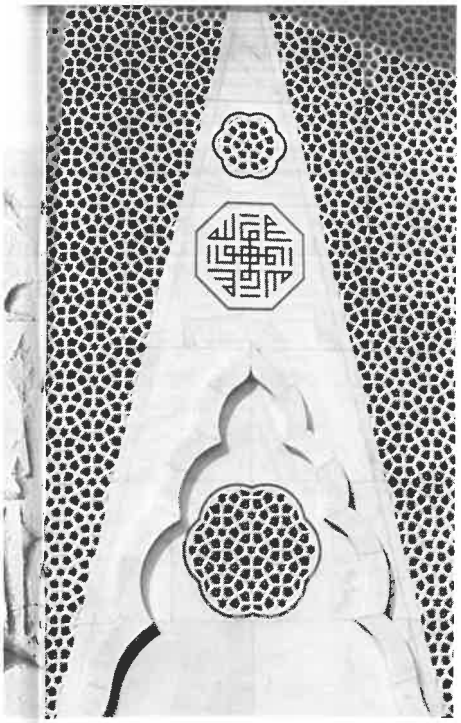
to decorate arched lintels, cornices and columns of religious buildings. The main concern of these craftsmen was Buddha and some of the large panels of relief work, such as Buddha in the act of renunciation, congregation scenes, the sage surrounded by devotees or assailed by doubt and temptation, remain outstanding specimens of workmanship. But in the process of narrating the Buddha story they also introduced a host of nobles and commoners of the day—courtiers, grass-cutters, garland bearers, dancers, clowns and domestic servants. They could chisel the human figure in almost any posture and could bring out with equal felicity expressions of uninhibited joy and sincerity as well as that of craftily concealed malice and fear. The exquisite reproduction of women's ornaments, hair-styles, and drapery folds testify to the fine craftsmanship of those dedicated artists. The art was not without its secular practitioners as is indicated by such fragments as the 'headless draped female' in the Taxila museum, the female torso in the Lahore Museum, or that remarkable piece of relief in the Swat Museum showing a couple in amorous mood. Many of these relief panels show domesticated animals, such as horses, rams and elephants. A noteworthy piece surviving from the period is the rough-hewn lion lying in the open outside a stupa in Butkhara in Swat. If its firmly rooted forelegs convey the impression of tremendous strength and its straight back denotes the beast's agility, the expression of mocking laughter communicated by its parted lips could have come only from satisfaction over a major triumph.



The Arabs brought calligraphy, Bhambhore. 1
Marble screen, inlay, Lahore. 2
Mughal Queen Noor Jahan. 3
Sunflower in relief, Thatta. 4

The first centuries of the Christian era marked the rise of stone-masons whose work survives throughout the Gandhara Valley and parts of Sind. They relied considerably on the skill of stone-carvers to beautify the facades, arches and columns of massive temples and palaces. The tradition received a great fillip under the Muslim rulers. For obvious reasons the art of sculpture declined though it was never wholly abandoned. The main task of the stone-craftsmen was to design and decorate columns and arches of the palaces and mosques. The remains at Bhambore and Mansura include many eighth century pieces carved for mosques. These are amongst the earliest specimens of Muslim stone carving which was developing simultaneously in Iraq, Spain and Central Asia.

In Sind and Baluchistan stone-craftsmen found an opportunity to embellish not only the religious buildings and halls of the rich but also the resting places of the poor. Old burial grounds in these regions reveal widespread use of human and animal figures on grave-stones. The practice of carving symbols and figurines on the top and side slabs of graves, so as to indicate the sex, status and calling of the persons buried there, led to the rise of whole communities of carvers and engravers who worked on panels displaying horse riders in the act of throwing the spear or



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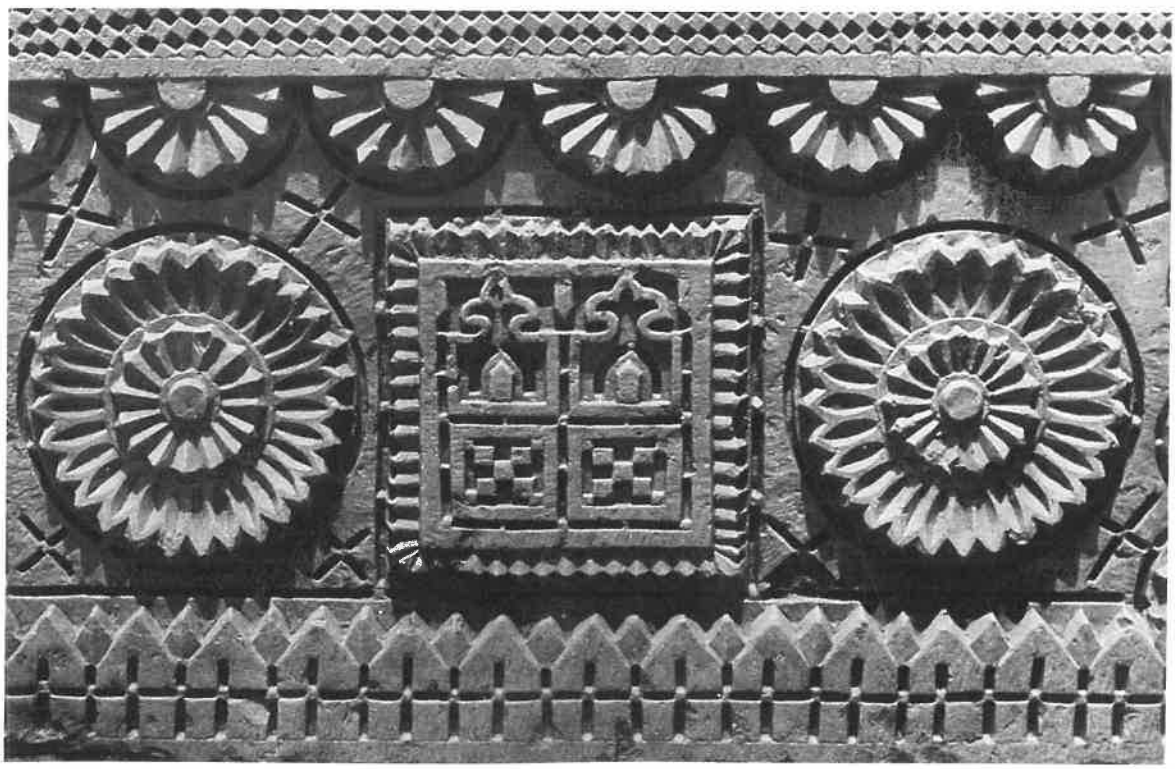
warriors in battle-dress, or embossed birds of peace, women's ornaments, and floral patterns. The abundance of sandstone, described locally as Jungshahi, perhaps enabled the craftsmen to satisfy the ambition of even the poorest to seek immortality in stone. The earliest Arabs to arrive in Sind brought the art of calligraphy in stone and on many tombs built between the eighth and the eighteenth centuries verses from the Quran were finely carved. These grave-yards are scattered over a large area from Kharan and Lasbela in Baluchistan to different parts of Thatta District. The graves are generally shaped like pyramids with several layers of rectangular blocks and in many cases a pillar is used as headstone. The panels carved on the slabs throw interesting light on the material resources and salient characteristics of the society. The Baluchistan graves show simpler and rougher motifs, reflecting on the modest means of the population. While some of



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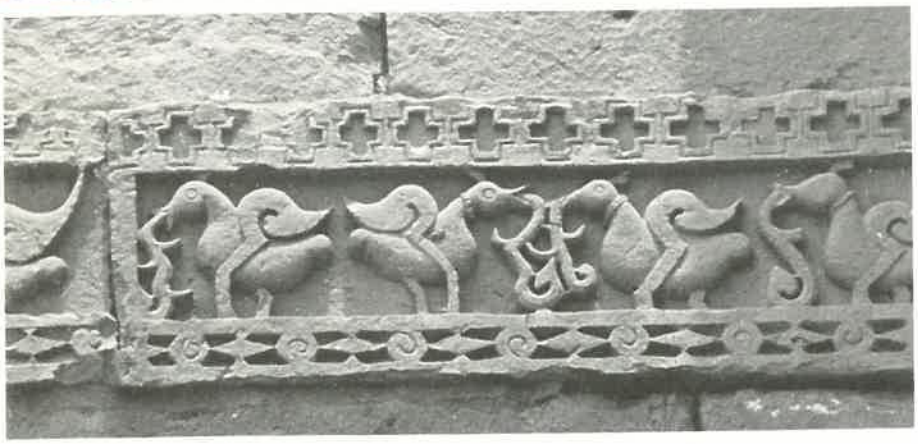

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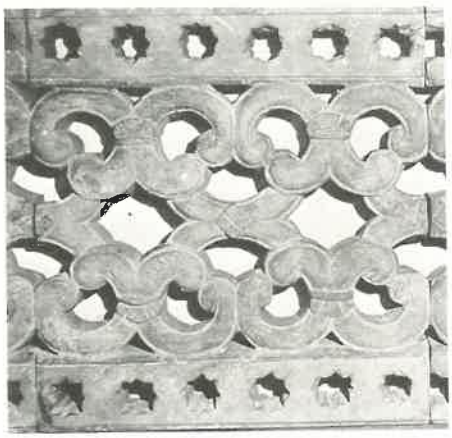

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Carved and engraved, Thatta. 1
Floral patterns, Lahore Fort. 2
Birds formed common motifs. 3
Sandstone 'jali', D. G. Khan. 4
Marble inlaid with precious stone, Jehangir Tomb, Lahore. 5
Parrots and moths, floral pattern, marble, Lahore. 6

the panels in low relief show men riding camels and horses and armed with swords and bows, some others depict men ploughing the fields with yoked oxen. The workmanship on graves in the Thatta area, especially in Chaukundi, is of a much higher quality. Sculptural representations of men, animals and birds are common. Many panels in low relief show warriors on horseback equipped with different weapons. Almost all slabs are decorated with finely carved floral and geometrical designs. Sometimes only a turban is carved to indicate the burial place of a man. On women's graves can be seen popular ornaments like bracelets, necklaces, ear-rings, anklets, etc. Among the birds, peacock seems to have been the favourite of craftsmen and their patrons. The frequent use of the theme of a peacock vanquishing a snake has led to an unresolved controversy on whether such panels reflect the influence of Hindu myths or European legends.

The Sindhi tradition of stone-carving was considerably enriched by the art of calligraphy and arabesque patterns introduced by the Arabs soon after their arrival. Combined with the already popular floral motifs, like the sunflower and the lotus, these new forms produced a rich variety of arabesque, polygon diamonds, flowers, petals, for which a large body of stone structures in Thatta are rightly famous. The main feature of workmanship is what has been described as lace-work in stone. The designs are as intricate and as varied as seen on glazed tiles. Two techniques of carving are common. Either the filigree-work design is carved in relief on the ground which is sunk or the ground is raised and the design incised in the dressed

surface of the stone. Geometric patterns are mixed with interlaced inscriptions, mostly from the Quran or classical Persian poetry. An outstanding example is the work on pillars at the tomb of Mirza Tughril Beg, which are richly carved in arabesque work and are surmounted by honey combed capitals. The niches have lotus and sunflower carved in relief. Some other specimens of fine stone carving are found on the tombs of Jam Nizamuddin, Isakhan Turkhan the younger and Jam Baba. The tomb of Jam Nizamuddin in particular attracts notice as it represents an attempt to combine the different traditions and styles of workmanship—Hindu, early Muslim, and Mughal—known to the craftsmen of the period. Its ornamental carvings range from interlaced Quranic inscriptions in 'thulus', half and full lotuses, to a band of geese in typical Hindu style.

Elsewhere also the boost architecture received under the Mughals opened new opportunities for stone craftsmen. The famous Mughal monuments in Lahore—the Fort, the Badshahi Mosque, the Jehangir Tomb, the Shalimar Gardens, and a number of smaller mosques, tombs, and palace gates—offer high quality craftsmanship in different kinds of stone. The red stone used for Badshahi Mosque or in the Fort and the Shalimar Gardens may have been brought from the Indian part of the subcontinent but not all the craftsmen who inlaid the red stone with marble stripes and different patterns, or chiselled the animals and birds used to support the parapets in the Fort could have possibly come from outside. The most outstanding workmanship of the period is however in marble. No visitor to the Shish Mahal in the Fort can fail to be wonder-struck by the magnificent pietra dura work there. The use of a large number of precious and semi-precious stones on a small block of marble has created most pleasing work of everlasting beauty. In some of the miniature niches—two and a quarter inches by one and three-fourths of an inch—of half pillars one can count more than a hundred pieces of semi-precious stone inlaid to form a single floral pattern. Also notable for their excellence and variety of patterns are the marble screens ('jali') used for windows and geometric and tendril designs found at these monuments.

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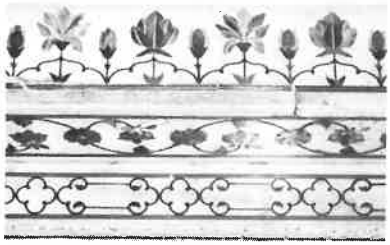

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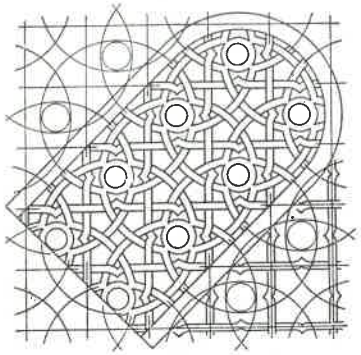
That the tradition of stone-crafts in Pakistan continues is demonstrated by the superb restoration work done at a number of historical monuments, including the Fort, the Shalimar Gardens, and the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore. The task involved carving and inlay work in both red stone and marble. Today's craftsmen have matched the originals, flower for flower, petal for petal. Partly the credit goes to families of craftsmen who migrated to Pakistan after Independence and thus added to the ranks of native workers and their skills. Some of the stone-carvers engaged on restoration work in Lahore are descendants of the masters associated with the construction of Akbar's fort at Fatehpur Sikri and the Taj Mahal who had later on worked wonders in stone in the Muslim States of the Deccan. Another example of fine restoration work is found at the grand mosque in Chiniot for which grey stone found in the hills nearby was cut and carved by local craftsmen.

In the recent past the use of sandstone in buildings has somewhat declined and with it the scope for craftsmen to carve and engrave stone for architectural embellishment has contracted. However, a substantial increase in the availability of marble has opened new opportunities for stone-craftsmen. Although it is in the form of plain slabs that marble is mostly used in buildings, stone carvers were called in to make latticed grills and screens for several newly-constructed mosques. Besides, the village craftsman has much use for his drills and chisels as he is constantly required to make a number of stone articles meant for household use. The successors of Gandhara sculptors can still be seen around Taxila working on miniature replicas of Buddhist tableaux which many an expert has taken for originals. A greater number is engaged on producing 'lungris' (mortars) which are painted in red and orange colours. That no more innovative work is being done by these craftsmen can be explained as due to anything except lack of skill.



More recently Pakistani craftsmen have excelled themselves in giving onyx a hundred shapes. Extracted from the mountains in the NWFP and the brown hills of Baluchistan, especially around Chaghai, Pakistan's onyx is counted among the finest found anywhere in the world. It is now available to an ever growing population of craftsmen in several colours and shades—off-white, deep brown, pink and jade-green. Very often the veins running in a colour different than the ground give an onyx piece a natural pattern that would arouse the envy of a modern painter.

The discovry of onyx is not new. The stone squares (used probably as weights) and chess pieces found in Mohenjo Daro show that at least some varieties of quartz and onyx formations were available to craftsmen in that period. Onyx was included in the list of exports from the Pakistan territories in the first century A.D. But there is nothing to suggest that at any time in history onyx-craft became so popular or that its products became available to the masses on such a scale as now. Although the

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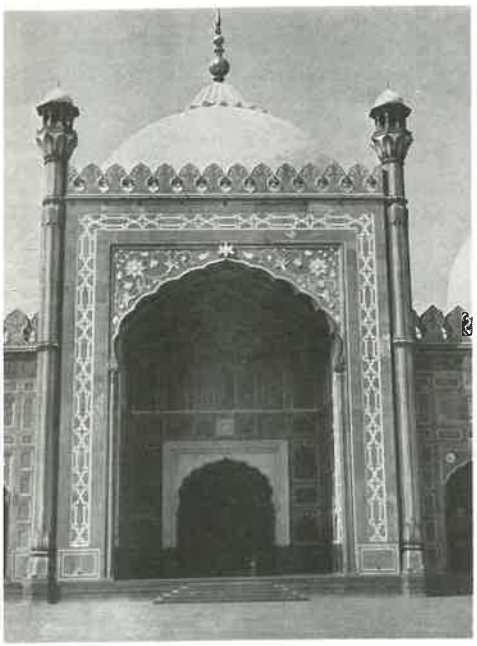

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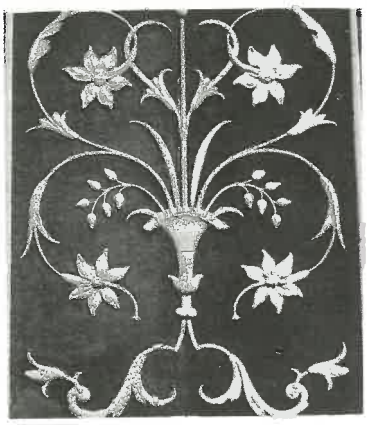

possibilities of handsome profit from large-scale, machine-based onyx industries have attracted many entrepreneurs, the craftsman has also flourished. Hand-made onyx articles are arriving in the country's markets in ever increasing numbers and varieties. These include articles of daily use as well as pieces meant for decoration—ink-stands, pen-holders, lamp stands, vases, cigarette boxes, ash-trays, snuff boxes, statuettes, chess pieces, etc. Small onyx pieces in rectangular, square and circular shapes are being used as beads to be strung into necklaces and other ornaments, or joined with delicate chains to serve as cuff-links. For some time the craftsmen avoided intricate detail and concentrated on seeking variety in form. The trend continues but there are growing signs of attempts to carve in onyx patterns similar to those found on old marble miniatures. More common is the production of small onyx articles inlaid with glass or stone in different colours to form floral patterns.

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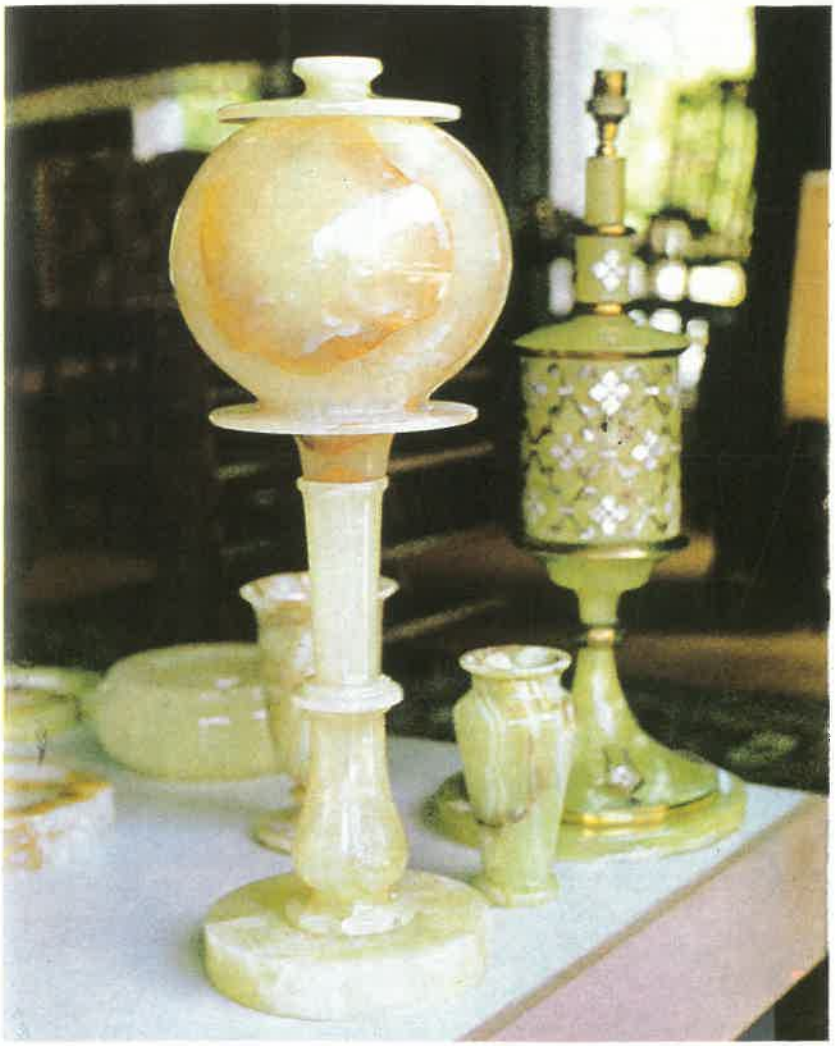

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1. Redstone inlaid with marble, Badshahi Mosque, Lahore.
2. Onyx vases, never so popular.
3. Redstone embossed with marble, Badshahi Mosque.
4. Buddha, Taxila.
5. Onyx in many colours.
6. Buddha in every mood, Taxila.
7. Pietra-dura work restoration, Lahore Fort.
8. Ash-tray with stand.
9. Candle-stand.

◀ Embroidered Baluchi 'kurta'

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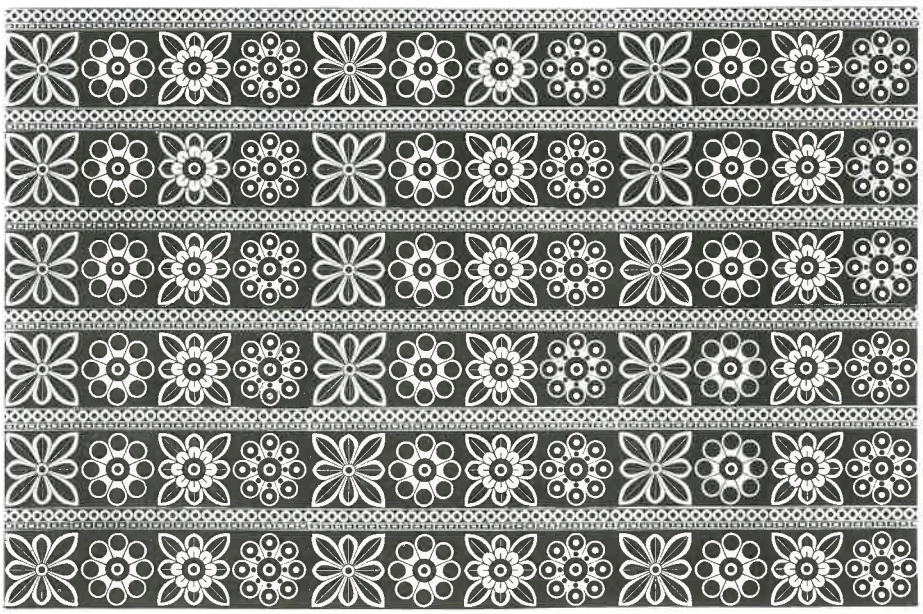
FABRICS

FLOWING GRACE

Those familiar with Pakistan's history can easily appreciate the range and variety of its hand-made textiles and the sight of a humble villager using as everyday wear what in the West would be considered, because of fine craftsmanship, the apparel of the most privileged. It is only natural that weaving, dyeing, printing and decoration of cloth should have been among the major occupations of artists and craftsmen in a land which has a strong claim to be accepted as the first home of cotton and where the earliest surviving piece of woven cloth was found. In no other field has Pakistani craftsmen's ability to adapt their traditional skills to the demand and taste of the contemporary society stood the test so well as in the case of textiles.

The existence of developed crafts of cloth weaving and dyeing in the Indus Valley five thousand years ago has been proved by the discovery of spindle whorls, bobbins, and a dyer's workshop at Mohenjo Daro. Several ancient chronicles, including the Rigveda, referred to the excellent cloth produced from sheep-wool in the Gandhara Valley and along the banks of the Ravi. Over a large part of the ancient world cloth woven in Sind or shipped from ports on the Indus was rated as the finest. The oldest cotton fragment, found at Mohenjo Daro, has sixty ends and twenty picks per inch and is made of 34 count thread. It was because of this degree of refinement that cotton cloth was described by terms derived from Sind—Sindhu and Sindhian. According to Herodotus, Sindhian cloth was widely used in Egypt and the Mediterranean region around 500 B.C. Extremely fine muslins from Sind were used to wrap mummies in Egypt and were worn by Roman Emperors from



Gandhara textile pattern

Gandhara girl.

Augustus to Hadrian. Similarly, the seventh century rulers of Mesopotamia wore Sindhian clothes. A ninth century Arab traveller, Suleman Tajir, observed: "The cotton cloth of this country is so nice that it can easily pass through a finger ring. Nowhere in all the world is finer cloth made than in this country."

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 found in the sixteenth century 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—Thatta, Nasarpur, Hala, Gumbat, Rohri and Sehwan. The East India Company opened an office in Thatta in 1635 and soon afterwards set up branches in Sehwan and Nasarpur. According to the agents of the Company, there were three thousand families of weavers in Thatta most of whom made 'khes', which was exported to Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Nasarpur had over a thousand families of

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weavers and the town was known for excellent 'bafta' cloth. Among the varieties of cloth mentioned by the British traders are: 'bafta', 'chhint', 'malmal', 'sussi', 'gharbi', 'tusser', 'ajrak', 'lungi', 'geegam', 'khes', and 'chunni'. Several other accounts also tell of the scale of Sind's handloom 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.

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 Gujerat 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. Hamilton, who visited the region in 1696, wrote that in Thatta alone "above 80,000 died of it that manufactured cotton and silk." But while Sind may have lost some of its value to the European traders, the art of weaving was kept

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alive by a large community. According to Pottinger, Thatta had, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, forty thousand "weavers of calico lungees." "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.

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", 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 themselves with fine silks, brocades and velvets. Twenty varieties of woollen cloth were exported from Lahore to different parts of the subcontinent

1. The richest satrapy
2. Mohenjo Daro: pattern on King-priest's tunic
3. Intricate pattern in silk, Mughal period

Weaving, generation after generation 1
Old motifs in block printing 2
Block printing on silk, Multan 3

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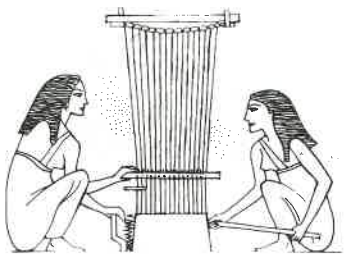
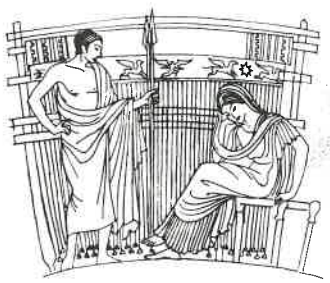
Embroidery: Mohenjo Daro.



Egyptian Loom.

Chinese Spinner.



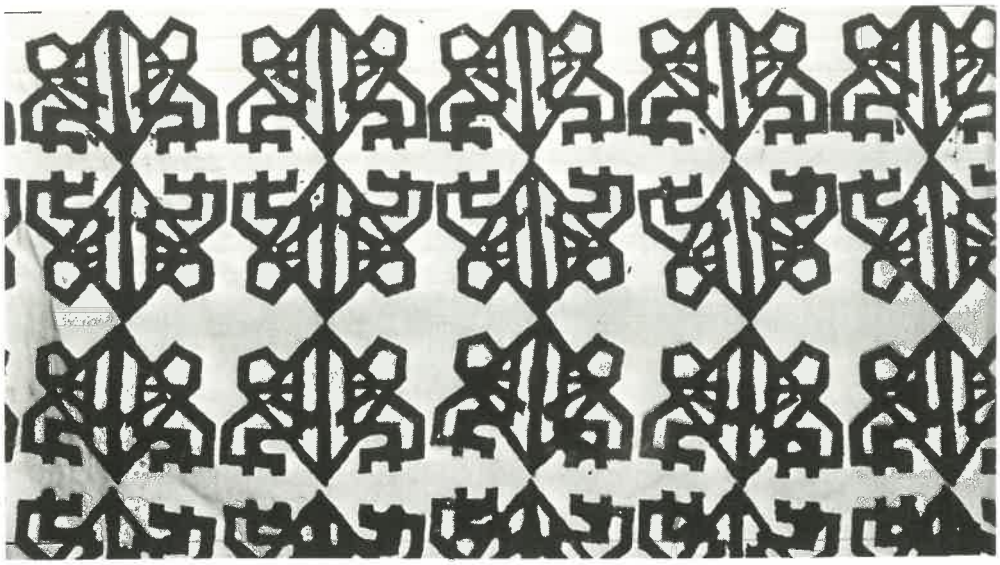
Greek Loom.

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 Bunder, Sehwan and Karachi were counted among the large industrial and commercial centres in the subcontinent in the 16th-18th centuries. Numerous references to weavers and weaving in classical Punjabi poetry point to the place the craft held in village societies.

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, 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.

Above all, 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. One could well say that the founders of Pakistan's textile crafts used in their muslins what Ghalib is reported, in an apocryphal story, to have suggested for a chick made for the king—threads of the soul.

The high level of these early craftsmen's skill can be appreciated better 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. 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. Even then the



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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.

For obvious reasons, the textile crafts suffered the most during the British period as their destruction was the principal plank of the colonial rulers' 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. 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 and 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 his 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.

In one respect, 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 pitloom. 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

1. Khalifajee
2. Silk 'khes', Multan
3. Bed-sheet, Multan
4. Tapestry-weave bed-cover
5. Motif on bed-cover
6. A craft rooted in antiquity
7. Prayer rug, Multan
8. Block printing, many designs

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has introduced a jacquard system which is 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 a particular variety automatic fly-shuttles and dobbies have been attached to handlooms to create semi-automatic weaving system.

The laying of the warp is similarly done in different ways. The most common method is to stretch the warp threads between the loom and stakes driven into the ground. At some places warps of more than one hundred metres are laid in this manner. In the larger workshops warp is wound over wooden drums suspended horizontally. The dressing of the loom is done in traditional manner and as most of the weavers find the production of a single pattern more convenient, they avoid dressing the loom every time a piece of cloth is completed. They leave the ends of the warp threaded, tie new threads to them and pull them through the heddles.

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.

'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

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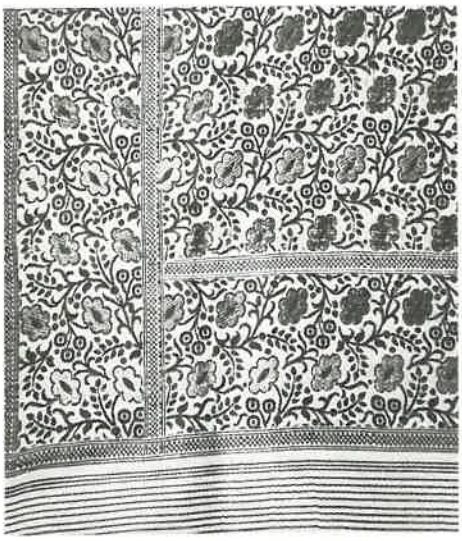

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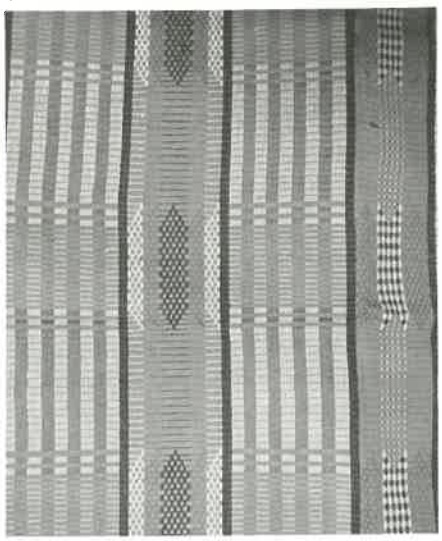

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Frontier Province, Lahore, Multan, Jhang, Sargodha, Kasur and Jhelum districts in the Punjab, Thatta, Mirpurkhas and Karachi in Sind. 'Khaddar' made for shirting, often called 'khadi', is sometimes made of 60/80 count yarn in Multan, Sargodha, Peshawar, and Hala. 'Malmal khaddar' is fancied for the traditional 'kurta' and 'pagri'. '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. Woollen pull-overs and jackets may have replaced the quilted 'khaddar' jackets and

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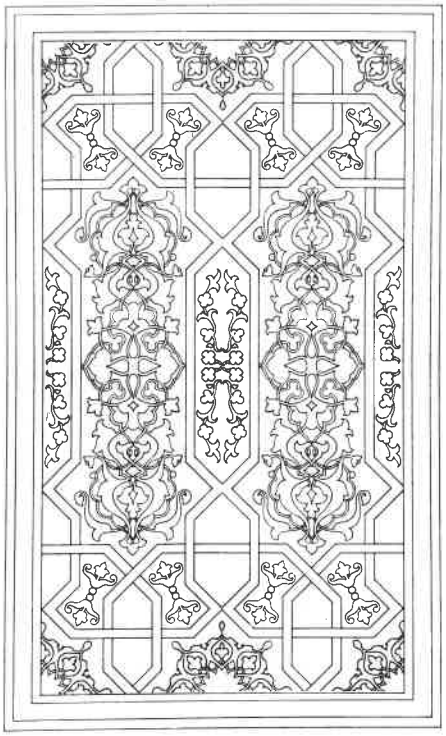
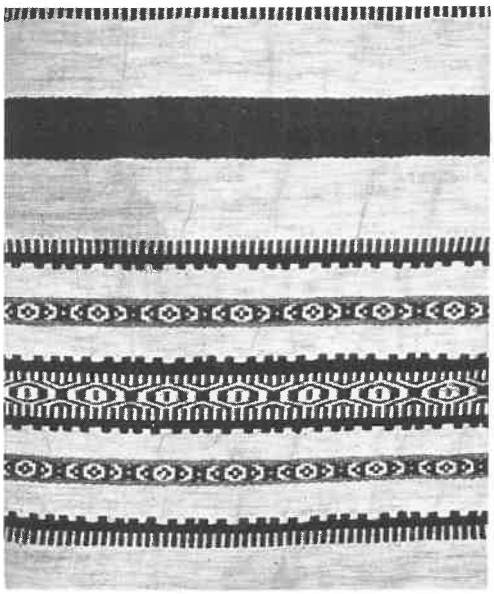
pyjamas in the cities but in villages they are still considered the best protection against cold. Far more common are the 'khaddar' quilts. In the cities 'khaddar' has become the most popular material for curtains.

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 Multani 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.





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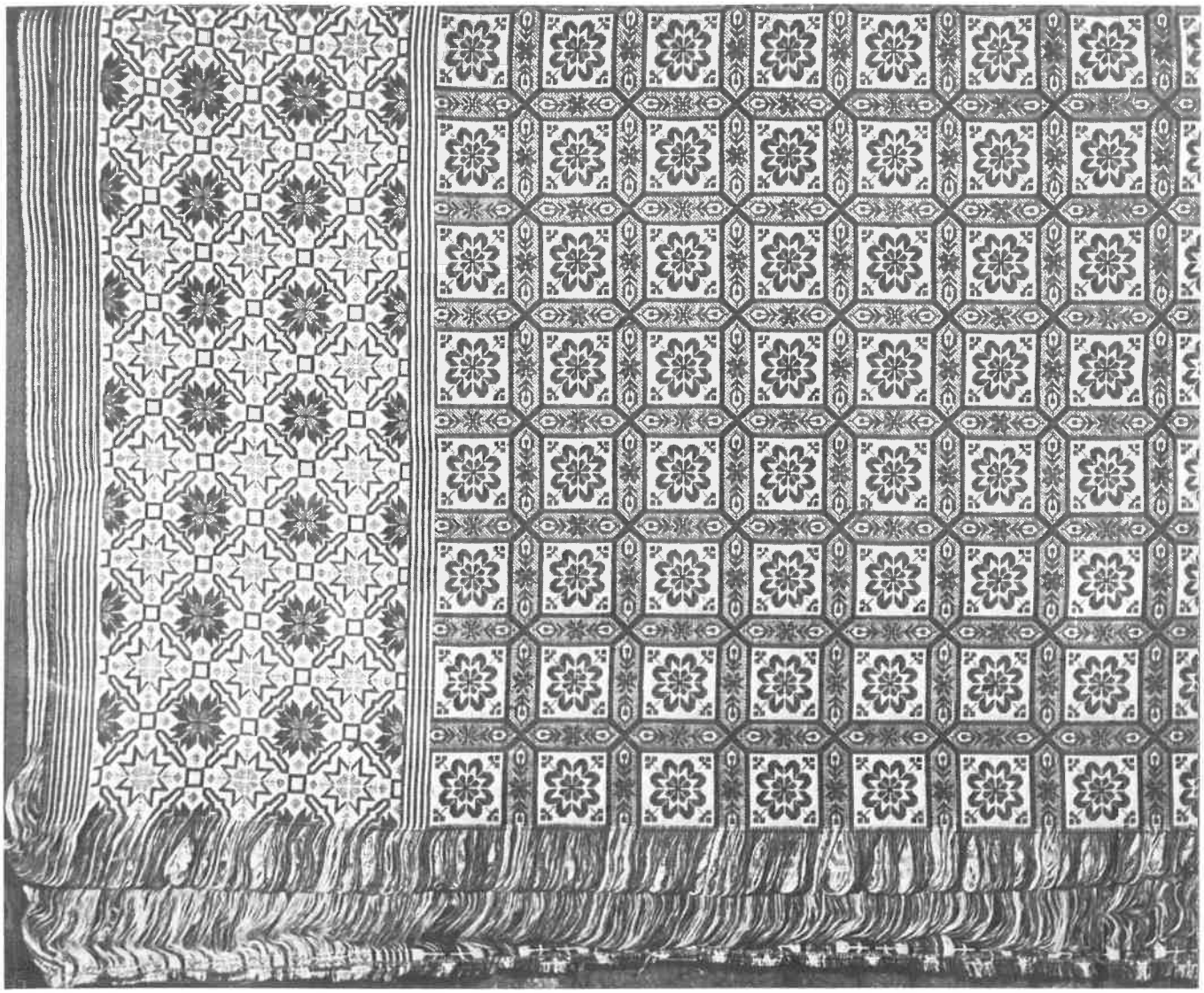
Patterns in 'khaddar'. 1
Curtain cloth, cotton and synthetic. 2
Floral and geometric motifs, 'khes', 3
Sargodha.
Striking simplicity, Sargodha. 4

'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. 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



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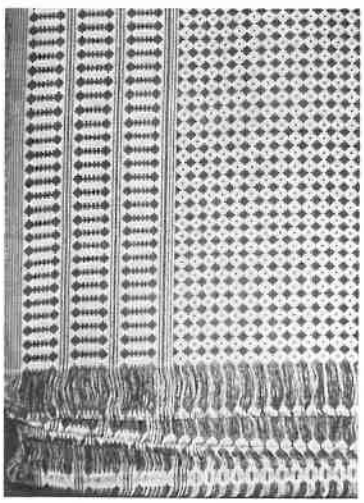
intricately woven, composed of many colours and create an attractive contrast to the overall 'khes' design. The 'khes' are traditionally woven in pairs and stitched together to create a 66" width and three-yard lengths.



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'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 handloom 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 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. 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 'lungis' 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, 'lungi' 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 in the preceding paragraphs. At one time 'sussi' cloth made in

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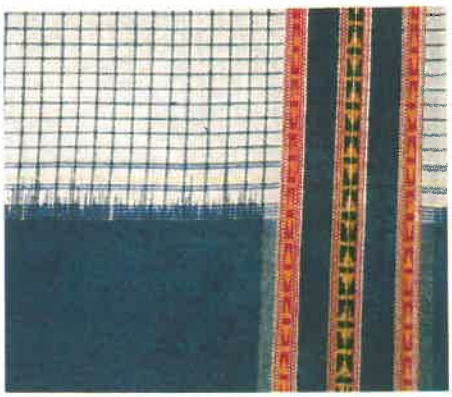

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Traditional 'lungi' pattern. 1
Another 'lungi' pattern. 2
Embroidered shawl, Kashmir. 3
'Sussi' cloth, Sind. 4

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' 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.

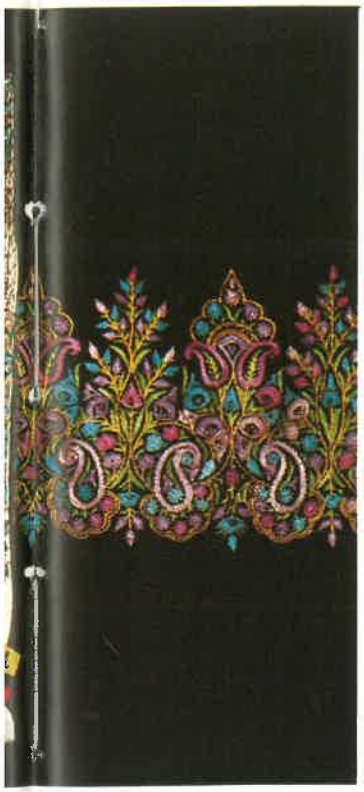
Silk Cloth

Love of silk, its soft touch and shine, is buried deep in man's psyche. 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 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 millenium 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,



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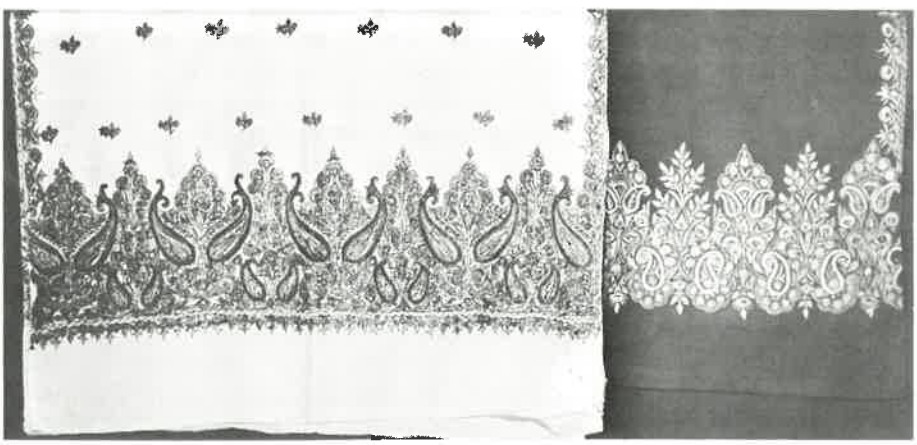
'daryai', 'lungi', and 'khes'. Lahore weavers still specialise in brocades and velvets. Apart from major towns and cities silk-weaving remains a flourishing cottage industry in small villages of the Punjab and Sind. An outstanding variety is 'gulbadan', the Sindhi 'lungi' traditionally given to the bridegroom 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 pitlooms.

Benarasi Silk

The most intricate, and also the most precious, silks are the Benarasi 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, 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 Benares 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. The popular motifs woven into the borders include the 'kairi', 'chinar' leaf, and creepers.

Most of the Benarasi silk weavers work on cottage industry basis. Some of them are under contract to big merchants and choose designs and materials under the latter's instructions. Others weave traditional varieties and sell them to the wholesalers. The weaving of 'kinkhab' being an exceptionally complicated



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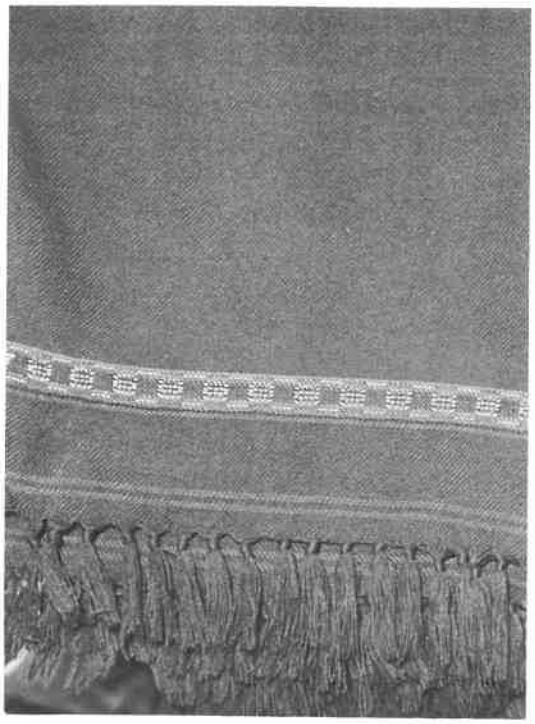

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operation only the most experienced craftsmen venture into the field. The loom itself is very complex; pairs of heddles are separately connected to strings and taken upwards and worked from above. The pattern is worked up by a combination of strings 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.

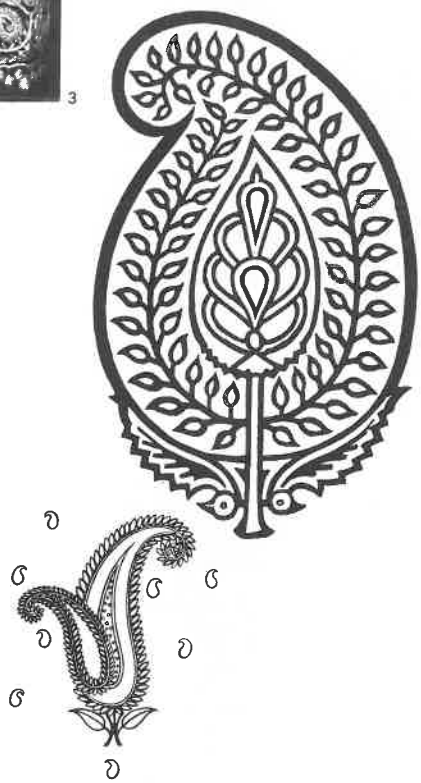
Woollen Cloth

Brief references to the long tradition of weaving woollen cloth in Pakistan territory have already been made in the preceding paragraphs. Even today a wide range of woollen cloth is produced with hand-spun yarn on handlooms throughout the colder regions of the country. Weavers in a number of places in Baluchistan, Frontier, Azad Kashmir, and Northern Areas make cloth whose coarse texture is strikingly beautiful. And in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Muzaffarabad the cloth for the finer Kashmiri shawls is hand-woven.

Shawls

One of the largest items of production is the 'chadar' (shawl), worn by both men and women. Its thickness, the quality of its material and the patterns vary from region to region, depending on climatic conditions. The Sindhi 'khatha' shawls are light-weight 'chadars', sometimes of cotton and woollen blend, and are most suitable for the temperate winters of the desert. They are usually white with multicoloured horizontal and vertical patterned border stripes dominated by primary colours and black. The 'chadars' woven in the Kaghan Valley and mountain areas of the Frontier are bigger in size and heavier. The Peshawari 'chadars', in light shades of khaki, brown and grey, offset by their tapestry borders, are popular with men all over the country. They are woven in pairs which are stitched together to create a large-sized shawl. Equally valued are Swati 'chadars' which come in different weights and have multicoloured borders and fringes. In Baluchistan camel-hair shawls are among collector's favourite items.

The most elegant variety, however, is the Kashmiri shawl. It is also the one most widely used by Pakistani women. The weavers continue to reproduce the woven decorative elements, paisleys and floral scrolls, which made the Kashmiri shawls



1. 'Kairi' in many styles
2. Light woollen 'chadar'
3. Kashmiri embroidery on shawl

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famous all over the world long ago.

Blankets

Blankets are also woven on pitlooms in all parts of Pakistan. The ancient tradition continues in the Frontier region where blankets in brown and grey colours are produced to serve both as winter bedding and as 'chadars' worn by men when it is unusually cold. Solid natural tones of sheep-wool are ornamented with decorative and colourful tapestry borders made with cotton and sometims dyed woollen yarn. Finer blankets have more intricate borders and finely crafted tassels and braided fringes. The Swat blanket-makers are particularly known for their fine weaves. In Baluchistan are produced camel and goat hair blankets which are known for their rustic quality. In the Punjab, Jhang has long been recognised as an important blanket-producing centre. The pool of indigenous talent was considerably augmented with the arrival of refugees from Panipat. Unlike the blankets woven in the Frontier, those produced in Jhang display chequered and floral patterns and can often compete in fineness with machine-made varieties.

'Patti'

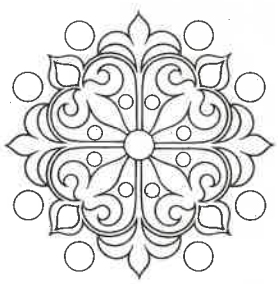
'Patti' is a thick solid colour woollen cloth, usually a twill or herring-bone weave dominated by the weft. The best variety comes from villages in Gilgit and Chitral regions. Natural tones of sheep-wool, white, greys and tans, are handspun by women on spinning wheels and woven by the menfolk on a crude floor loom the back beam of which is usually a tree or a pole. The cloth is called 'patti' (strip) because its width is between 14 and 20 inches only. Some 'patti' cloth is marketed as yardage but most of the production is stitched into finished products in the area where it is woven. The strips are sewn into 'chughas', the traditional local winter coat, waist-coats, either plain or ornamented with braiding, and caps in a variety of sizes and with rolled brims that can be worn in various ways. Baluchistan has its own 'patti' tradition. A highly valued variety is the waist-coat made of camel-hair 'patti'. In the Punjab, 'patti' cloth is made on a limited scale in Multan.

1. Silk 'khes'
2. Bold pattern on 'patti'.
3. Embroidered 'chugha', Swat.
4. Blanket, Frontier
5. Rugged life, bold patterns

Dyeing and Printing

The Mohenjo Daro cloth fragment referred to earlier 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. 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.



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

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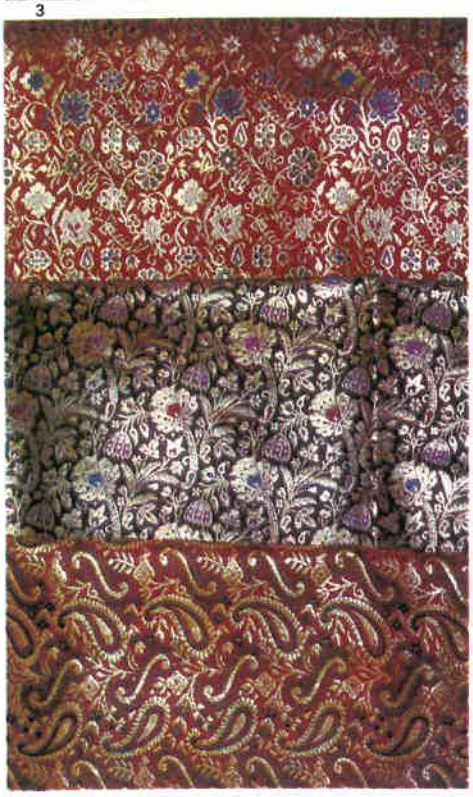

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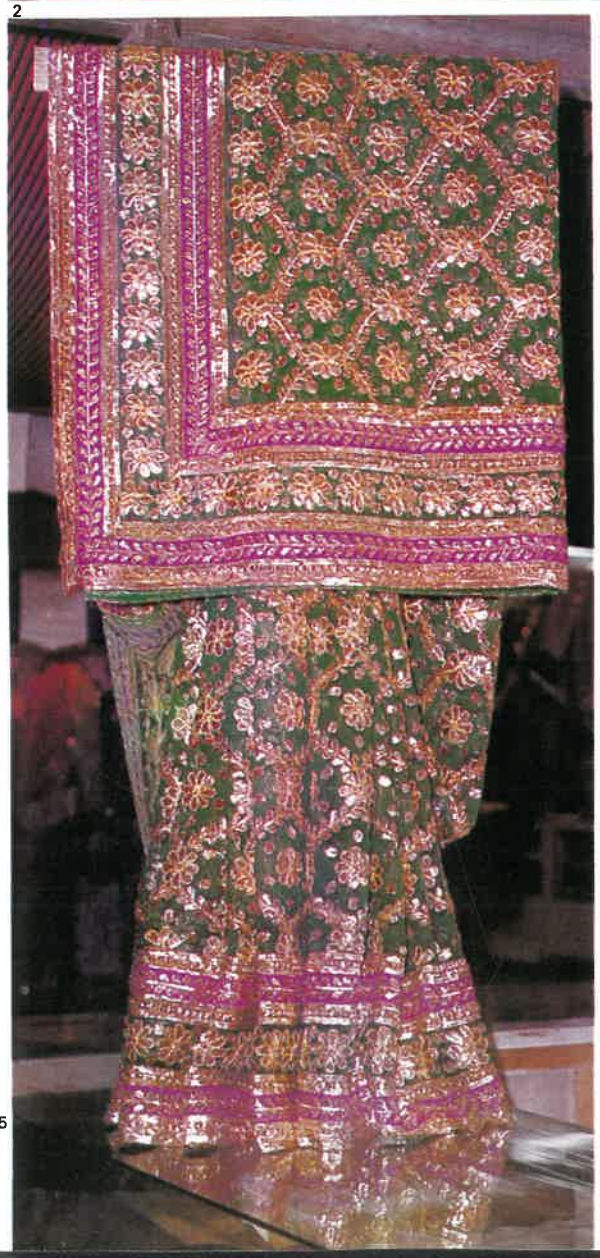

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Christ and till late in the eighteenth century, Europe learnt much about cloth printing from the incomparable 'chhints' made in this part of the world. Throughout the Muslim period Lahore and Thatta enjoyed world-wide reputation for calicoes and 'chhints'.

At present Sind can boast a block-printing tradition that has been spoiled the least during 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 into 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.

The 'ajrak' remains a popular Sindhi fashion and is traditionally used for bed-covers, skirt material, men's turbans and women and men's 'chadars'. '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. 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.

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 rely 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.

Embroidery

The third skill a Pakistani girl is expected to learn in order to become an ideal housewife—after cooking and sewing—is embroidering. So it has been ever since man took first steps towards evolving the basic textile crafts. The thin bronze needles found at Mohenjo Daro are believed to have been meant for embroidery.

Woven for the royalty.

1. Gold-embroidered Banarasi silk, Lahore
2. Many varieties in brocade
3. Silk-weaver, complicated process
4. 'Butidar' patterns
5. 'Kamdani' sari
6. Gold embroidery, patience and skill
7. In place of jewellery

Gold embroidered apparel worn by the nobility in Pakistan territory is mentioned in the Rigveda and Greek accounts. The native rulers in the first centuries of the Christian era wore lavishly embroidered robes and under the Mughals embroidery developed as one of the major crafts.

The range of this traditional craft can easily be appreciated if one remembers that every piece of cloth, stitched or unstitched, can be ornamented with embroidery, that a variety of threads—cotton, wool, silk, synthetic, and metallic—are used, and that almost all the known methods of stitching are employed. As in other crafts the choice of colours and motifs reflects identification with ideals of happiness, fertility and contentment. Pakistan's contemporary embroideries present a rich blend of ancient traditions and modern innovations and each region of the country has evolved a distinct style.

In Sind exquisite patterns are embroidered on shirts, shawls and scarves. The most

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lavishly done piece is the 'guj', the bride's wedding shirt. The entire shirt is covered with embroidery and mirror-work. A common design is to divide the surface into rectangles with a sunflower motif in the centre and separated from one another by elaborately worked borders. The traditional embroidered shawls include 'abochnais', worn by women, and 'malirs', worn by men. Another example of typical Sindhi embroidery is the 'bokhani', a scarf thrown over the shoulder by the bridegroom. Usually, geometric, floral and animal motifs are embroidered in red and black. However, the largest variety of patterns is found on shirts. Besides ornamentation with decorative thread-work mirror pieces are used to enhance the beauty of the piece. The darning stitch is often an inch long. The button-hole stitch is employed to bring out flowers and leaves in sharper relief or to set mirrors.

1. Stitched on a 'gabba'
2. Embroidery, Sindhi tradition
3. Gold embroidery, experience over centuries
4. Measure of a woman's accomplishments
5. A montage of styles
6. Lighter patterns, too

Baluchi embroideries also are famous throughout the world for their bold patterns and rich colour schemes. The best workmanship here, too, is on shirts. A unique item is the 'pushk' (loose shirt) which has embroidered pattern on the front portion, matching cuffs, and a pouch on the lower half of its front. The techniques include hurmutch, interlaced, and chain-stitch. The button-hole stitch is employed to set mirrors. The Baluchi women have acquired a special skill in ornamentation of clothes with mirror-work. They create equally pleasing effects with abundance of mirrors on a simple base and with a few mirror pieces set within an intricately embroidered design.

The embroidery style peculiar to the Punjab (though executed in some parts of the Frontier also) is 'phulkari' (flowering), generally done on shawls meant for the bride. In the traditional 'phulkari', the patterns are separated by plain spaces. But in the 'bagh' (garden) pattern sometimes the entire surface of the cloth is covered. The 'bagh' styles are named after the dominant motifs and colours, like 'Shalimar

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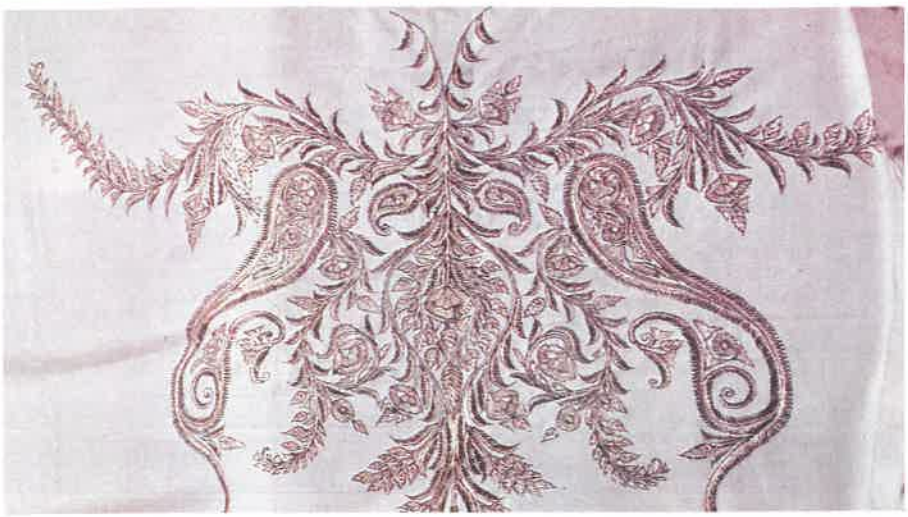

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bagh', 'chand bagh', 'mirch bagh', 'satranga', 'panchranga', etc. Another variety is 'chop', in which the edges are richly embroidered. The technique is the simple darning stitch, done from the back, either by counting the threads or with the help of a thread line. In 'bagh' work the stitch is so refined that the embroidery becomes the fabric itself. The quality of workmanship is judged by the smoothness at the back that can only come from the evenness of stitches. Traditionally, 'phulkari' was done with silk thread but now cotton, synthetic and woollen threads are also used. The dominant colours are red, pink, white and green.

In the Northern Areas and Frontier, bold geometric patterns in primary colours continue to be embroidered on shirts, trousers, cloaks, bed-sheets and handkerchiefs. Swati embroidery still bears a strong Greek influence. Chitral and Gilgit are renowned for embroidery on 'chughas' (loose cloaks) which are made from locally-woven 'patti' cloth. The decorative motifs include 'tughras', geometric and floral designs, creepers, etc. Embroidered woollen caps are made throughout the Frontier region and so are braided velvet waistcoats.

The best known and in some respects the finest embroidery work is Kashmiri

1. Selling woollen caps.
2. Block printer, Lahore
3. Block printing on 'khaddar'
4. Chitral embroidery, since the Greek period
5. Gold embroidery, Swat
6. Mirror work by Baluchistan women
7. Chitral, patterns repeated in reverse
8. Prettier than a galaxy of stars, Baluchistan
9. Embroidered 'rilli', Sind
10. A love of bold colours

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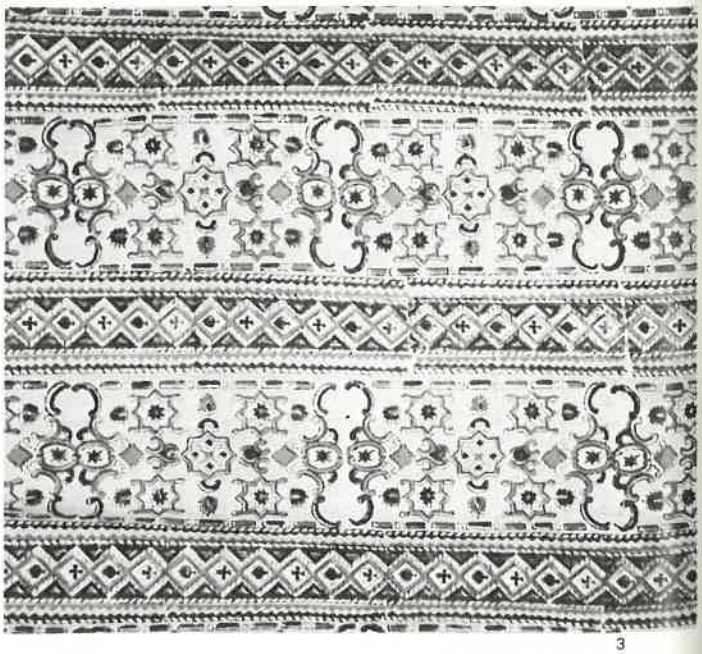

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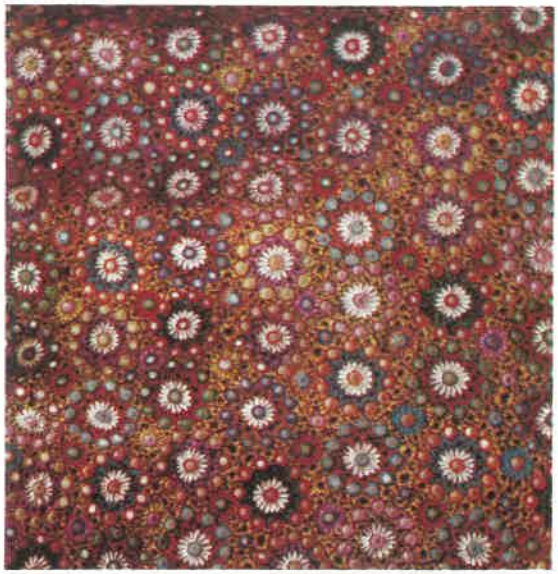

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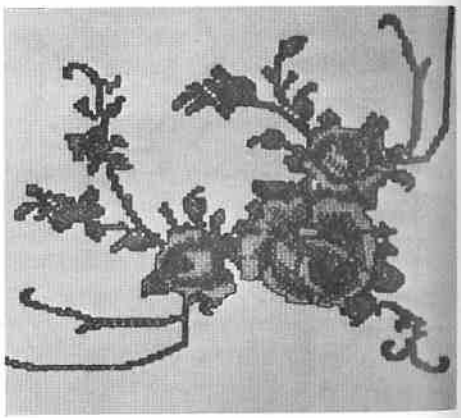

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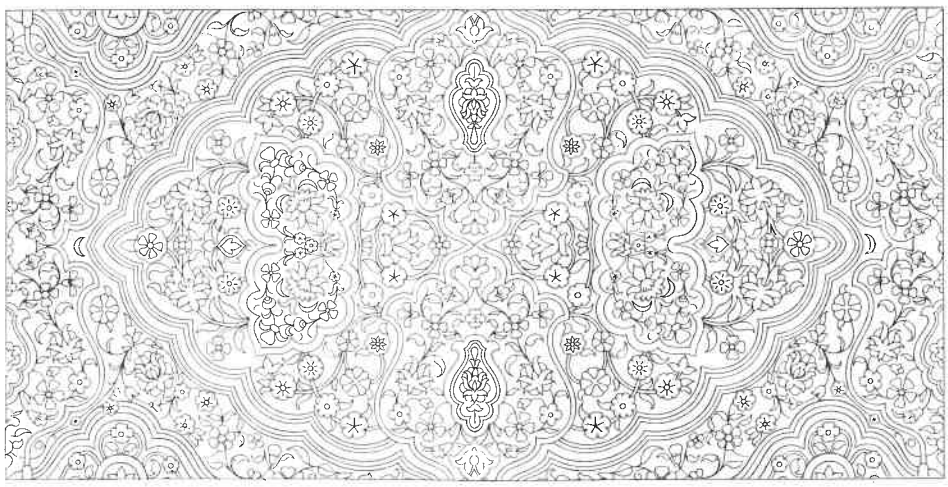

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1. Ajrak, Sind
2. Popular Baluchi dress
3 Applique on tent.
4. Ensemble embroidery
5. Flowers in twill, Kasur
6. Rilli, not merely patchwork
7. Ajrak, for all seasons
8. Oriental decoration.

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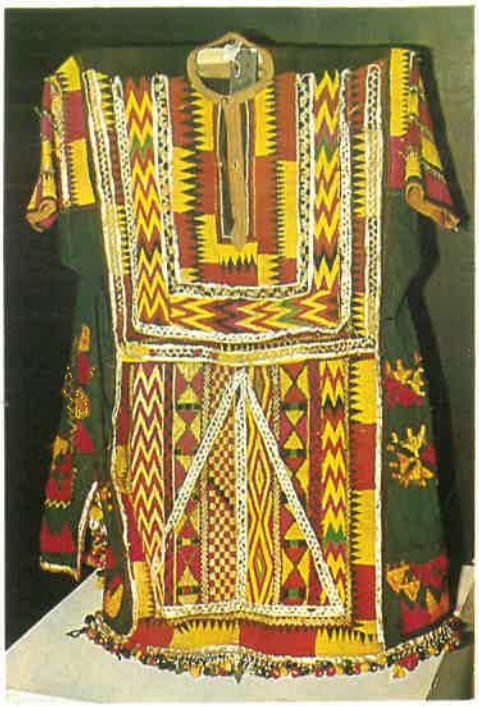

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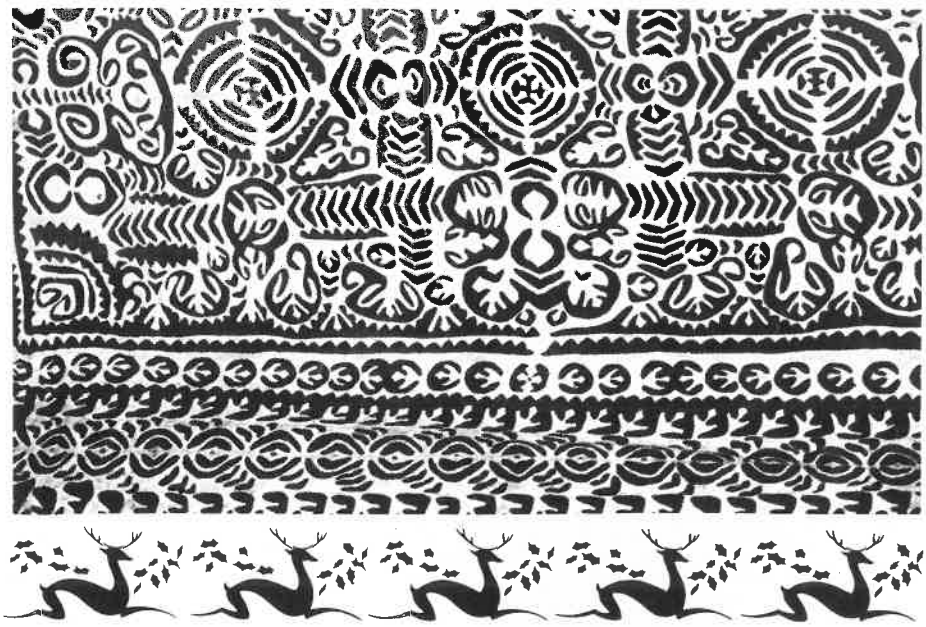
embroidery. The Punjab districts on the border of Kashmir (Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Gujrat) have always been known for fine embroidery work. The influx of refugees after 1947 gave a further boost to the craft and besides Lahore, which has been a centre of Kashmiri work since the Mughal period, organised groups have been set up in Karachi. The variety of designs in Kashmiri embroidery is simply overwhelming. Skilled craftsmen transfer on to their shawls almost everything that won for the valley of Kashmir the description of paradise on earth. The favourite motifs are Cypress cones, the 'kairi', the 'chinar' leaf and the lotus. All embroidery is known as 'kashidakari' but there are exclusive terms for different techniques. In 'sozni' work only such stitches are used as will show uniformity on both sides of the material. Chain-stitch embroidery is called 'zalakdozi' and button-hole stitch is employed for thick fillings. A most sophisticated style is 'do rukha' (two-sided) in which there is no right or wrong side. Sometimes a design is in one colour on one side and in a different colour on the other side.

In a separate class is embroidery done in gold or silver wires called 'zari' or 'kalabattu' work. Wedding suits and clothes meant to be worn on ceremonies are lavishly decorated with 'zari' work and contemporary craftsmen in Lahore, Karachi, Multan, and Peshawar are keeping an ancient tradition alive. They use all the materials evolved during the Mughal period: 'gijjai', a circular stiff wire used in intricate patterns; 'sitara' (star), a small round metal piece used in a style called 'salma sitara'; and thick 'kalabattu', used on borders. The popular styles in embroidery are: 'zardozi', the most elaborate work done on thick materials; 'kamdani', lighter needle work done on thinner cloth; 'mina', enamelling in gold; 'makaish', 'tilla', 'gota', and 'kinari' work.

Before concluding this chapter, mention must be made of the special Pakistani craft of making 'rilli', which combines several decorative techniques—printing, painting, applique and embroidery—to create with inexpensive materials patterns in form and colour of unsurpassable beauty. Literally, 'rilli' means patchwork and perhaps the tradition was born out of the necessity of sewing small pieces of cloth together to form a 'chadar' or a bed-sheet. Then it became the traditional shawl of the sufis and faqirs. But now 'rilli' is a mark of neither poverty nor humility. It is a highly valued piece of utility wear as well as decoration, worthy of being presented as a prized gift. The 'rilli' pattern has also appeared on stitched garments, tents, curtains, and table cloths. 'Rillis' are stitched in Baluchistan, Sind and the Cholistan area of the Punjab. The traditional colour combinations are black, white, red and yellow, but in some places blue and green are also added. Finer 'rillis' display motifs created by applique and embroidery. They also carry the hallmark of hand-made articles—each piece has its individual characteristics.



1. Embroidery, as far as fancy will take
2. Swat shirt
3. Sari 'pallus', Benarasi silk
4. Ajrak printer, Hala
5. An ardent desire for exuberant colour

4

BASKETRY

SPLENDOUR IN STRAW

2

Making mats and baskets, one of the oldest crafts learnt by man, is also one of the most widely practised in Pakistan. For thousands of years 'chatai' (mat) has been used in this country to serve as a prayer rug, floor covering, wall of the hut, and numerous other purposes. Likewise, baskets have been used to carry goods, store food and serve meals. In the Indus Valley civilization, reed-mats were used for ceilings and baskets were used by potters to set their moulds. During the intervening centuries men and women in villages have perfected the art of giving rushes, raffia, reed, date-palm, etc., shapes and colours of such irresistible beauty that even those who do not need a 'changair' to keep bread would like to hang it in the drawing room to lend a distinct charm to the overall scheme of interior decoration. The techniques and styles of workmanship are as varied as the raw materials available in the different parts of the country.

1. All-purpose 'chatai'
2. Prayer mats from rushes
3. 'Chhabi', for decoration also

Rushes and 'kana' (reed with core of soft pith) grow in abundance along the banks of Pakistan's rivers and both are put to numerous uses. In the past rushes and reeds constituted the principal raw materials for constructing village cottages in the plains and desert regions. Such cottages can still be seen in some areas,and where peasants have built mud-brick houses the traditional fodder silo has a roof of twined rushes. But today the most common use of rushes is to make prayer mats and runners. The craft is practised by both men and women, in many cases as a whole-time vocation and in others to fill hours of idleness between farming chores. The craftsman sits outside his hut and stretches the warp threads on the ground. In order to facilitate weaving the rushes are wrapped in wet cloth. The style of weaving is generally very simple. A couple of split rushes are taken and used as weft to cross the warp threads, first going under a certain number of warps and then

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going over an equal number. By varying the number of warp threads in the two stages of crossing some craftsmen weave geometric patterns into the mats. A wooden frame is used to set the weft. Finally the ends sticking out on the sides are woven to form firm edges. The thick, soft mats so produced can stand rain and sunshine and are widely used in mosques. They can also serve the poor's need for a bedding, as a carpet to squat upon, and as the dining mat. One of the most impressive things made of coiled rushes is the general purpose thick mat. Coiled rushes are wound into modules which are sewn together to form door mats and room mats in different sizes.

The 'kana' is used to create a greater variety of articles. The thicker reed is twined to make 'moorhas' (stools or chairs with backs and arms). The body consists of a double row of twined reeds and the seats and edges are bound with cord. The more affluent would often sew leather or deer skin on the seats and edges. A more common use of thick reeds is in chicks, curtains for windows and verandahs, which are particularly favoured in summer because of their resistance to heat. A modern style is to use reed-chicks in place of wood-panelling in homes and restaurants. The thinner reeds are used to make baskets for storing grain, and dates, 'chhaj' (winnowing basket), boxes for keeping clothes, the gypsy children's rattle and several other toys.

Also found in wild growth along river banks is 'moonj' (raffia). The two outer stalks are dried in the sun and are then beaten into thin fibre. The more the fibre is soaked in water and beaten the finer it becomes, and the finer the 'moonj' fibre the more durable will be the cord made of it. The 'moonj' string is useful in scores of ways. The seat of the 'moorha' and the traditional cot, 'charpai', is generally made of it. It is also woven into large net-baskets needed to carry goods on animals. In the northern regions 'moonj' baskets are quite common. At one time 'moonj' sandals were widely worn in these areas. Even now stylishly shaped sandals of exceptionally fine 'moonj' can be seen in the markets of Peshawar. They make good slippers on beaches.

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Ropes and cords are also made of date palm, hemp and jute. Village craftsmen make excellent nets of string to serve as mouth-lock for animals, and 'chheekas'. Once 'chheeka' was made only to keep food out of the reach of cats and dogs but now it has become popular with urban people as a hanger for flower-pots and decoration plates. Extremely fine cord is used to weave these hangers, which are embellished with beads, frills and pom-poms.

Large baskets ('tokras') made of branches of trees and cotton-plant stem can be seen throughout Pakistan. They are used to carry loads over long distances and by construction workers to carry bricks and sand. At fruit and vegetable shops they are used to keep and display the various commodities in eye-catching arrangements. The best and the most durable baskets are made of mulberry branches. These are also used to make the essential structure of the cone-shaped goat-hair baskets used by the Kalash women to carry children and goods on their backs. While thicker branches are woven in a simple style considerable artistic imagination is employed when very thin twigs are woven into small baskets. The most intricately designed pieces are the Kashmiri 'kangris' (baskets woven around earthen fire-pots which women can tuck under their shawls to keep warm). The twigs are often woven into geometric patterns and decorated with beads, tin foil, and frills in different colours.

Cane and bamboo are also used to produce a wide range of baskets and other utility objects. The raw material is imported but the popularity of the craft can be explained by the fact that while territorial changes in the last few decades deprived Pakistan of the raw material a sizable community of craftsmen remained here. In the main cane is used to make furniture, picnic and flower baskets. The technique is wholly traditional. Cane is heated and moulded into the desired shape and the

fixing is done either with cord or with nails. Split cane is used to make plaited mats, baskets, and fans. Similarly, split bamboo is used to make a number of items of utility and decoration—sofa sets, tables, chairs, swings, shelves, suit cases, picnic baskets, chicks, flower vases, wall scrolls, etc.

But by far the most popular raw materials for mats and baskets are date-palm leaf and wheat straw. Date-palm grows in abundance over large areas in the sandy

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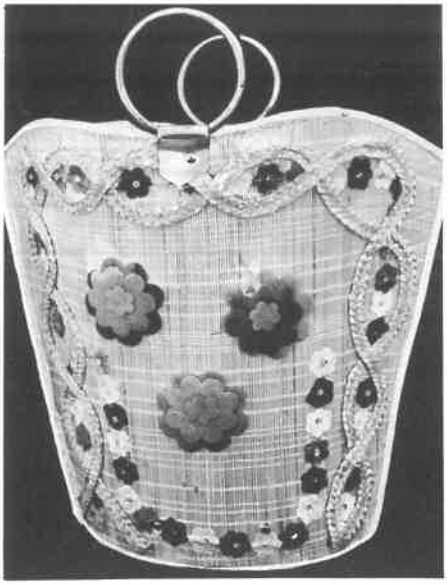
1. Kalash basket
2. 'Kangri', incomparable
3. Wheat straw, natural sheen and colour
4. Frills for colour, Sind
5. Different materials, different shapes
6. Pattern on wheat straw basket, Rawalpindi



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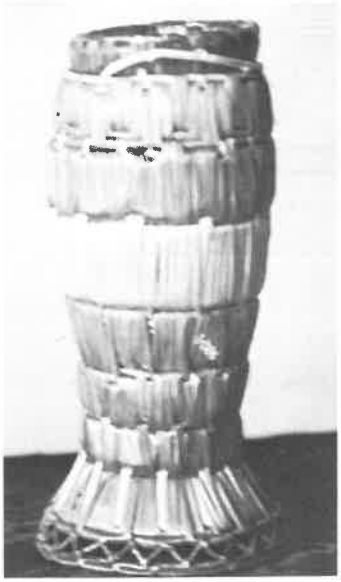

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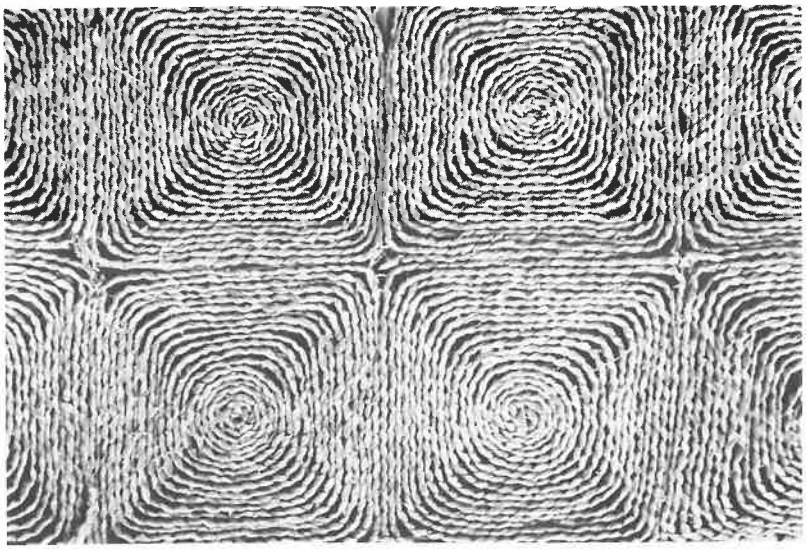

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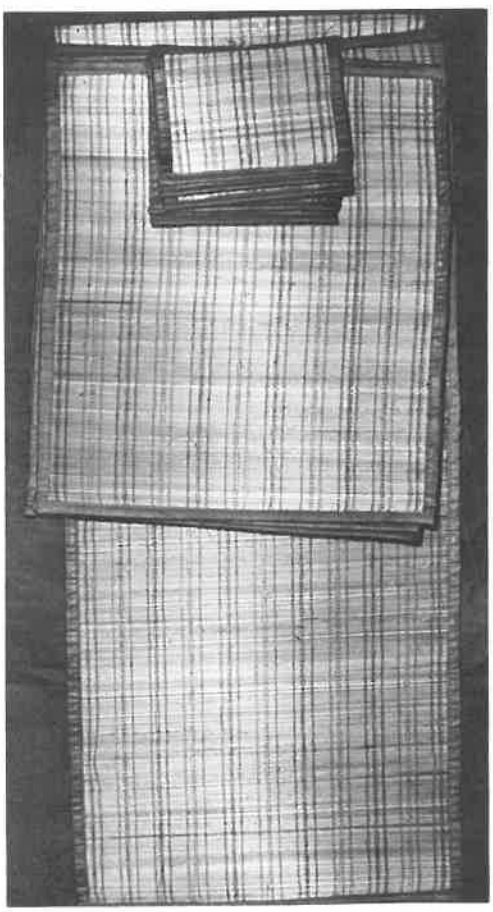

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plains of the country. It is coiled and plaited to make mats and baskets in infinite variety while the common 'chatai' is made everywhere to be used as hut-wall or floor covering. The technique of plaiting has not changed for ages. Usually the mats are woven in chequer pattern and sometimes a chequer-board pattern is created by using palm leaves dyed pink or black. Split palm leaves are used to make hand-fans. In the villages of Sind and Baluchistan the fans bear a variety of motifs and are heavily embellished with beads, mirrors, embroidery, and frills in different colours. Apart from their utility to women as cooling devices in hot season, the fans make attractive pieces of wall decoration. Dera Ghazi Khan is famous for the prayer caps, light, airy and inexpensive, which are used all over the country. The area is also known for the heavy mats made of coiled palm leaves which are sewn into modules.

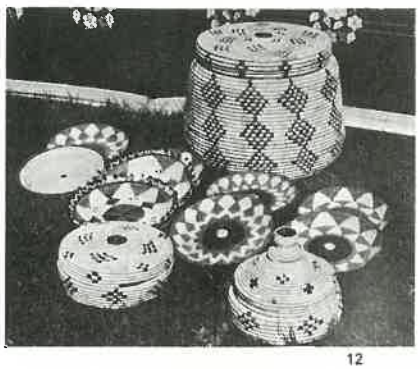
The craft of making coiled palm ropes and then netting them into sacks thrown across the saddles on donkeys and camels is practised in different parts but the craftsmen of Dera Ismail Khan and Peshawar have achieved the highest distinction in this field. They use the dwarf palm, 'mazri', which is found in abundance in the Frontier and Baluchistan regions. Plaited and coiled 'mazri' articles made in Alizai in Kurram Agency are famous for their intricate designs.

1. Teeli, coiled straw, applique, Murree
2. Straw vase
3. Split bamboo, craftsmen stayed on
4. Mat of coiled rushes
5. Cane, moulded and fixed
6. Split bamboo, picnic basket
7. 'Moonj' sandals
8. Table mats
9. Split bamboo vases
10. Coiled rushes basket
11. Coiled and plaited
12. Many geometric patterns

One of the most attractive items made of date-palm is the bread basket. In its simplest form it is 'changair', a flat plate with slightly raised edges, for serving bread, fruit, etc. More elaborately designed are baskets with lids, labelled in the West as the snake-charmers' baskets but used in Pakistani homes for storing bread, knitting, cloth pieces, etc. Smaller models are called 'dabki' in Sind and 'chhabi' in Punjab and Frontier. These baskets display triangular, square and running patterns in different colours. The craftsmen of Uchh Sharif near Bahawalpur and several villages in Multan district are known for their exquisite 'chhabi' designs. In Sind it is common to decorate 'dabkis' with feathers, cloth frills, and beads, and in the Frontier geometric patterns are created between coloured wrappings with stout threads.

11

Wheat straw is likewise used extensively to make large baskets for keeping clothes, grain, and dates, 'changairs', 'chhabi', fruit vendors' baskets, etc. The natural sheen of wheat straw is attractive enough but often designs in different colours are woven into the surface of the object for exceptionally pleasing effect. Dried wheat stems are peeled to obtain the 'teeli' (reed) and fibre. The latter may be plaited like palm-leaf or wrapped around a core of grass to make baskets, table-mats, bags, purses, etc. In the Rawalpindi-Murree region, village women produce articles in a wide range using different techniques. Straw is woven into floral designs for ladies' hand-bags, purses and table-mats. Often cloth, plastic, and foam-leather is cut into floral shapes for applique work on straw articles.



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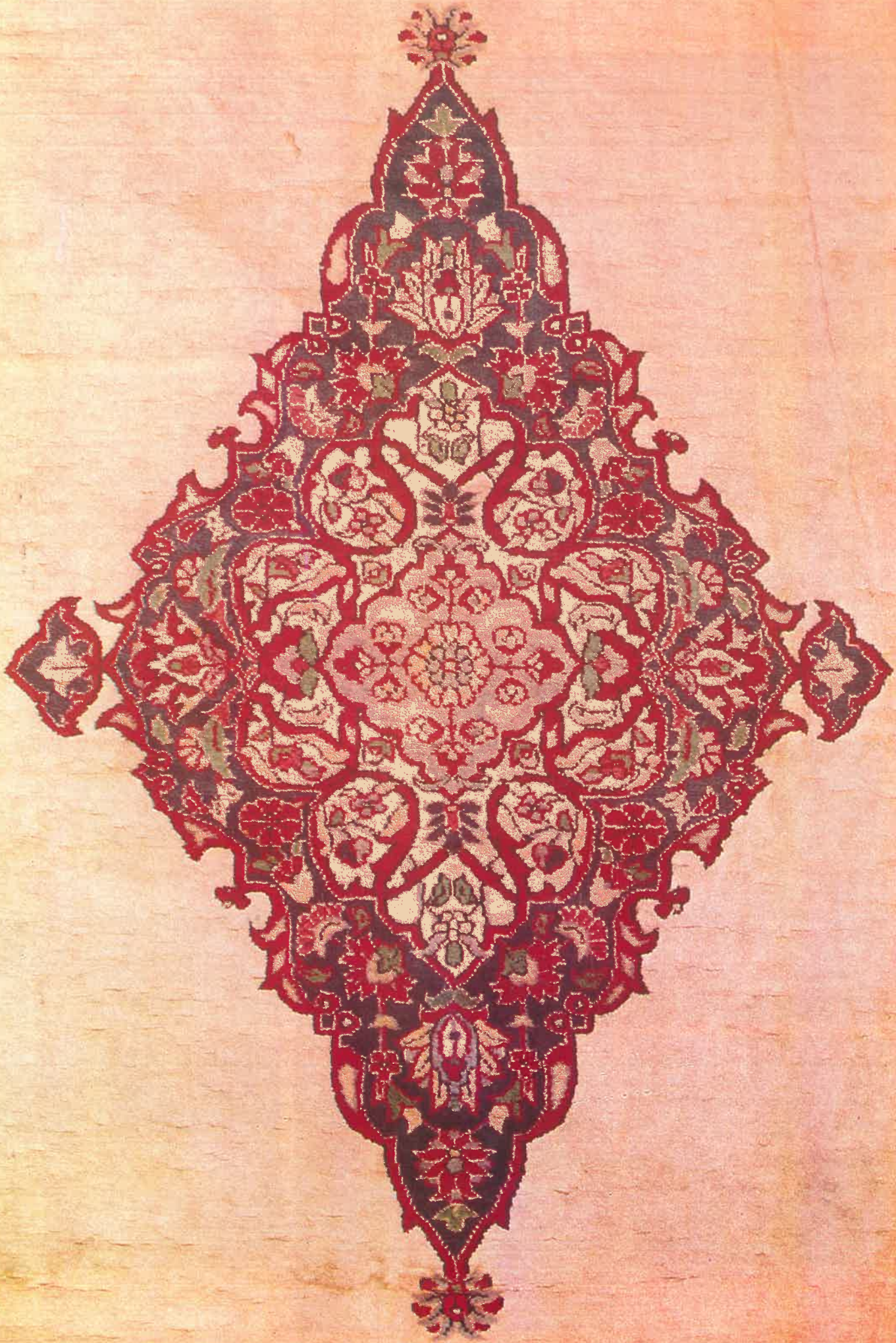
Whatever the material the most popular form of basketry is the coiled one. The foundation is laid by looping the coil around the central core and building up the spiral, gradually widening the base, until the desired shape and size are reached. The coils are fixed with each other by sewing. In many cases coils are held together by wrapping palm-leaves or straw around them. In plaited basketry, two or more sets of warps and wefts are crossed. But whatever the technique the finest baskets made by humble craftsmen in the countryside make one feel that it is not grass or straw that has been woven into them but the soul of the artist.



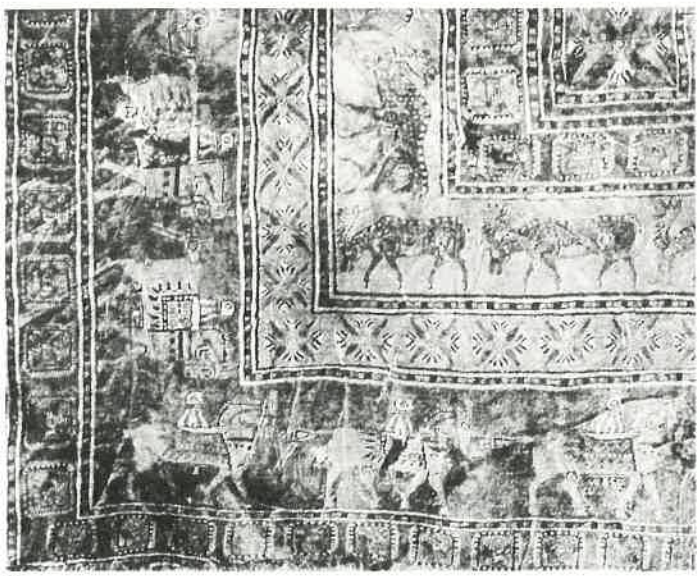
5

carpets

a creed in colour

During the last two decades or so the Pakistani craft that has received the widest recognition abroad is that of carpet-weaving. Today there is hardly any part of the world where Pakistan's hand-knotted carpets are not eagerly sought. A large increase in the population of carpet-lovers and a series of initiatives taken by the administration to promote carpet-making have certainly contributed to this development, but these factors alone would not have mattered in the absence of a centuries-old tradition built up by dedicated practitioners of the craft.

It has been argued, on the basis of the earliest traces of weaving so far found and the indication of floor coverings in wall-reliefs excavated at Mohenjo Daro, that the carpet was among the Indus Valley civilization's gifts to mankind. The theory has not been affected by the discovery of what is considered to be the oldest surviving carpet—a fifth century B.C. piece found in Pazyryk valley of the Altai Mountains. The intricate pattern of this carpet and the count of 232 knots to a square inch point



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to the developed form of an art which might have originated elsewhere much earlier. The discovery, however, has a special relevance to Pakistan. It is reasonable to assume that any special skill the Scythian possessors of this carpet might have had must have come to Pakistan territories when many Scythian tribes settled here between the fifth and the first centuries B.C. The view that the large number of nomadic tribes that came here from Central Asia and Iran brought their own carpet-crafts is supported by the existence of a strong tradition in the tribal belts of Baluchistan and NWFP.

1. Sought all over the world
2. The Pazyryk piece
3. New designs for modern buyers

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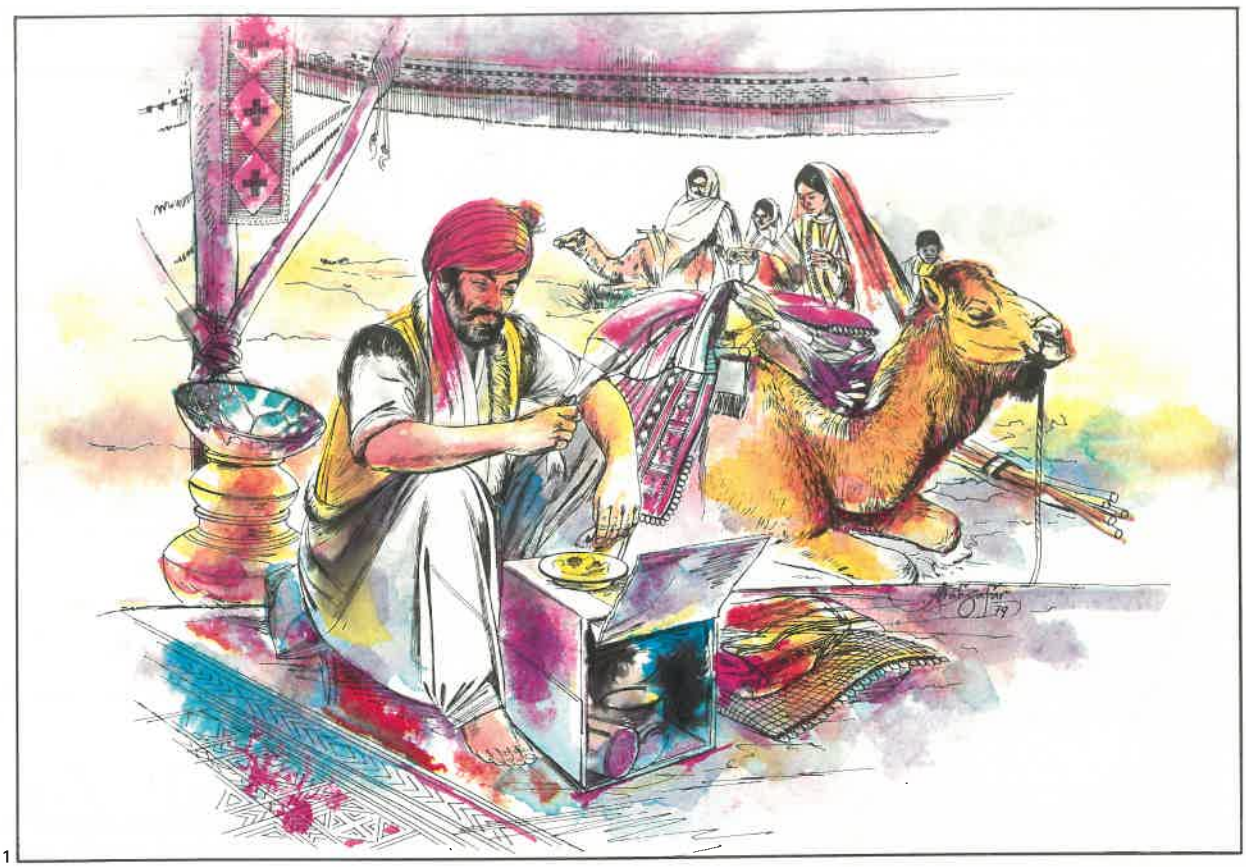

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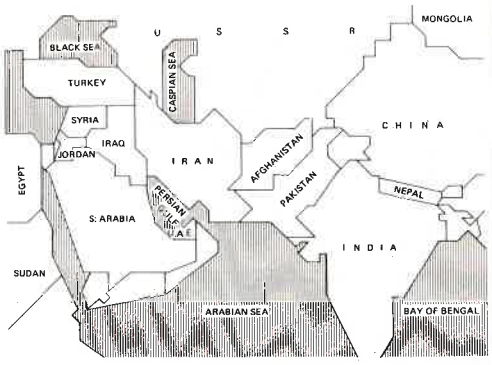
Besides, the documented history of carpet-weaving in Pakistan is as old as anywhere else. Pakistan forms a part of the land mass stretching from Turkey in the West to northwest China in the east and Central Asia in the north to northern India in the south—described as the home of the oriental carpet—and the Islamic culture which has been the dominant influence on the growth of the craft. It shares the legacy of the medieval Muslim communities whose work constitutes the bulk of the treasure of oriental carpet and whose extensive use of the carpet for religious purposes led to such fine achievements as to move a western expert to describe the prayer rug as a 'creed in colours.'

It is generally accepted that the art of the hand-knotted carpet, as practised for more than a thousand years, was developed in Iran and many a bard has sung in praise of 'The Spring Carpet of Chosroes' made in the sixth century. The belief rests on the fact that the oldest surviving carpets, after the Pazyryk piece, were 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'. The great Mughal ruler Akbar (1556-1605), who 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



1. Nomad's dreams
2. Pattern within pattern
3. Profusion of motifs, Mughal style

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countries. According to Abul Fazl, the famous chronicler of Akbar's reign, experienced workmen were producing masterpieces in such wonderful varieties that 'the carpets of Iran and Turan are no more thought of'.

Much has been written in recent years about the features of the Mughal school that distinguish it from the styles evolved in Iran. While the Lahore carpet-weavers adopted both the standard knots (Turkish and Persian) and some of the stylised motifs executed throughout the carpet 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 among the most successful artists who could increase the pleasing impact of a floral pattern by providing adequate relief or using a light ground. As for the ultimate test of the quality of a

carpet, the fineness of the wool and the knot, chroniclers have recorded that the Lahore carpets had up to 1,200 to 2,500 knots to a square inch and that the wool of the carpets made for the royalty, like those woven for Shahjehan, was indistinguishable from silk. A measure of the unbelievably high standard of craftsmanship attained by the Lahore carpet-weavers of the Mughal school is provided by a small piece made in 1907, long after the decline of the imperial workshop. Made with silk warp and a small quantity of silk in the wool pile, this 4'3" x 1'10" masterpiece has about three million knots—nearly 2,600 knots to a square inch. A miniature reproduction, it has as many knots as the 20 times bigger Isphahan original of the 16th century.

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

Talim

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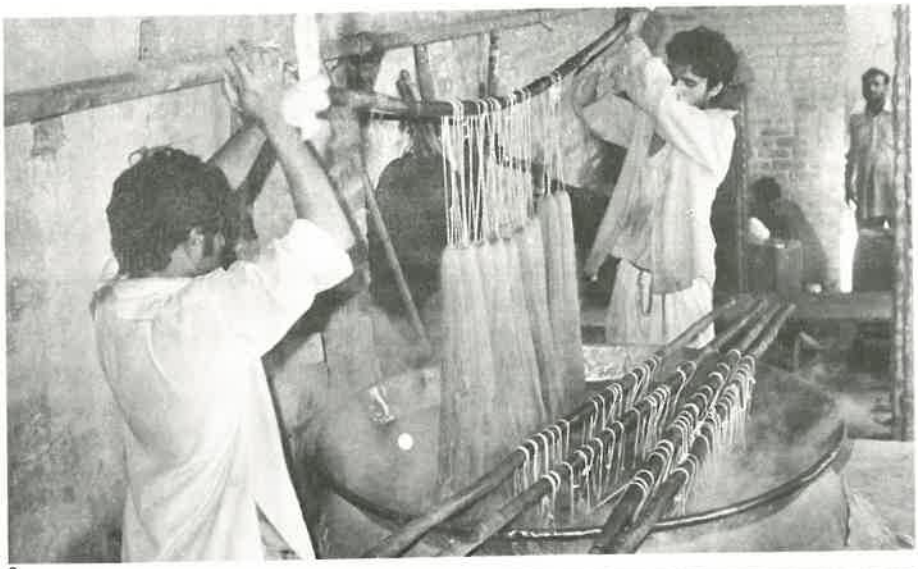

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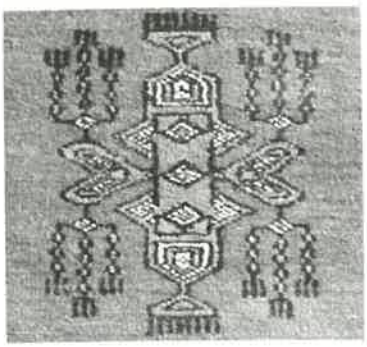

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Children often help 1
Dyeing of wool, traditional way 2
'Shamadan' a common motif 3
Clipping the pile 4
From design to 'Talim' 5
Washed repeatedly 6

that were rising and falling in quick succession, most found economic depression and the oppressive heat of the plains an unbearable combination. 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 them 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 sub-continent, 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 join the community of craftsmen already settled there. At present carpets are produced in and around more than fifty towns.

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

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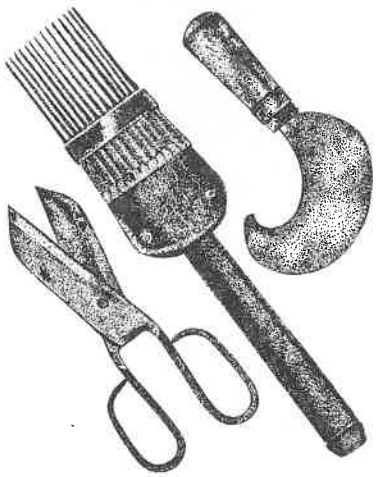
for carpets has encouraged the growth of fairly sizeable units in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Hyderabad.

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-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.

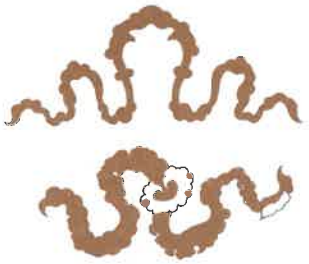


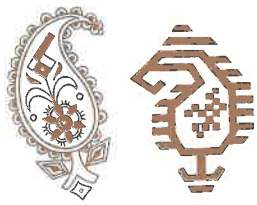
The most essential part of the carpet-weaver's equipment is a wooden (or iron) loom which may be fixed to the ground horizontally, in the fashion adopted by the nomad weavers, or vertically, as is the case in most indoor units. Yarn for the warp, mostly cotton in Pakistani carpets though woollen thread 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.

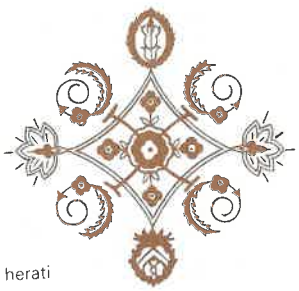
The beams of the common loom are supported by two vertical posts firmly driven into concrete or heavy logs of wood. The upper beam is turned round until the warp is stretched taut between the two beams. This rotation is manipulated with a spire passing through the loom, and to prevent the beam from turning round a chain is stretched between the two beams. A screw fitted to the chain enables the weaver to tighten or loosen the warp as required. After the warp has been stretched arrangement is made for the crossing of its threads. To each thread is tied a loop and each set of loops (those of front and back warp threads) is tied to a bamboo stick as long as the width of the loom. To each bamboo stick are fastened along its length several bow-like objects. Thus there are two sets of bows, one each for the front and back rows of warp threads. The bows rest on the beam and by moving each set of bows on the beam either back or the front set of warp threads is pulled forward while the other is relaxed. In this manner the threads are crossed. Before the knotting of the wool pile begins about an inch of the warp is woven like ordinary cloth by passing the woof threads through the warp. For knotting the weaver sits on a bench in front of the loom. When several weavers work on a single carpet each one of them is responsible for a part of the breadth of the loom. Above the weaver's head hang balls of wool in the required colours. He ties knots on the warp-spread

cloud-bands

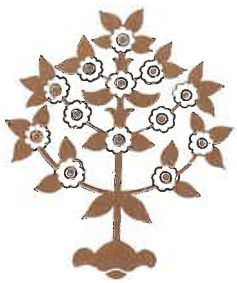




pears



herati



octagons

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according to the given pattern by pulling down the yarn of the proper colour and passing it round the threads of the warp to form a knot. The ends sticking out in front are cut off with the knife which descends on the thread simultaneously with the completion of the knot. When a row of knots has been completed a thread of woof is passed through the warp and the warp threads are crossed. Then another woof thread is passed from the other end and the pattern is beaten into place with the comb. In most cases the pile is trimmed to the desired height at this stage. The process is continued till the carpet is completed and taken off the loom by cutting the warp threads. The loose threads are knotted to form a fringe and the long sides of the carpet are bound with wool threads to make firm edges. Throughout the process the weaver depends more than anything else on his fingers and eyes, both trained to deal with the exacting demands of the craft and to make judgements with astonishing speed and precision as if electronically co-ordinated. The slightest error at any stage can cause irreparable damage.

3

Mughal carpet, Shahjehan period. 1
Caucassian pattern. 2
The garden the weaver missed. 3
A strong Kashmiri tradition. 4
The fringe adds to beauty. 5

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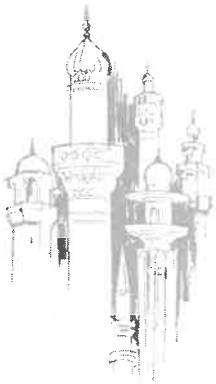

The washing and cleaning of the finished carpet is no less a test of skill than weaving. The carpet is spread over a concrete floor near a washing tank. The first wash is given with plain water to drive out the dust particles from the weave. Then a diluted solution of sulphuric acid is spread over the carpet and brushed for a few minutes. The purpose is to make the colours fast and provide a chlorine base. In the next stage a solution of bleaching powder is spread over the carpet. The foam and the chlorine produced by the action of bleaching powder on sulphuric acid help to clean the carpet of oil and dust. Then the carpet is thoroughly washed in running water and after that a weak solution of caustic soda in water is applied to the surface to bring out the lustre of the material. The carpet is again washed to remove all traces of caustic soda. Once more a solution of bleaching powder is used and the carpet is brushed till a thick layer of foam is made. Another wash follows to take out the bleaching and after that a very dilute solution of oxycalcium chloride is spread over the carpet to make the white cleaner and define the other colours. Finally transparent soap is used to clean and soften the pile and after yet another wash the carpet is spread in the sun to dry up.

Apart from the quality of wool what determines the value of the carpet is the

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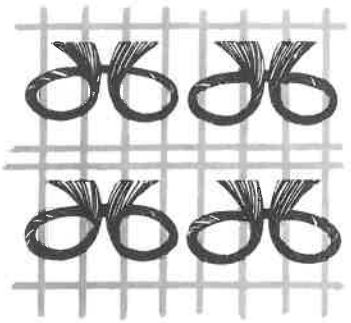
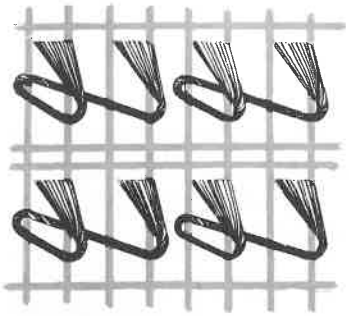
1. The prayer rug.
2. Caucassian motifs in different colours.
3. Floral pattern on prayer rug.
4. 'Saff' butterfly.
5. Prayer 'saff'.
6. A distinct style, Baluchistan.
7. Verses and legends, too.

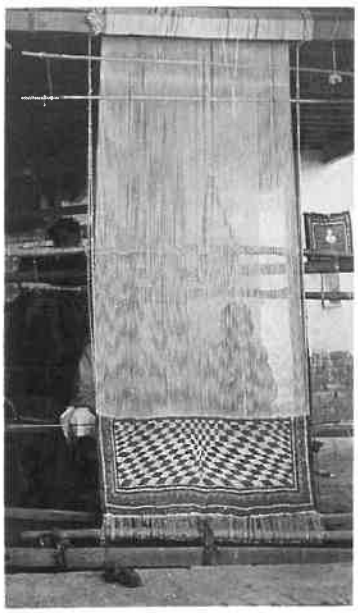
fineness of knotting. Both the standard knots—the Ghiordes (Turkish) style of knotting around two warp threads, and the Sehna (Persian) style of knotting around a warp thread and looping under the next—are executed in Pakistan but the latter is more common. An average quality carpet has around 250 knots per square inch but in finer pieces the number may range between 500 and 1,000. A skilled craftsman can tie 10,000 to 14,000 knots a day. Since children can move their fingers through the warp threads more quickly than the grown-ups they make excellent helpers to their parents. To facilitate speedy knotting the design is read out to the weaver by a 'Talim' reader. The 'Talim' is a graph of knots in various colours prepared by specialists on the basis of the pattern and colour scheme laid down by the designer.



Turkish knot



Persian knot



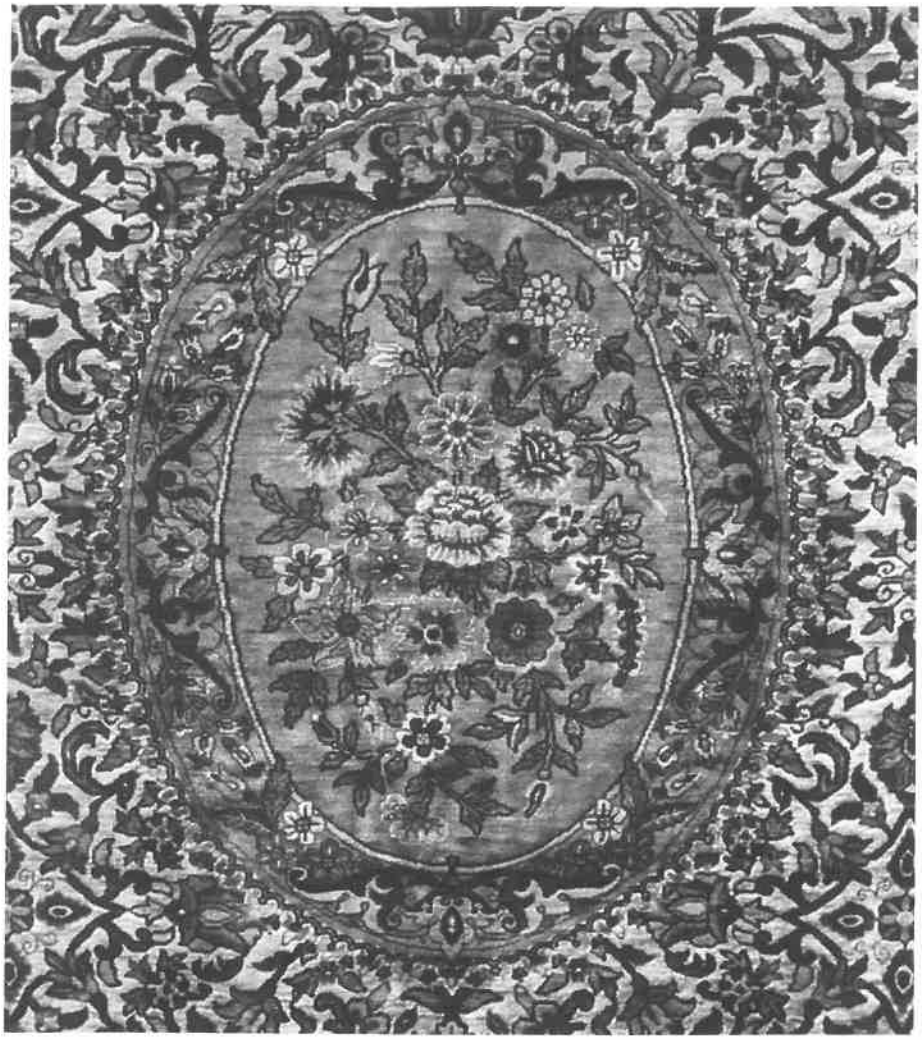
1

A carpet is, however, not merely knotted wool yarn held by a ground weave. A modern consumer may be looking only for a floor covering to match an interior colour scheme but to the nomads who laid the foundations of the craft the carpet meant many things. Spread on bare earth or hung along the sides of the tent, the carpet offered protection against cold. A further advantage was that it could provide a comfortable resting place anywhere, and when it was time to break the camp it could be rolled and packed on the donkey. Soon, however, the nomads learnt to weave into the carpet impressions of life around them, memories of the paradise they had been forced to abandon or dreams of the one they sought. The carpet thus acquired different designs and colour schemes at different places, depending on the nature of the environment where the craftsmen were working and the beliefs of the community to which they belonged. To this day the oriental carpets are named after the places where a particular design was evolved. The Khosro might never have thought of a carpet which he could step on at any time of the year and walk through orchards of fruit-laden trees if the wandering nomad had not mastered the art of creating trees and flowers on his loom. Thanks to his skill the nobility could decorate their bedrooms with illustrations of favourite verse or legends. A whole tradition developed around the prayer rug. To give the feeling of praying in the mosque its essential features—the "mehrab" and the lamp—were incorporated into the design of the carpet. The more ambitious began weaving models of the famous mosques and reproducing the flowers, plants and creepers that they liked to grow at the places of worship. Gradually the motifs and designs inspired by objects found in nature that looked pretty, comforting or challenging were reduced to stylised forms. At the same time the carpet designer was ever keen to adopt any pattern developed by craftsmen in other fields to illustrate a book, illumine a glass panel or decorate architecture.

As the inheritors of the common tradition of the Asian and Muslim carpet, Pakistani craftsmen have the capacity to produce any type of carpet, using all the popular motifs—'guls', medallions, paisleys, traceries, geometric designs—in countless combinations. Although floral and geometric designs are more common pictorial carpets are by no means rare.

Unfortunately, Western experts display a tendency to dwell on the lack of original designs in Pakistani carpets. They obviously do not take into account the fact, noticed by early European writers on Eastern arts, that Muslim crafts developed in different parts of the Islamic world, often simultaneously. It is obviously very difficult to say where a particular design originated. Secondly, they do not seem to have appreciated the disastrous effect of commercialisation on all crafts. Finally, they are less than fair to the designers of original carpets here.

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



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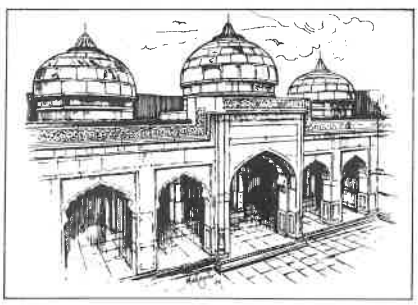

1. Knot by knot the pattern emerges.
2. 'Aina-i-Gul' new design on silk ground.
3. Lighter patches for relief.
4. Sunflower in compartment.
5. Prayer 'saff', lamps and 'mehrabs'.

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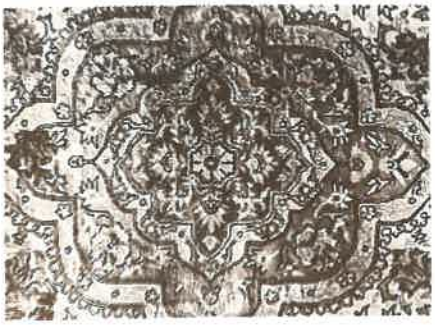


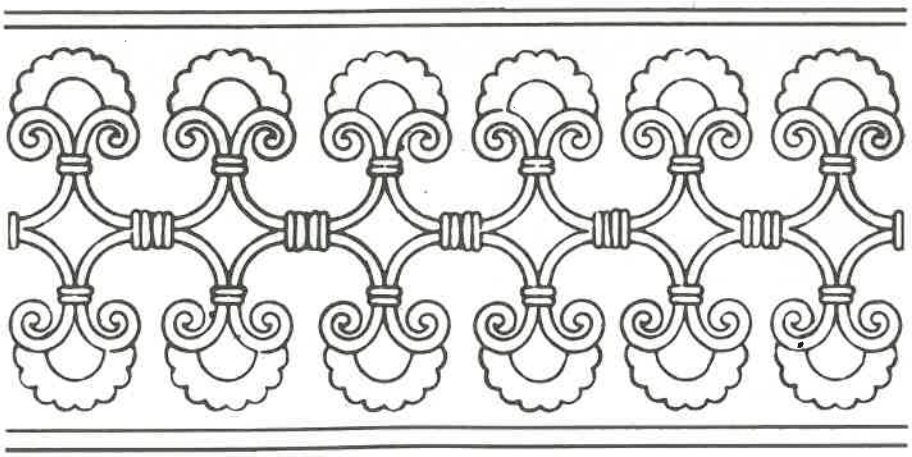
2

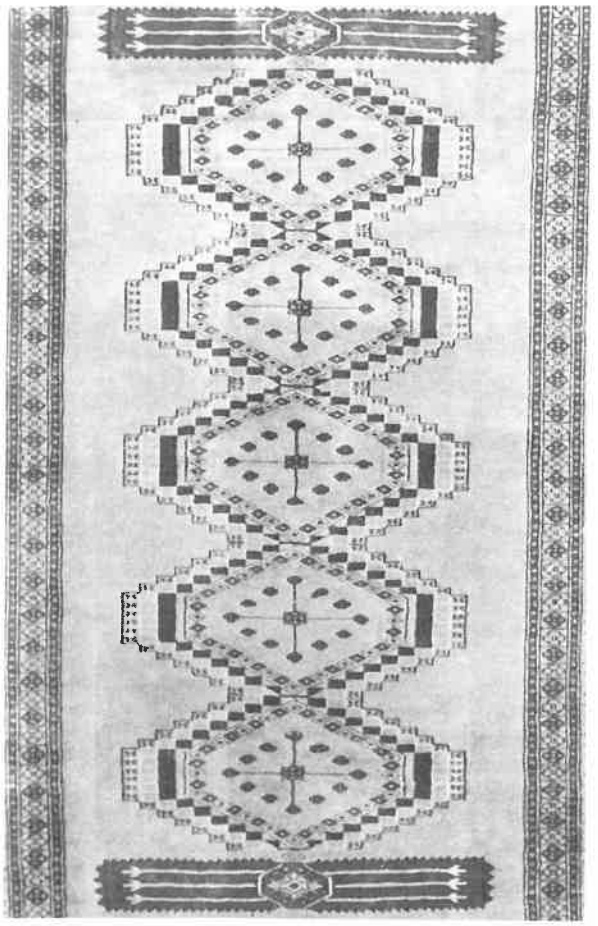
Pictorial carpets are not rare. 1
Central medallion. 2
Central Asian pattern. 3
On a plain ground. 4
Pattern from Thatta. 5
To suit modern taste. 6

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.

Howsoever 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 larger 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.

However, 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-i-Suleman 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.





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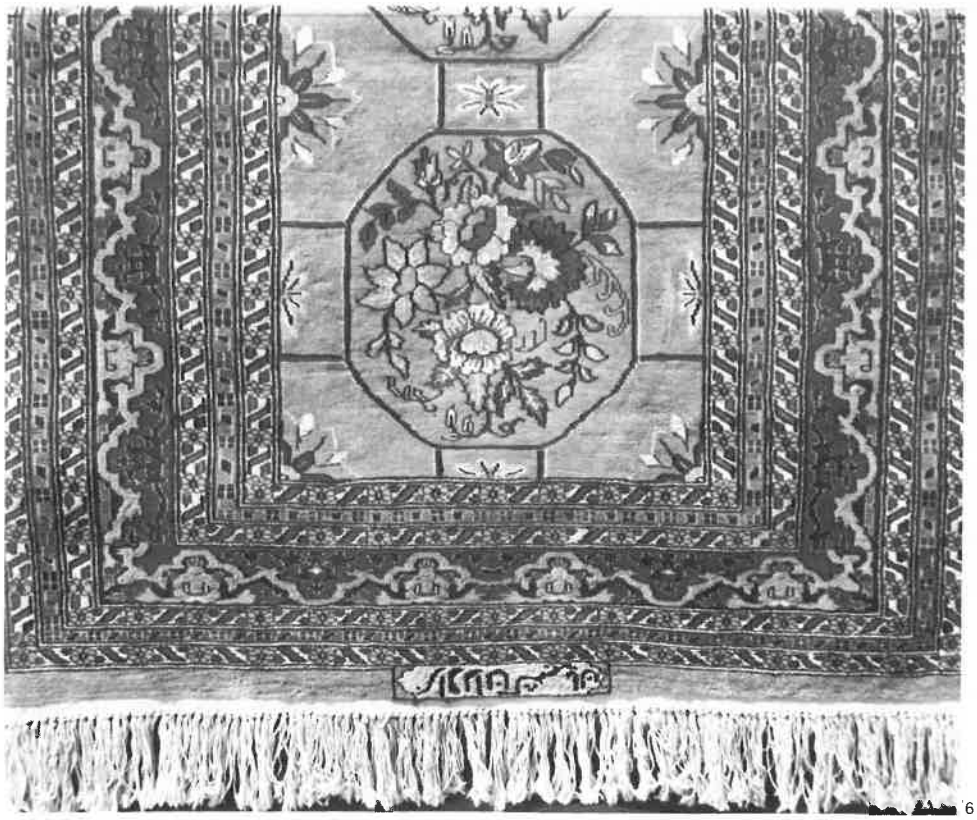

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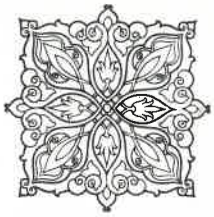

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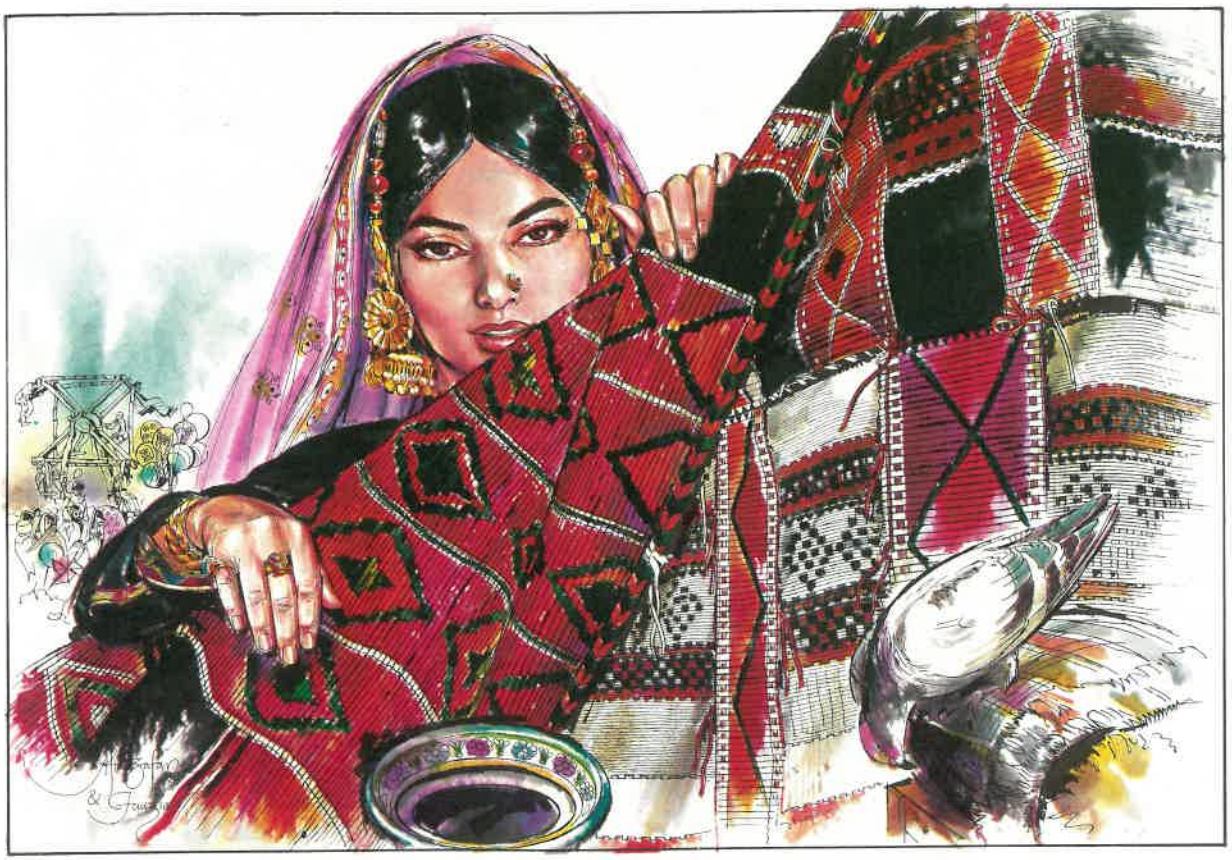
Kashmiri 'namda', stylised composition. 1
Takht-i-Suleman legend. 2
Carpet bag. 3
Ardabil medallion, rhythmic pattern. 4
All over the tribal belt. 5

Other Rugs

Although hand-knotted carpets occupy the pride of place with producers of floor coverings, Pakistani craftsmen also continue to produce non-woven rugs and mats and woven rugs. The art of felting sheep fleece to form 'namdas'—to serve as floor covering, saddle-blankets, and wall-hangings—was known in Pakistan territories about 2,500 years ago.These 'namdas' can be plain or decorated with complex patterns. Some of these motifs have been in use ever since they were brought to the land by the Aryans from Central Asia while others developed in Kashmir. The more important centres of 'namda' production with such motifs are in Swat, Hyderabad, and the north-western parts of Baluchistan. Another common decorative style of 'namdas' consists of chain-stitch embroidery. Woollen yarn in different colours is used on white or dyed felt to trace geometric or animal motifs or stylised patterns representing 'chenar' leaves, grapes, irises, almond and cherry blossoms. The craft is traditional to Kashmir and the present-day centres are in Azad Kashmir, Murree, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Peshawar. Considerable impetus to the craft was given by the creation of training centres for 'namda'-makers in Muzaffarabad and Kahuta.

Far more intricate than the motifs on 'namda' are the chain-stitched patterns on blankets and burlap called 'gabbas'. In most cases the ground is completely



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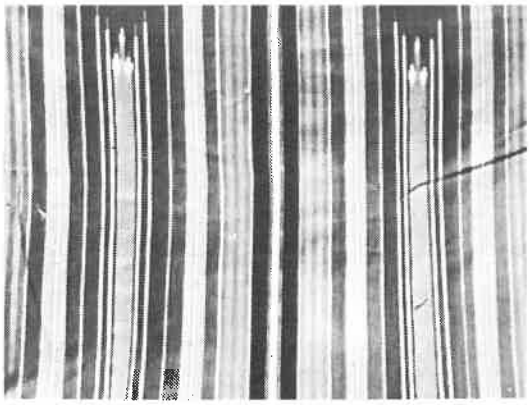

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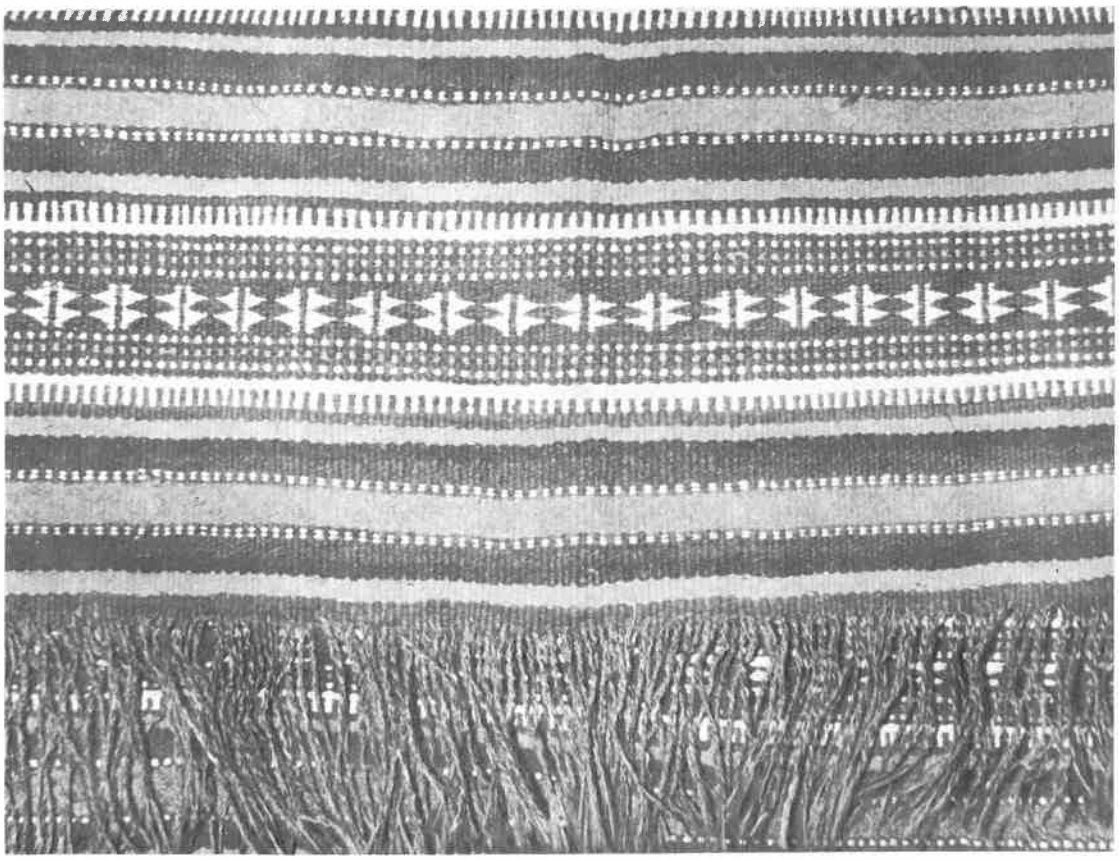
1. 'Durry saff'.
2. Camel hair 'durry', Baluchistan.
3. Village scene on 'gabba'.
4. Striped 'durries'.
5. Floral design on namda'.
6. Animal figures, Kashmir style.
7. Embroidery on 'namda'.



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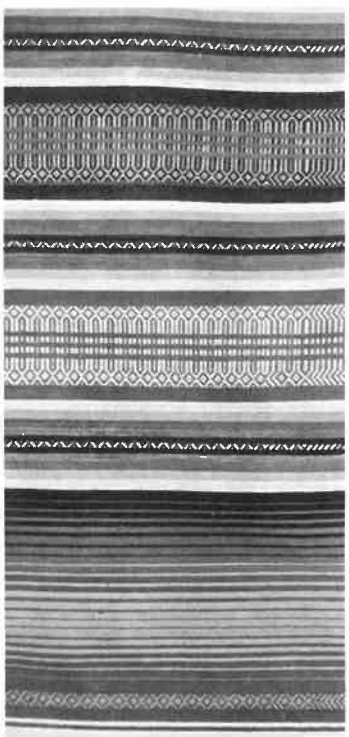

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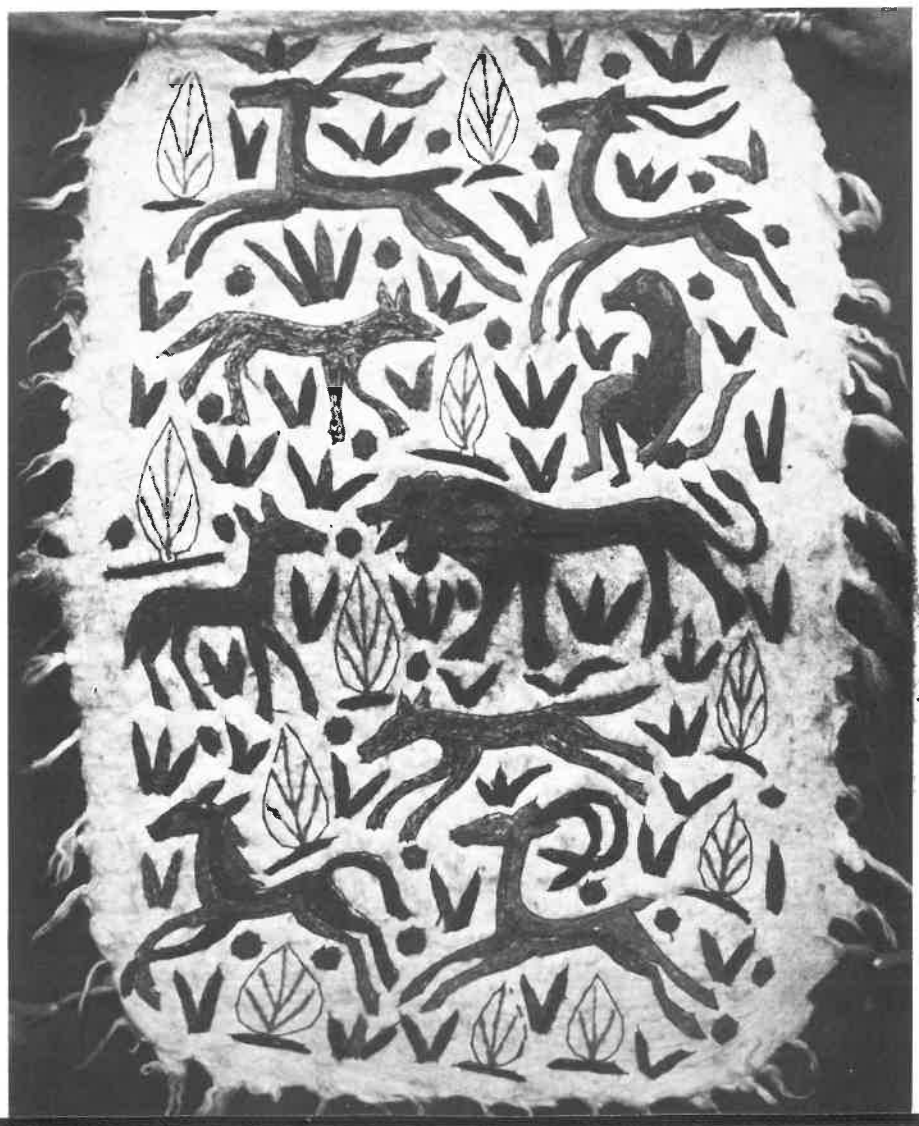
covered with geometric or floral patterns, scenes of natural beauty or pictorial stories—such as hunting scenes, wedding parties and celebrations. In recent years younger craftsmen have produced 'gabbas' with chain-stitched embroidery in wool on jute that possess all the qualities of old masterpieces.

Akbar is credited with having started the production of all cotton carpets in the South Asian subcontinent. The decisive factor must have been the need for rugs and tapestries to suit hot climate and based on more abundantly available raw material. The validity of these considerations is reflected in the large-scale production of 'durries'. Woven in different sizes the 'durries' serve as common man's carpets, cot mats, floor coverings for big assemblies, prayer rugs, and wall-hangings. These are mostly woven on horizontal looms. Machine-made, coarse cotton yarn is used by organised teams of weavers but in villages hand-spun yarn is still used. Mostly the 'durries' have solid weft patterns in different colours but in the Multan and Bahawalpur regions white and blue geometric patterns are woven. There is also a tradition of creating patterns on plain 'durries' through the process of block printing.

A robust tradition of weaving carpets with wool, goat hair, camel hair, and mixed yarn exists in the tribal belts of Pakistan. The tribes in Baluchistan weave 'ghilims' with brightly coloured diamonds with woollen wefts on a woollen or goat hair warp. The variety of patterns and colours is fantastic. Similarly tapestries woven in the north-western tribal area and Chitral are called 'kalins'. Mostly these bear bold geometric motifs in primary colours dominated by red. The 'kalins' woven in Chitral are made of sheep wool on a cotton warp and the patterns are bigger than elsewhere. Chitral is also known for 'palesks', goat-hair rugs used as mats by the local people.



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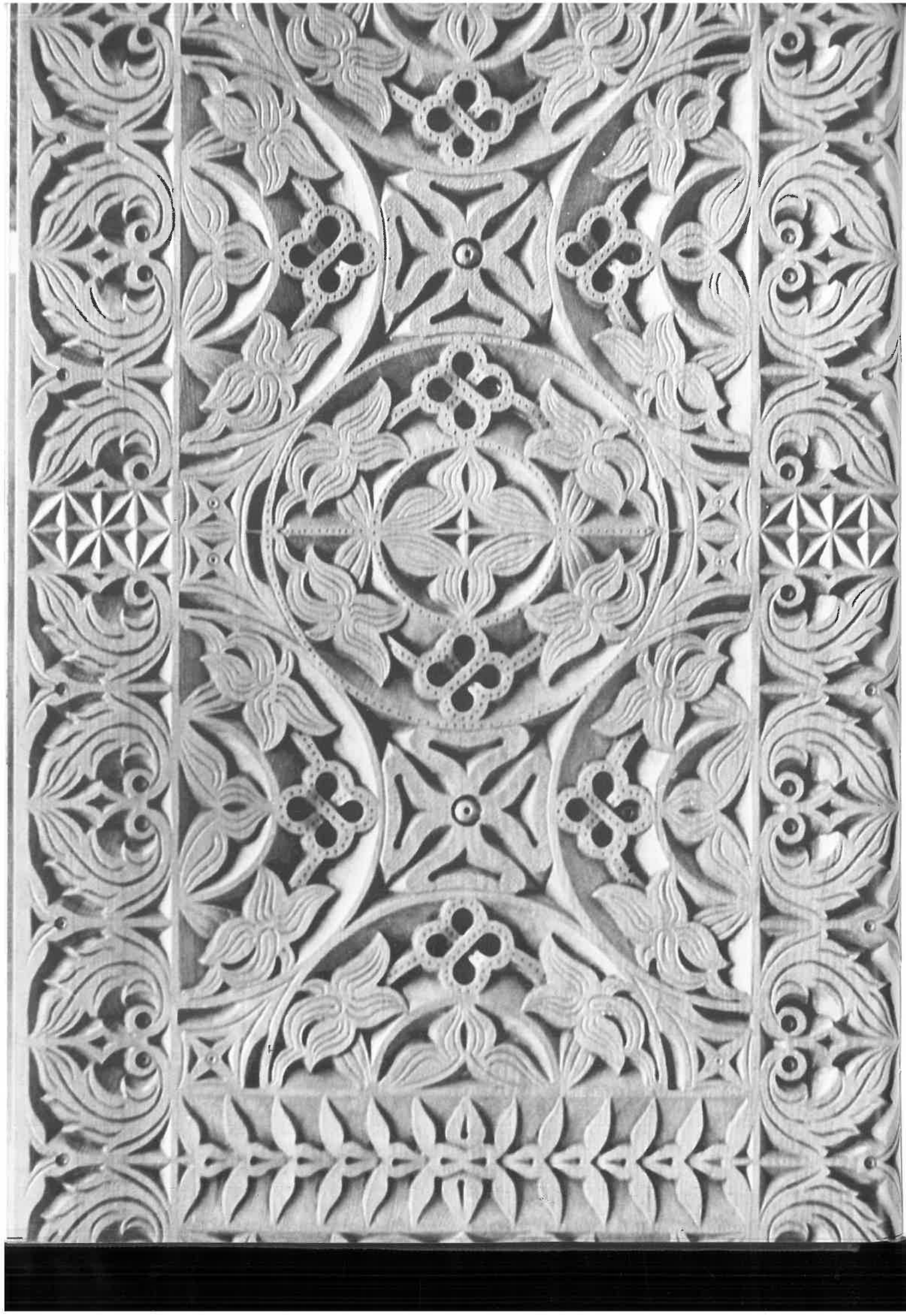


◀ Carved deodar, Lahore.

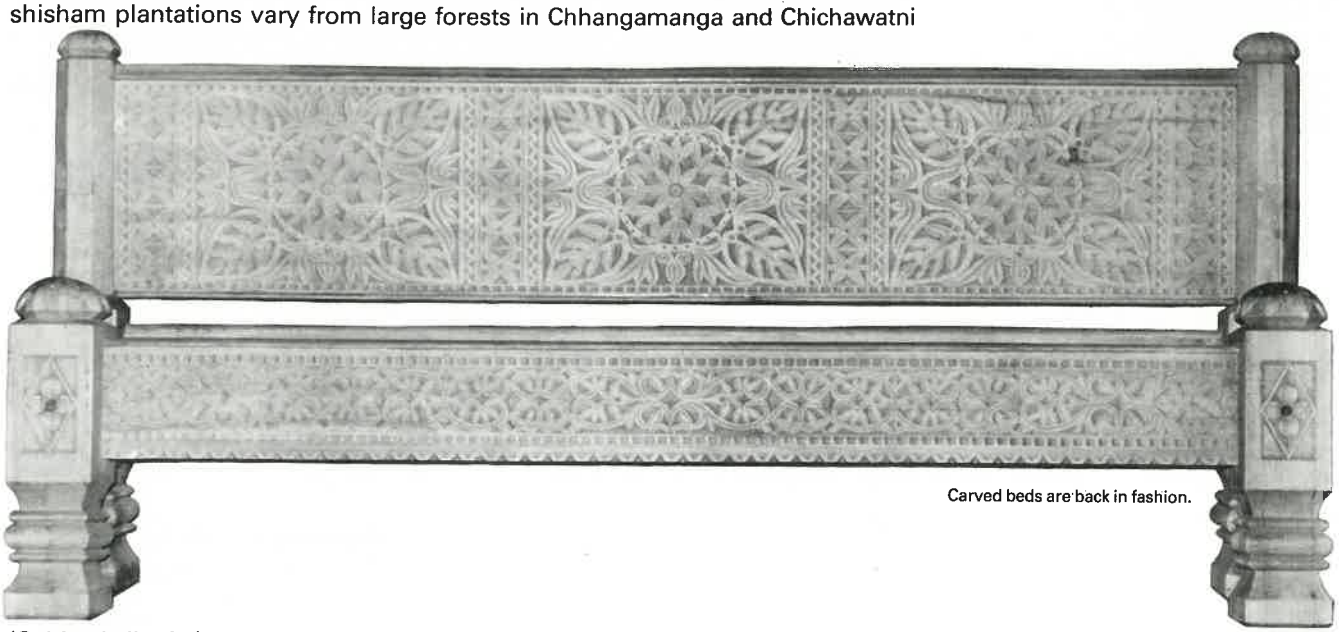
6

WOOD

carved to life

Like textiles, 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. In a large measure it is a tribute to the craftsman's capacity to satisfy man's desire to surround himself with things attractive.

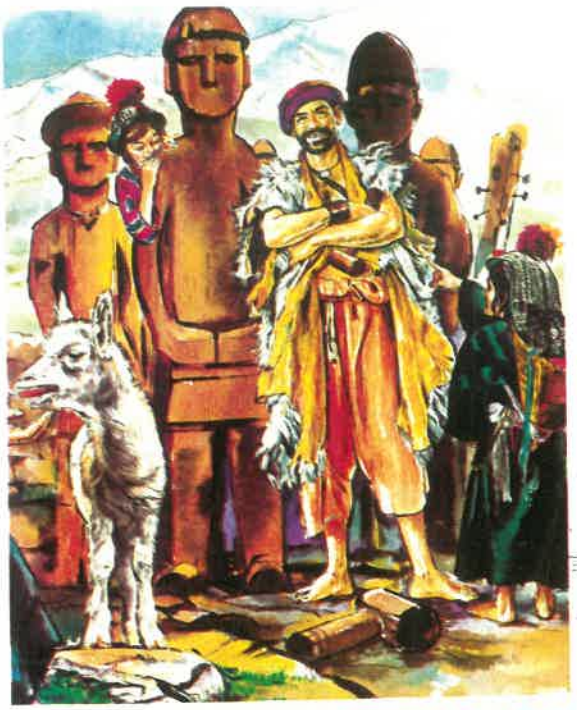
Although less than five per cent of the country's land is under forests, the material available to Pakistan's wood-craftsmen is of considerable variety. While the forests of mangrove-like trees in the coastal areas mostly provide firewood, date palms, babul (acasia arabica), farash, kikar and pipal (ficus religiosa) scattered all over the sandy plains have traditionally yielded raw material for wood-craftsmen. In the 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 (dabergia sirsco) and mulberry. The shisham plantations vary from large forests in Chhangamanga and Chichawatni



Carved beds are back in fashion.

(Sahiwal district) to rows of trees along the roads and watercourses. For each variety a different craft has been evolved.

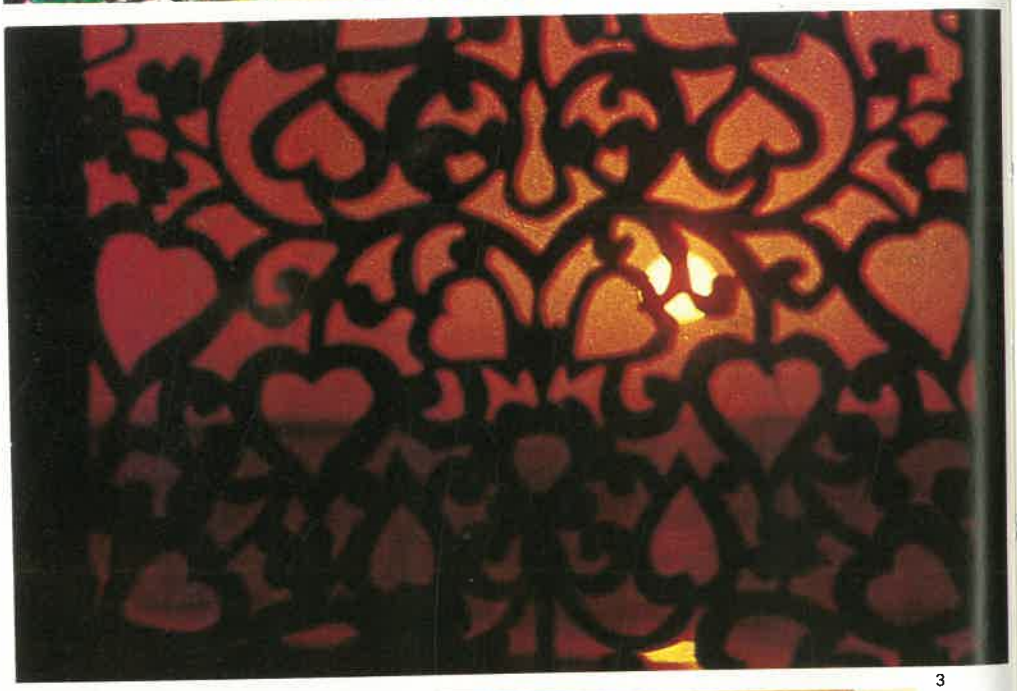
In view of the perishable nature of wood it is not possible to trace the evolution of



1

Kafiristan deity. 1
Lacquered powder box, Hala. 2
Wood screen. 3
Lacquered wood boxes, Hala. 4
Carved in the open. 5
Swati motifs. 6
Kafiristan statue. 7

2



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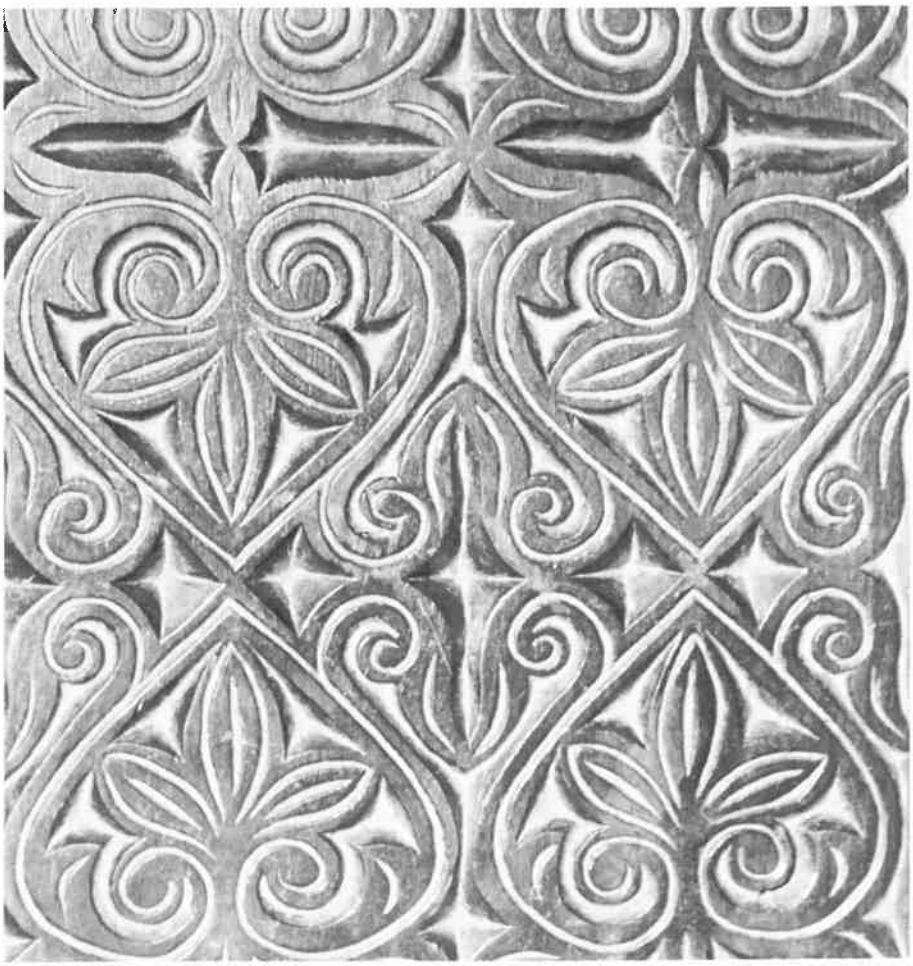
carpentry in the agricultural communities of Baluchistan more than 5,000 years ago or during the period of the Mohenjo Daro-Harappa culture though wood is mentioned among its exports, and, as mentioned earlier, the saw with undulating teeth was invented here. The Vedic literature, compiled by Aryans moving into the Gangetic plains of India from the Frontier and Punjab regions of Pakistan, mentions carpenters as prominent members of the artisan community. There are also references to different kinds of couches—a special one to serve as the nuptial bed, of a 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 Nothern 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. Though it is confined largely to incision, the variety of patterns is most impressive. The use of wood as a building material must have begun earlier. The availability of a more durable, and esier 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 but wood cottages were common in the northern valleys of Chitral and Kafiristan. Simple, incised or raised lines and



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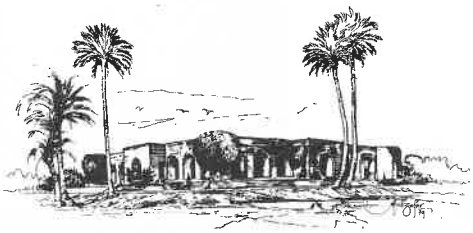

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geometric designs on wall panels, doors, balconies and windows show widespread traces of Greek influence. The surviving collection of old pieces displays craftsmanship that has evoked admiration for ages.

Under the Muslim rule the evolution of new architectural designs made a heavy demand on the wood workers' skill. Like their co-religionists in the Arab kingdoms the Muslim craftsmen of Sind and Punjab in the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries strove to evolve methods to overcome the effect of wide climatic fluctuations on

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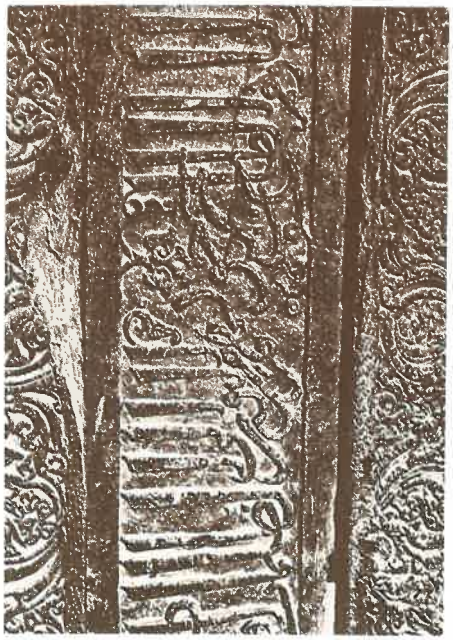
wood. To guard against the contracting and warping of wooden structures they worked out designs in which small pieces were dowelled together to form large panels. The technique was used by the builders of the Rukn-i-Alam mausoleum in Multan who used thick beams of shisham in lintel and soffits. For obvious reasons, however, architectural use of wood was confined to places of worship and 'havelis' 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



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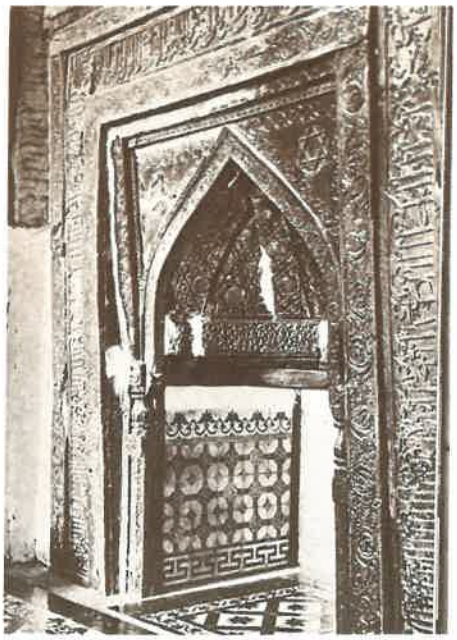

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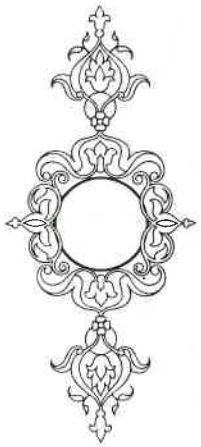
in the Lahore Fort. Richly ornamented doors, windows and balconies at some of the old 'havelis' in Lahore still attract interested observers in large numbers. The Sethi family home in Peshawar, built in the nineteenth century, presents fine examples of wood craftsmanship. But as in other parts of the 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 etched and carved on wood floral motifs, arabesque, and lines from the Quran similar to those done earlier on glazed tiles. 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.



At the same time, at many places where large communities of wood-craftsmen had settled and a tradition of carving had taken root a variety of wood work could be acquired for common dwellings. In Chiniot one can still find a number of houses in which carved wood panels and columns were profusely used. Large panels of lattice work, called 'pinjra', were fitted into the upper portions of the walls to serve as ventilators and window screens, or wooden niches were designed in numerous forms. The 'pinjra' screen was, however, an item that the masses also could afford. 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.

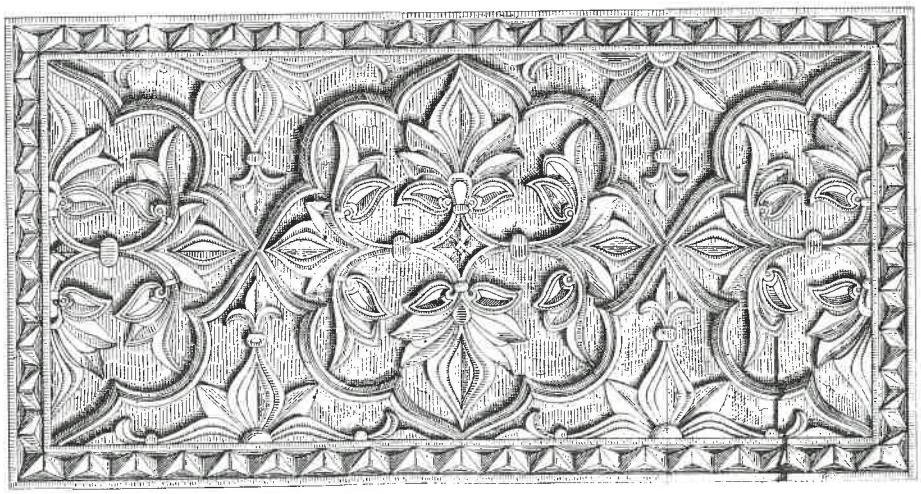
In the first half of the present century the use of ornamental wood panels in

1. Inlay work, table-top, Peshawar.
2,3,4. Lacquered wood, many shapes, many colours, Hala.
5. Calligraphy in wood, Rukn-i-Alam Tomb, Multan.
6. Richly carved 'mehrab', Rukn-i-Alam Tomb.

buildings declined under pressure of demand for more functional structures and the possibilities of speedier construction offered by bricks, mortar and cement. But the last quarter-century has witnessed a revival of interest in breaking the drabness of concrete walls and ceilings with carved wood panels, and richly carved wooden doors and windows are back in fashion, of course, with those who can afford them. The large panels and partition-screens designed for the Foreign Office in Islamabad represent some of the finest examples of the traditional craft of wood carving. In a single screen one can find many styles and patterns and motifs, from sunflower and roseatte to intricate arabesque and geometric designs. And in the richer new housing colonies of Lahore and Karachi long panels of carved wood are being used to cover the bare concrete projections.

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 to lovers of virile craftsmanship 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. There have been instances when a doting mother has commissioned a master craftsman to fashion the entire furniture needed for her daughter's dowry in Swati style. But while the basic features of the traditional Swati furniture—broad seats and heavy legs of chairs and block-like appearance of chests—have survived unchanged, innovations have appeared on the ends of arms and legs of chairs and the range of decorative carving has expanded. One can find the legs of latest beds and chairs shaped as inverted lotuses, and if the craftsmen of old decorated 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 partal 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



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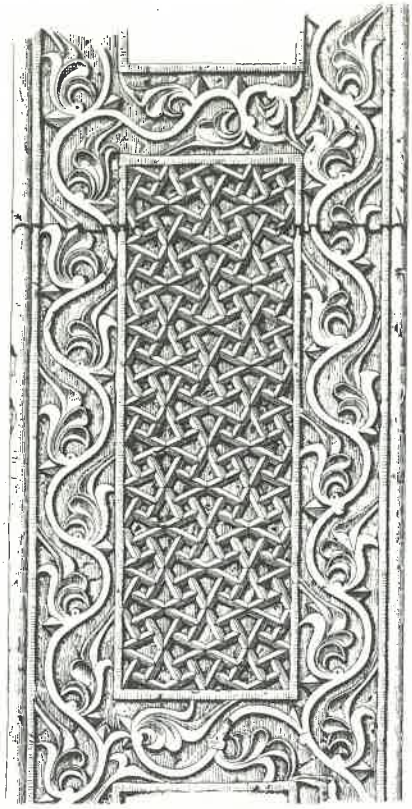

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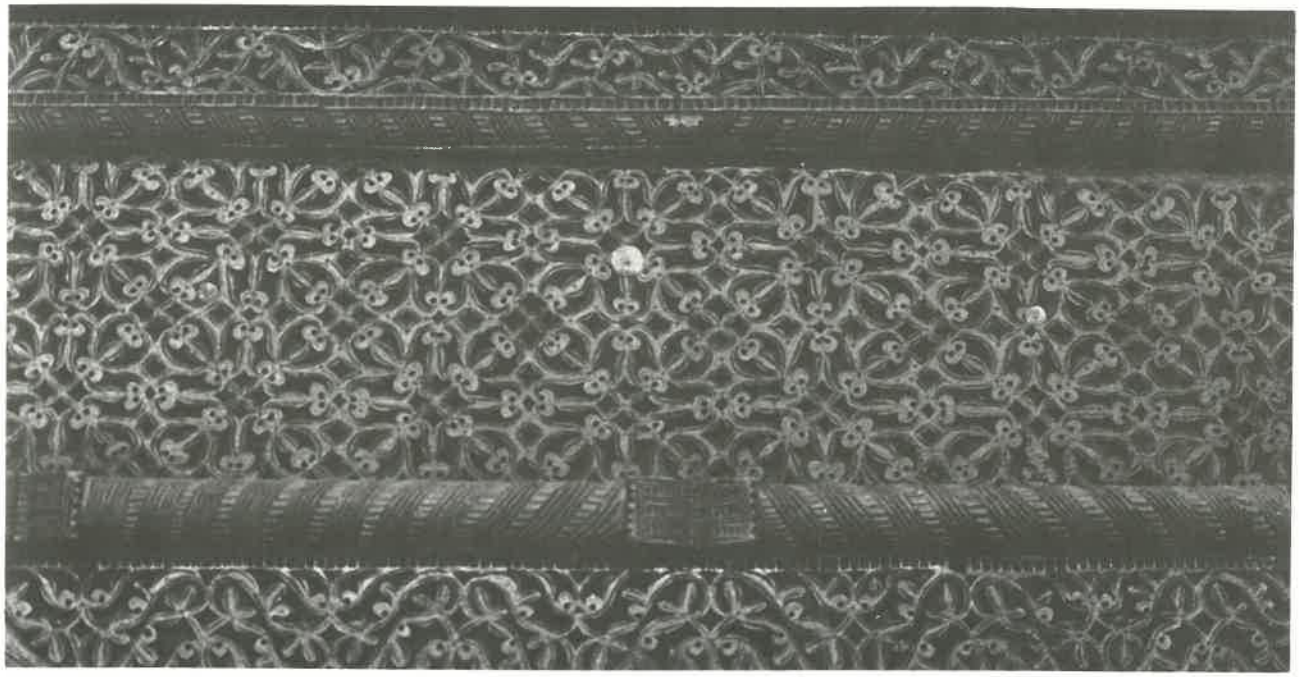
1. Carved floral design, Mughal period.
2. Lion in the round.
3. Geometric patterns in screen, Mughal period.
4. Door from Swat.
5. Pitcher-stand, Swat.



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work is done at home, away from the vulgar influences of the market-place. 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.

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So irresistible is the attraction of carved woodwork that, in order to satisfy the demand of people who cannot afford to pay for walnut, craftsmen in the Punjab plains have taken to carving on hard and cheaper wood like shisham. 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. A recent innovation from villages around Faisalabad is the setting of tables of different heights into a bigger one, all with carved tops and legs. The outer frame can be used as a single table but when necessary the tables within can be pulled out to form a large multi-plane table. The item is finding increasing favour with people with small drawing rooms as the space occupied by it can be reduced or extended to suit the occasion. Another recent example of craftsmanship is the creation of table stands which look like inter-twined snakes of different sizes. These collapsible legs, crafted from a single piece of shisham, go especially well with glass tops or engraved metal plates or bowls, which do not cover the unique features of the stand.

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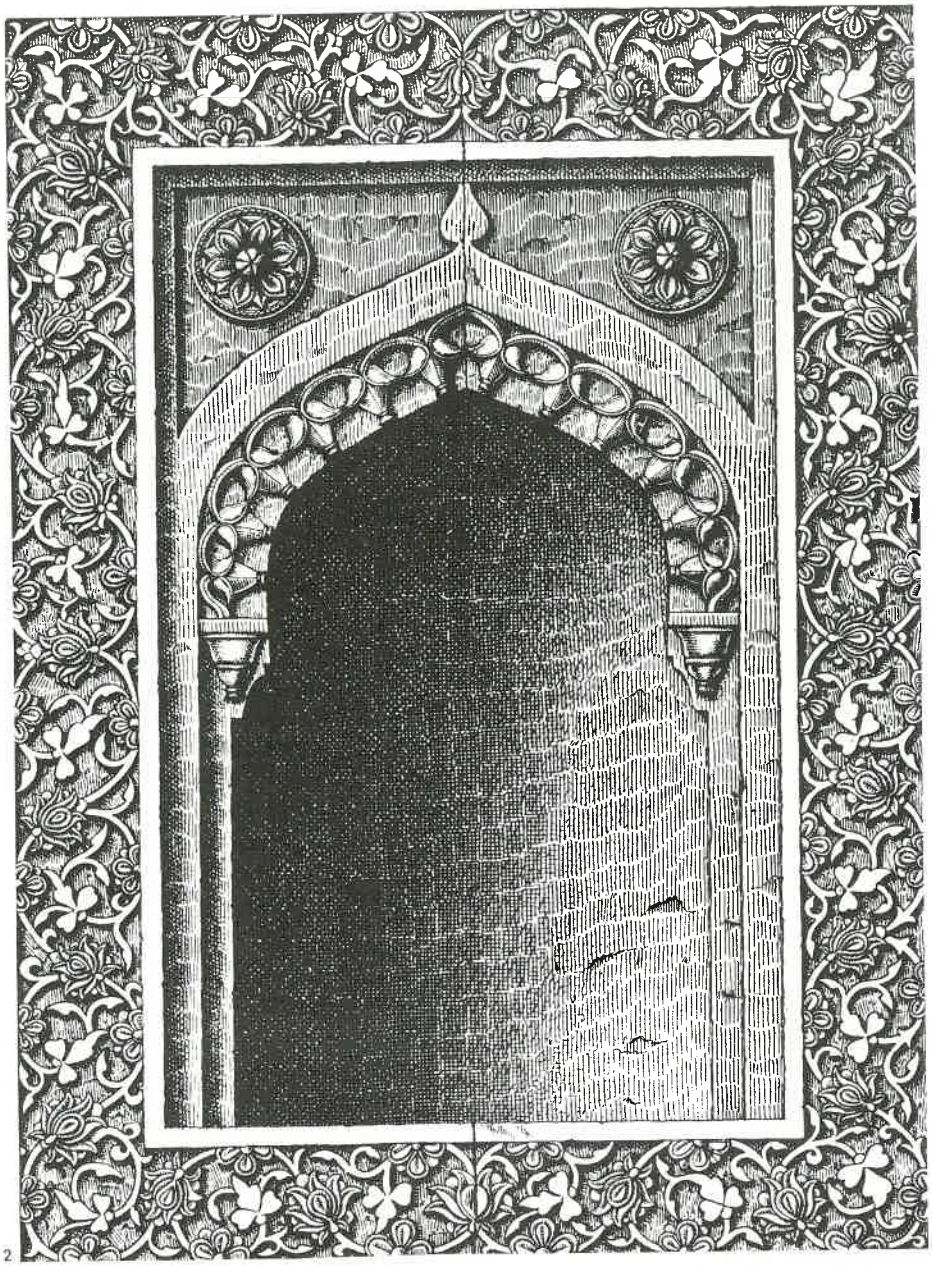

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Border and panel, Mughal period. 1
Another Mughal pattern. 2
Carving on modern furniture. 3
Carved in the open. 4
Diverse styles on bed. 5

The common types of wood carving in Pakistan are: relief, in which the design is either sunk into the ground or the ground is etched high to stand out; round, in which the design or figure is totally detached from the background wood; chipping, in which a design is evolved by chipping wood to the desired depth; incising, in which designs, mostly flower and creeper traceries, are cut into the wood without ground work; and piercing, in which the ground is cut away leaving only the design.

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 straight blades in a limited number of sizes, with stronger, imported chisels, with straight and curved blades of various widths. But a deeper study would reveal Pakistani craftsmen in a ceaseless endeavour to exploit further the possibilities of decorative carving offered by the natural colour and grain of the wood or to overcome the limitations imposed by such peculiarities. Traditionally they have adapted their workmanship to suit the nature of the raw material. There would be more of perforated work in black, opaque wood and more of relief work on lighter coloured wood. The patterns of carving would be determined by the staple and

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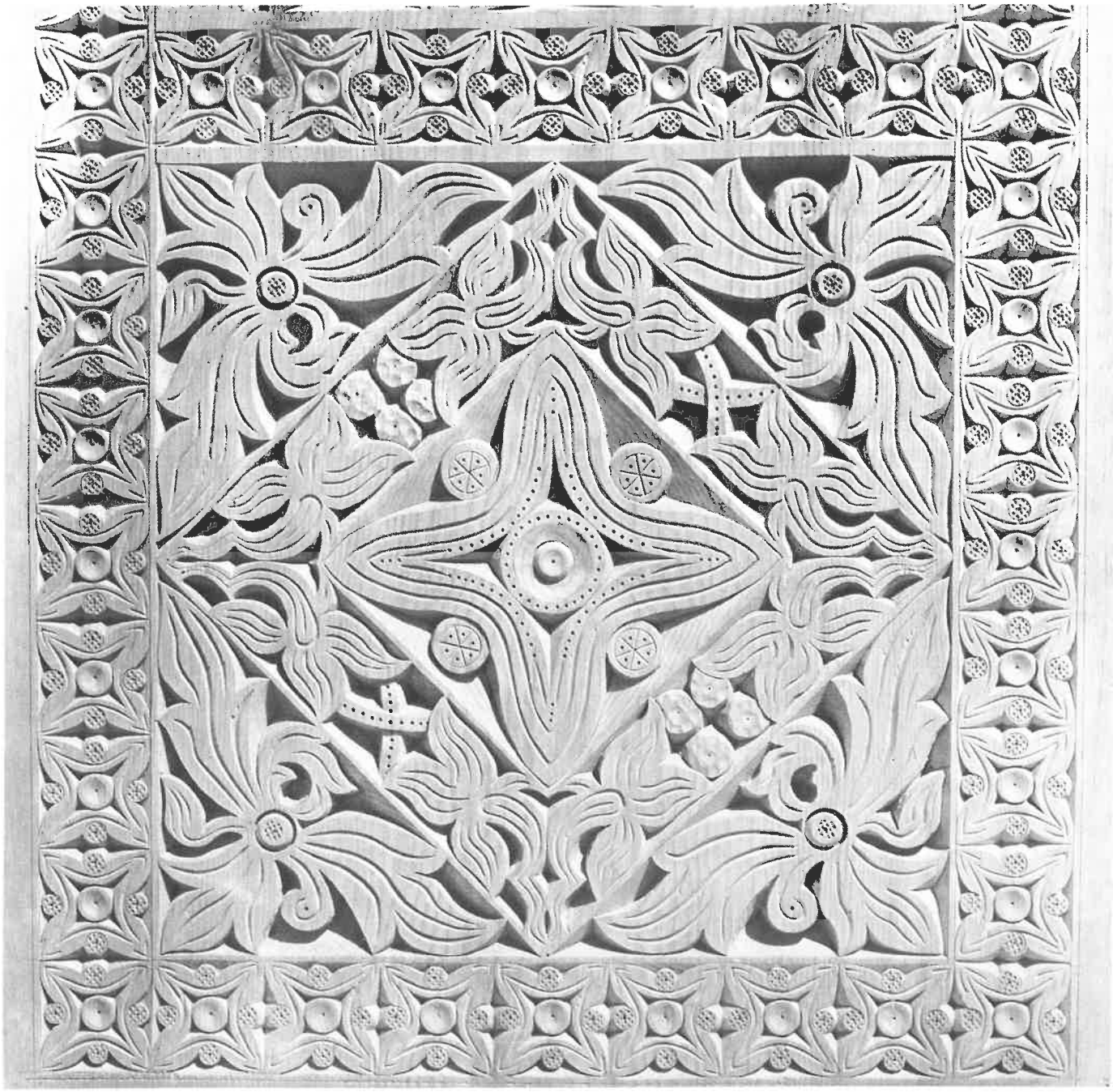

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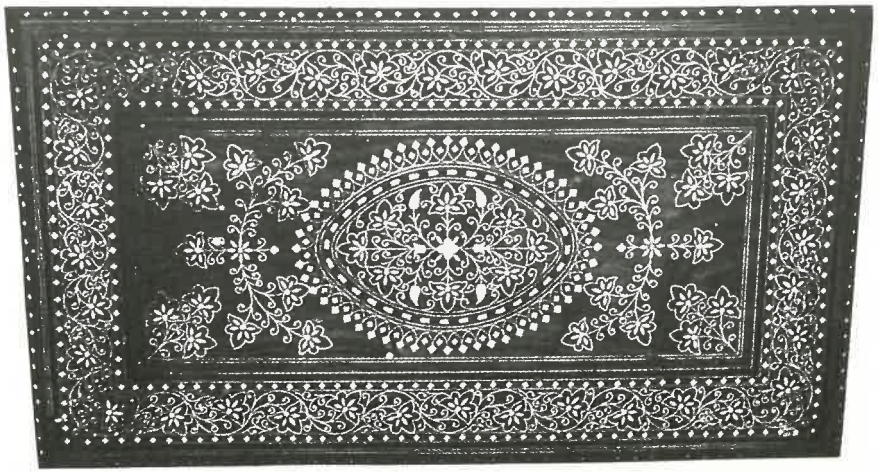
grain and tonal variations on the surface of the available wood. But there is increasing evidence of successful attempts to defy the impediment of grain to carving and also to reduce reliance on post-carving operations, like rubbing with sandpaper or polishing, to smoothen out rough chisel work or sharpen 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.

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 marqueting 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 use of metal strips and nails to bind chest planks suggested patterns of decorative-cum-functional nails and strips of metal such as had been seen on leather shields and animal gear. The rich rulers started matching precious wood with precious metals or ivory but since there was enough of gold on taspestries and 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-like combination on jewellery boxes, and the



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1. With only a chisel.
2. Bone in place of ivory, Chiniot.
3. No technique beyond him.

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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 smoothened 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 methd 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. But then a large

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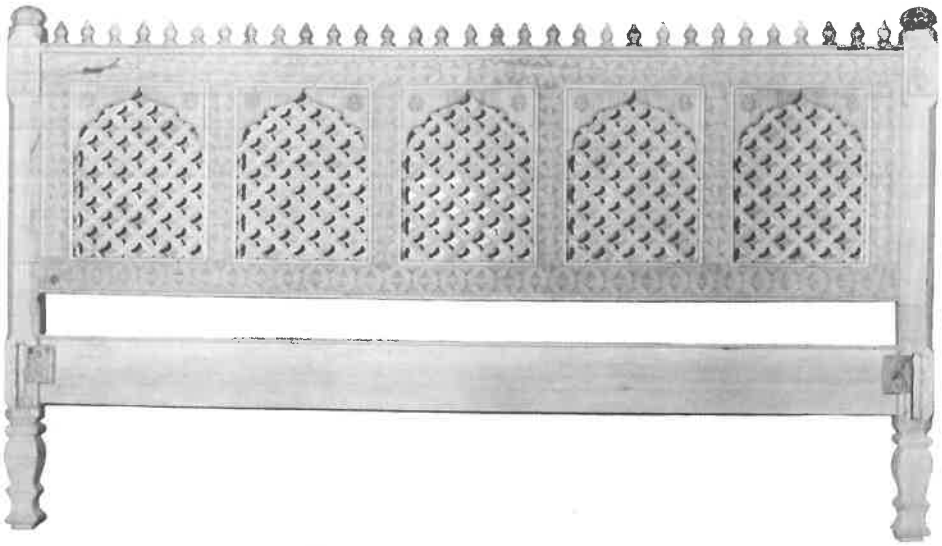
number of articles are made of coarse wood and village women learnt long ago that these could look prettier and last longer if dipped in mustard oil. And if no wood carver was available in the village the doors and the legs of cots could be painted. In the Northern Areas the housewives often paint their wooden pots and cooking spoons with red and black. In the Potohar region painted bed legs, sticks used to



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churn curds, cooking spoons, thick rods for husking rice at home, door-frames and door panels, rustic cradles and swings, etc., are quite common.

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 lac 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 geometric. The Kashmore 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.

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. Besides, the range of lacquered goods has been

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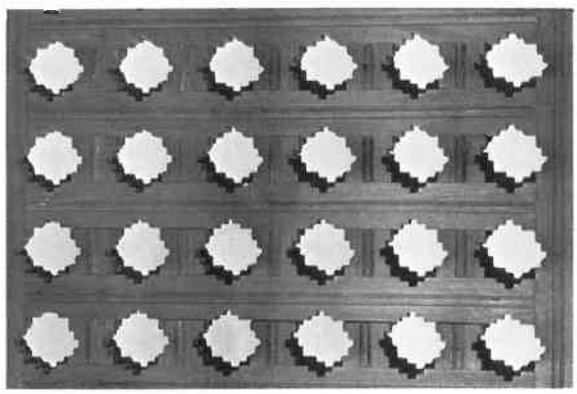

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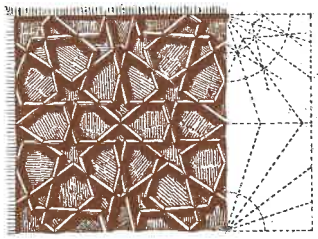
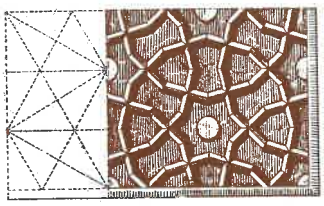
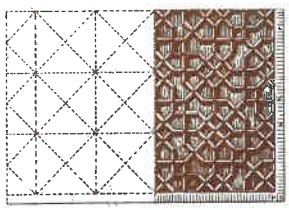
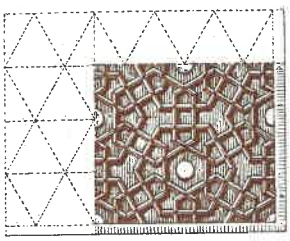
1. In relief, Lahore.
2. Bone inlay, jewellery box, Jhelum.
3. Pinjra pattern on bed, Lahore.
4. Village 'jhoola'.
5. Ideal ventilation.







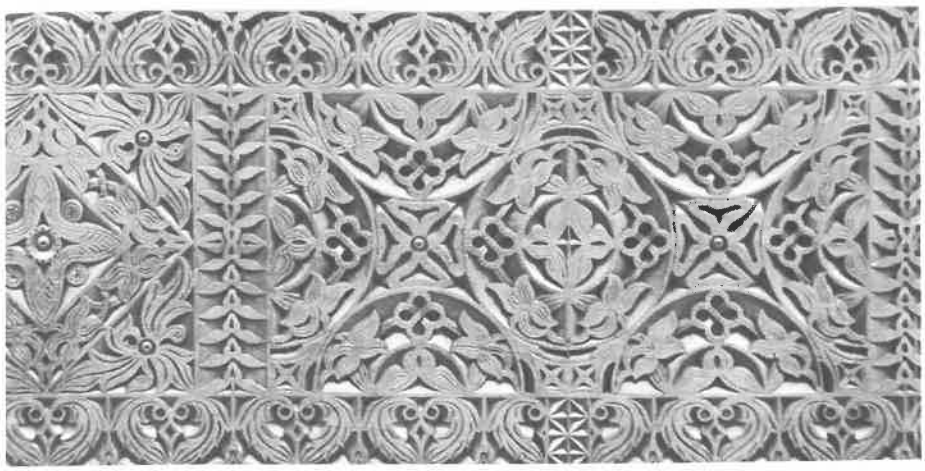


Geometrical patterns, Mughal period.

Kashmir style.

enlarged to include bowls, powder-boxes, spice containers, mirror frames,walkers, toys, imitation fruits and vegetables, etc.

It is easy to understand how the craft took root in the desert areas. The quality of the wood available was neither good for carving nor was its colour pleasing. 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. 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. For the most outstanding 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 lac 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 lac 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 ubelieveable. 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 'jandri' (rotation).



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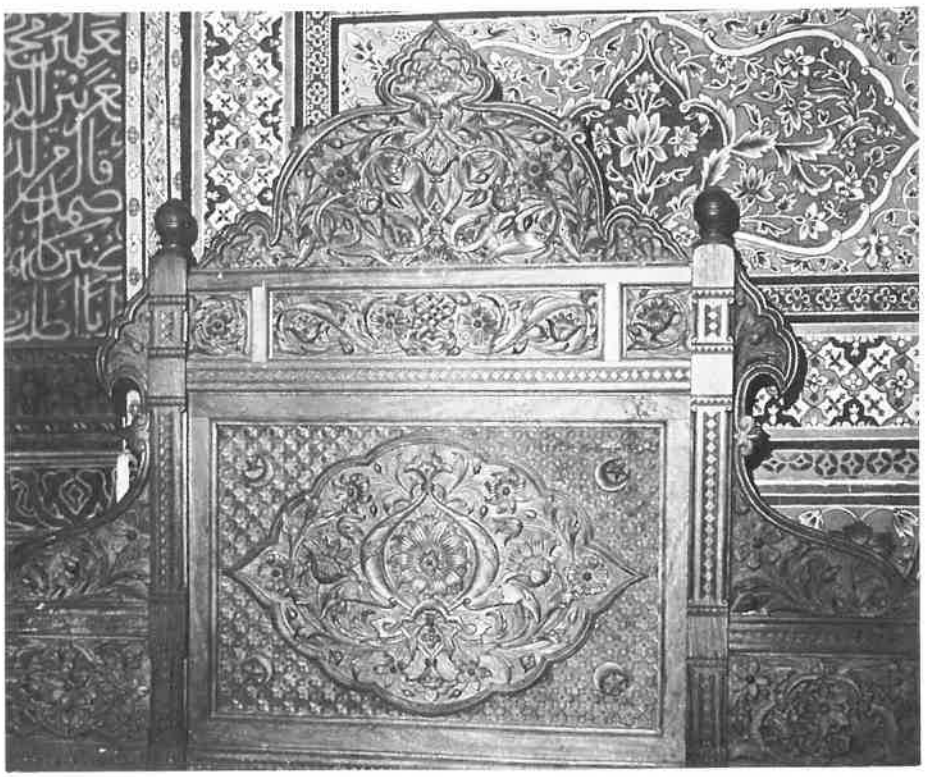

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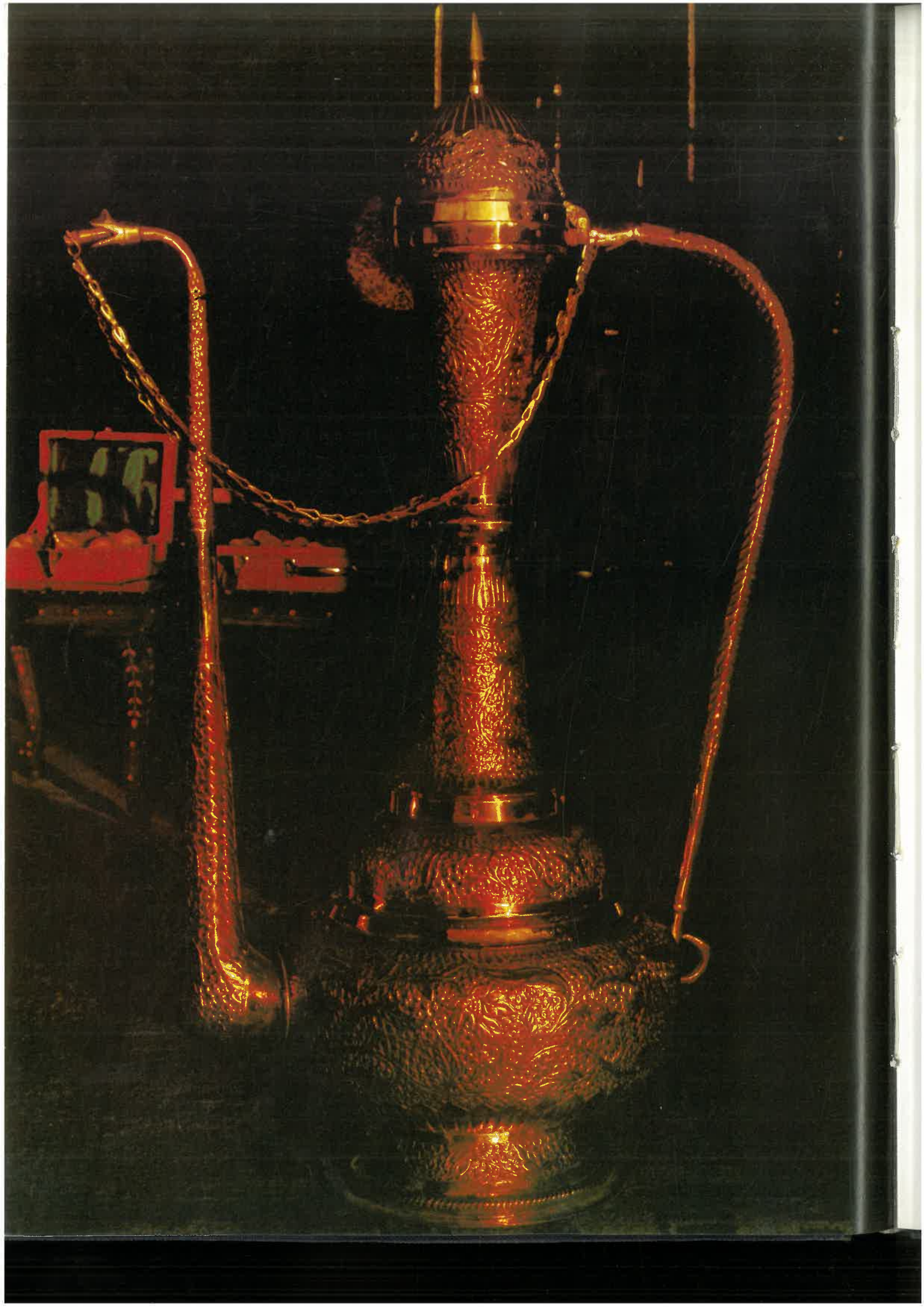
1. Carved deodar.
2. Swat low chair, Lahore.
3. Lacquered wood chair, Nasarpur.
4. 'Pirhi' Swat.
5. Carved 'mimbar'.



◀ Copper' 'aftaba', Peshawar.

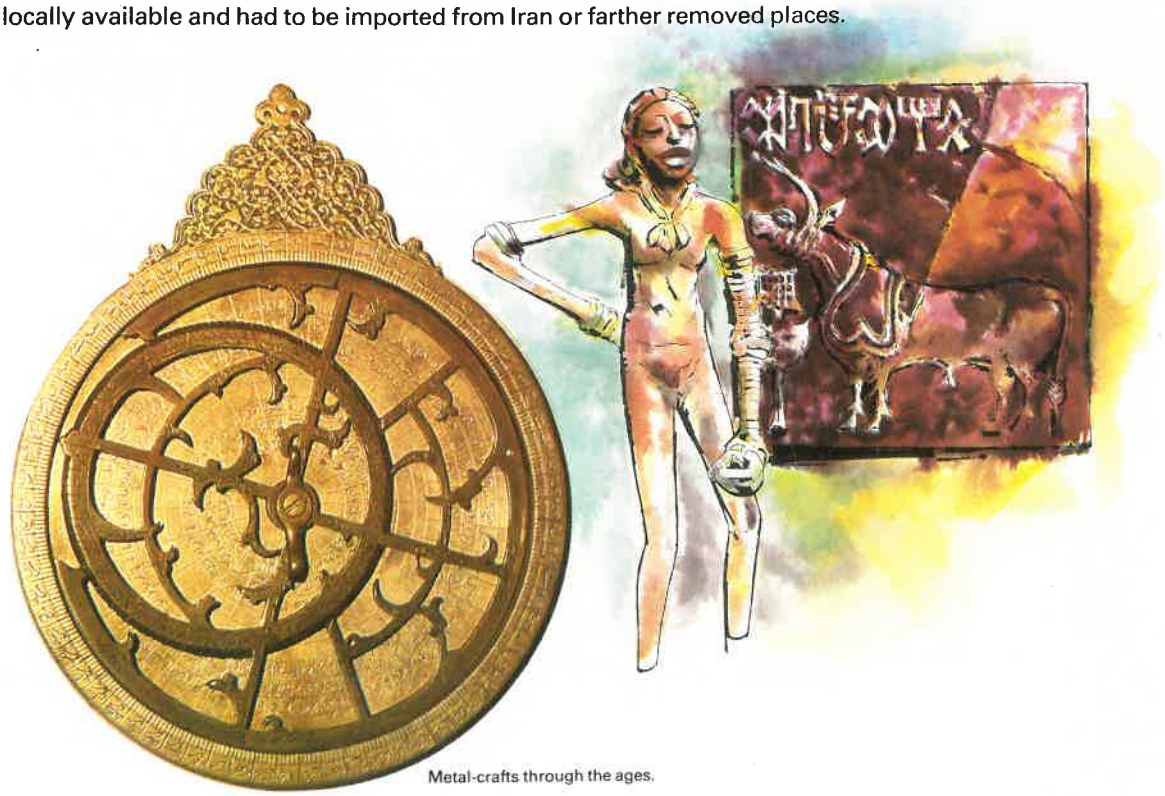
7

metal

chiselled to perfection

Nobody should be surprised at the abundance and variety of glittering metal-ware in Pakistan's bazars or the intricate workmanship it displays. A very large section of the population still uses metal-ware for cooking and numerous other household purposes and even where it has been replaced with glass or porcelain it has retained its place as a piece of decoration. And the amount of labour expended on even small objects reminds one of the days when Pakistan territory formed part of the Muslim empire where the last great school of Islamic metal-crafts—the Mughal—reached its zenith.

An indigenous tradition of metal-crafts, however, existed in this part of the world since time immemorial. The use of copper and its alloys by the Indus Valley culture people is proved by the discovery of numerous well-made utensils at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. Not only were metals and alloys used to make implements like axes, hooks, chisels, etc., and utensils, like pots, salvers and goblets, the technique of casting sculptural figures also was known. The eight-inch statuette described as the Mohenjo Daro dancing girl and the fragment of a foot with anklet—both in bronze—continue to be mentioned as outstanding examples of Indus Valley metal-craft in all studies of ancient art. But, as Sir Mortimer Wheeler and others have pointed out, the use of metal in that culture was limited because raw materials were not locally available and had to be imported from Iran or farther removed places.



Metal-crafts through the ages.

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These constraints were considerably lightened in the north-western part of Pakistan when it came under Achaemenid rule in the sixth century B.C. For many centuries the native craftsmen were not only exposed to the metal-work techniques developed by the Persians, the Greeks, the Bactrians and the Sogdians, they could also receive large quantities of raw material from Central Asia, including gold from Siberia and copper from Iran. Iron began to be used here not later than the fifth century B.C. Although the region witnessed the rise and fall of several empires between the sixth century B.C. and the fifth century A.D.—the Persians, the Macedonians, the Mauryas, the Bactrian Greeks, the Scytho-Parthians, and the Kushans—material conditions favoured the continued progress of crafts, as proved by the rich haul of metal-ware from Taxila. The best preserved utensils include a narrow-necked copper jug with handle, a bronze bowl with concave base and carved sides, a bronze frying pan with a ram's head on its fluted handle, a goblet with carinated shoulder, and a cloven-hoof spoon of copper with an oval bowl. The silver-ware includes jugs, goblets, bowls, cups, dishes, plates, ladles, spoons and strainers. From the famous Shahji-ki-Dheri stupa, near Peshawar, the 550-feet high structure topped by 25 gilded copper discs, which deeply impressed Hiuen Tsang, was recovered the world-famous Kanishka relic casket made of copper alloy. One of the most valuable artefacts preserved in the Peshawar Museum, the lid of the casket has, in the round, a seated Buddha flanked by two Budhistavas. The upper portion of the cylinder shows flying geese in frieze and in the main frieze on the lower part of the cylinder stands Kanishka in front of an undulating garland held in place by attendants. From the latter part of the Gandhara culture the magnificent Fasting Buddha, in the Lahore Museum, is a masterpiece of chiselling. Other metal objects found at Taxila and other important Gandhara sites include tools and implements, such as double-headed hammers, anvils, clippers and chisels, and weapons, including swords, daggers, spears, and helmets.

Another branch of Gandhara metal-craft is represented by coins that have been preserved in a large number. The earliest coins, made in the fifth century B.C., are bent bars of silver with two symbols punched on the sides. Next come the Mauryan coins, thin circular or rectangular pieces of silver and copper alloy, bearing a variety of animal figures such as bulls, elephants, rabbits and dogs. Under Greek and Bactrian influence die-struck coins came into circulation and historians have a special reason to be grateful to the craftsmen who designed these coins as they are the only source of the history of the Scythian and Parthian kings. The tradition continued during the Kushan period and later till the Sassanians set the patterns in the third to fifth centuries A.D. which were copied by the early Sultans of Delhi.

The Muslims brought to the subcontinent a considerably developed tradition of metal-crafts. At the very beginning of Arab conquests they had come into contact with the metal-craftsmen of Asia Minor which was famous for its metal work, especially chasing, engraving and moulding, since ancient times. The craft developed rapidly under the Umayyads and more so under the Abbasides and spread to Egypt and Spain. Even today European museums display with pride their acquisitions of art pieces created by Muslim craftsmen between the tenth and the seventeenth centuries. These craftsmen not only developed and refined the ancient techniques of chasing, engraving, raising, and encrusting, but also designed metal-ware in new forms and shapes. However, their greatest contribution was in the field of ornamentation. They created patterns and motifs in endless variety, from geometric designs and arabesque to floral lace, on a number of items—lamps for mosques, astrolabes, inkstands, pen boxes, tables, swords, shields, etc. Unfortunately, one has to rely mostly on Western researchers for accounts of Muslim metal-craftsmen's work and they are often concerned with collections at one or two museums. However, one can have an idea of the goldsmiths' craft in the early Islamic period from the writings of people like al-Maqrizi, quoted by Lane-Pool, whose inventory of heir-looms collected in Fatimid palaces of Egypt lists "gold and silver inkstands, chess-men, parasol-handles, vases for narcissus

flowers and violets, golden birds and trees set with precious stones", in amazing numbers. Also, the bronze, brass, and copper utensils, furniture and decoration pieces that have survived can help in assessing the achievements of Muslim metal-craftsmen. Besides decorating metal by raising patterns in relief and engraving, they perfected the art of damascening—inlaying designs with gold and silver in steel, bronze or brass. The Spanish, Egyptian and Iraqi styles of inlay work spread to Europe via Sicily and Venice in the fifteenth century. In the South Asian subcontinent old traditions of metal-craft were vastly enriched by the technological innovations introduced by the Muslims from the thirteenth century onwards. During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries the Ottomans in Turkey, the Safavids in Iran and the Mughals in South Asia encouraged the development of new styles. The Mughal period craftsmen in Pakistan received inspiration for metal-ware forms and decoration styles not only from the contemporary Iranians but also from the Central Asian models which formed part of Babar's inheritance.

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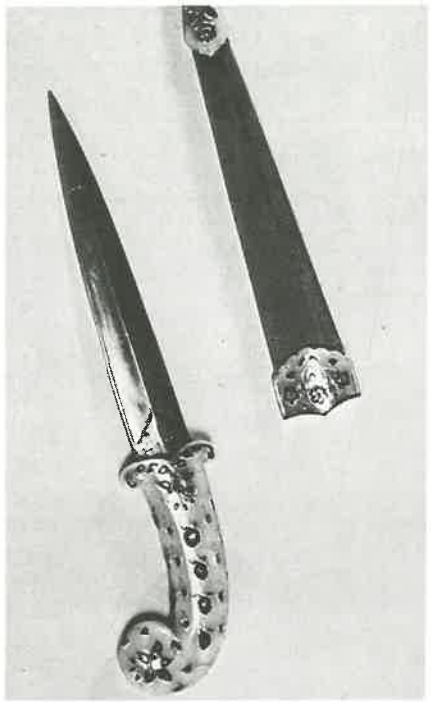

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The metals most widely used during the Muslim period were copper and iron. Often the demand for copper was so great that supplies from indigenous mines had to be augmented with imports and even then there were shortages resulting in sharp jumps in prices. At many places copper was the standard to determine the value of currency. While the non-Muslims continued to use brass utensils the Muslims invariably chose copper as they thought brass was a base material, impure and unhygienic. To guard against poisoning by copper sulphate they had cooking and water vessels periodically plated with tin, which kept a large number of 'qalaigars' busy. Peshawar and Lahore developed into major centres of coppersmiths' craft quite early.

The use of iron ranged from making horse-shoes to weapons. Even the humblest household needed a few kitchen articles made of iron, like tongs and blower and 'tawa' (convex plate for baking bread). 'Karahis' (half-circle pans) were made in different sizes for boiling milk, frying cookies and preparing sweets. Centuries ago gypsy tribes developed a special skill in producing such simple implements in their tents and huts. The village blacksmith concentrated on making plough blades, sickles, shovels, chains, bars, door joint, nails, Persian wheels, stirrups, etc. An idea of the blacksmith's importance to the village community can be had from the fact that he was paid at a higher scale than the goldsmith and the carpenter. However, the field that attracted the greatest attention was the production of armour. The

1. Fasting Buddha.
2. Chased pattern, Mughal style.
3. Kanishka relic casket.
4. Dagger and sheath studded with precious stone.
5. Balban coin.
6. Greek coin.
7. The pattern was set.

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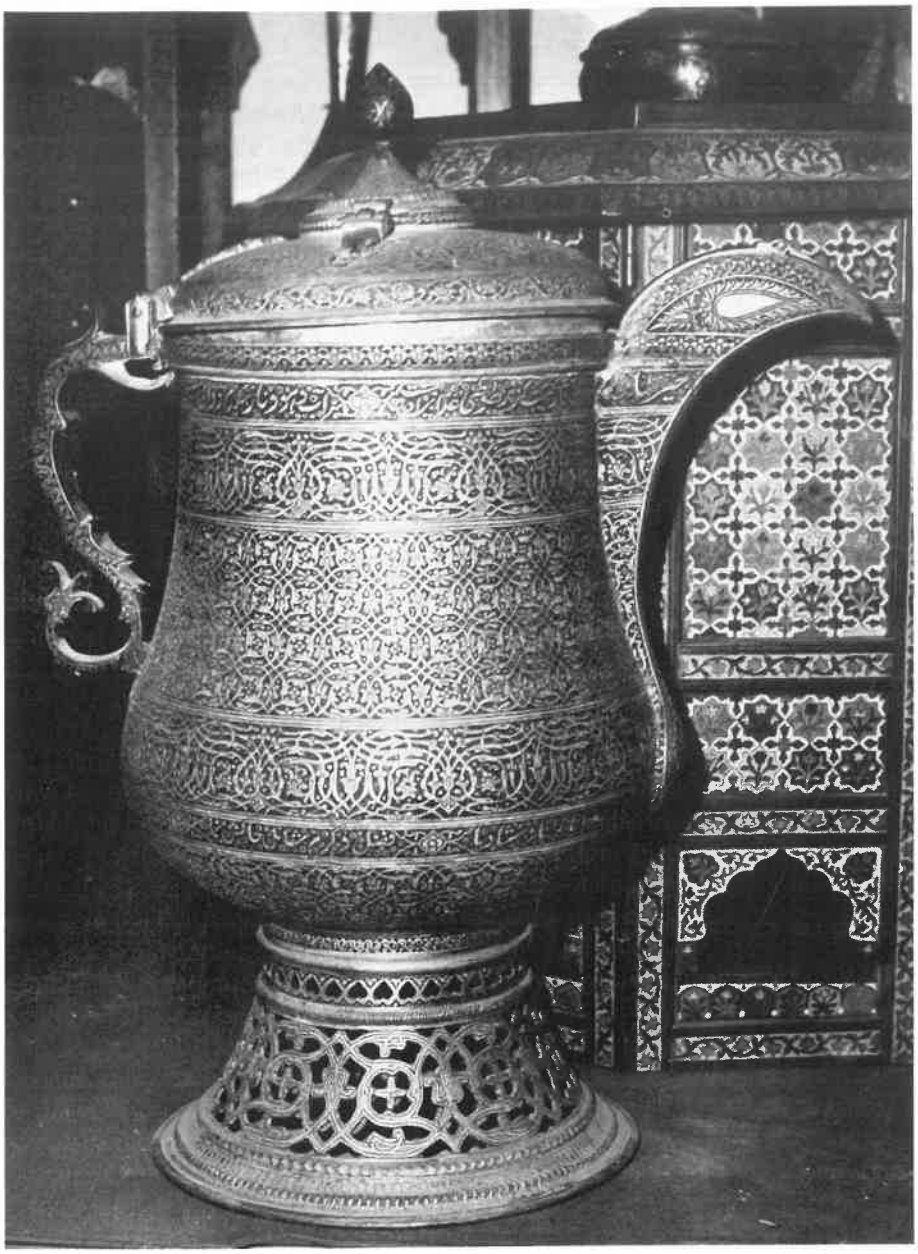

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craftsmen of Wazirabad built up a reputation for making excellent daggers and knives and those in the nearby town of Nizamabad became known for quality swords. Various designs and motifs were engraved on the blades and handles of swords and daggers and these were often inlaid with silver or gold. The availability of iron ore at Khuzdar helped the rise of indigenous iron-crafts in Baluchistan. At the turn of the century blacksmiths in the Yusufzai belt of the Frontier region were reputed for their reliable craftsmanship. A great deal of old armour—swords, shields, daggers, carbines, cannons, coats of arms, and helmets—has survived but the experts are yet to separate the pieces produced by local craftsmen from those imported from Golconda or Iran.

At the same time other raw materials were not ignored. Brass was used to make astrolabes, sun-dials and pen-boxes, all richly carved and ornamented. To meet the demands of the royalty and the nobility there was no shortage of craftsmen who could add to the value of gold and silver. Sir Thomas Rowe was taken aback by the skill of the goldsmiths working in Jehangir's workshops when they produced within a short time several replicas of the gold coach he had ordered from England to please the Mughal ruler. And in the north-west the famous Baluch leader, Mir Chakar, used golden stirrups and presented his friends with gold-inlaid swords.

With the advent of the British the metal-crafts also suffered heavily, some branches

more than the others. For instance, the Nizamabad sword-makers were forced to be content with producing knives and scissors, that too for those who could not afford imports from Sheffield. The Frontier iron-smiths retreated into tribal hideouts to develop their skill in making guns which were often sold as manufactured in Europe.

Today, because of its prohibitive cost, gold is rarely used to make anything other than ornaments but silver-ware is turned out in considerable quantity. The common items are tea sets, bowls, dishes, tumblers, rattles, cutlery, candle-stands, etc. While most consumers are quite happy with die-cast silver-ware, those who care for ornamentation done by hand, and have the means to pay for it, can find craftsmen capable of meeting any order. Normally they are called upon to contribute to the bride's dowry as the well-to-do would like to give the newly-weds a few pieces of silver, like a 'tashtari' (dish) for serving betel leaves, with a dome-like cover piece, or a tray, or a 'gulabpash' (rosewater sprinkler). And many still think an infant will have a better life if the grandmother could give it a silver spoon or a rattle to play with. These days price considerations have forced a switch-over from silver to white-metal. The motifs on all these items are floral or crescents and stars, chased or perforated. However, one craftsman working in silver will not be able to substitute his raw material with anything else—the silver-leaf maker. He cuts silver wire into small pieces and hammers them into rectangular leaves which are spread over sweet dishes at ceremonies. There is nothing remarkable about his workshop or his tools (only a hammer) but the rhythmic metallic sound produced as the hammer falls on silver can hardly be forgotten.

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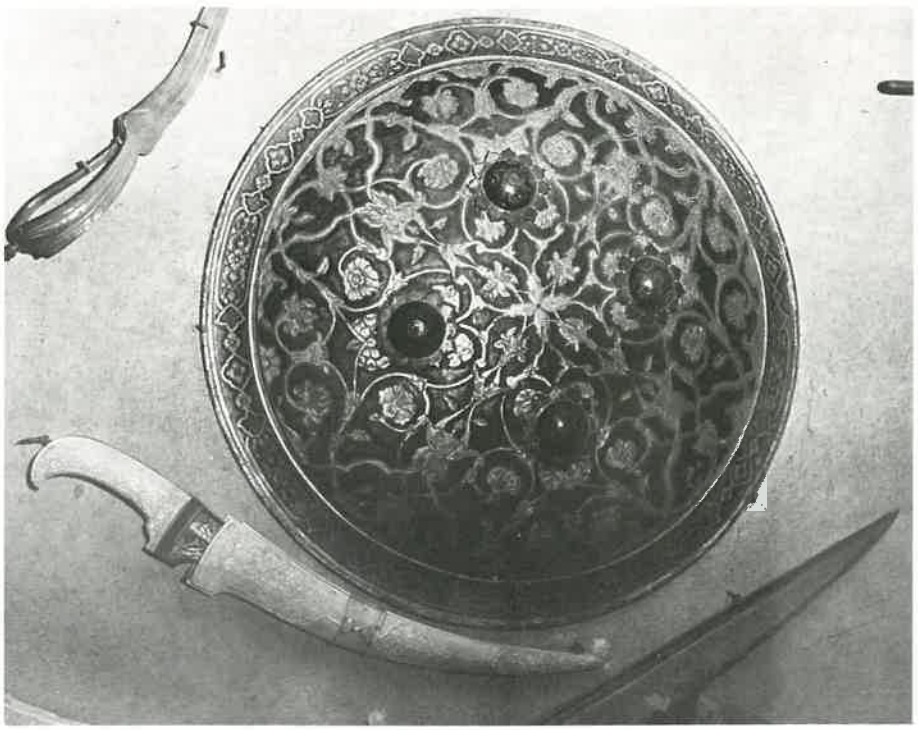

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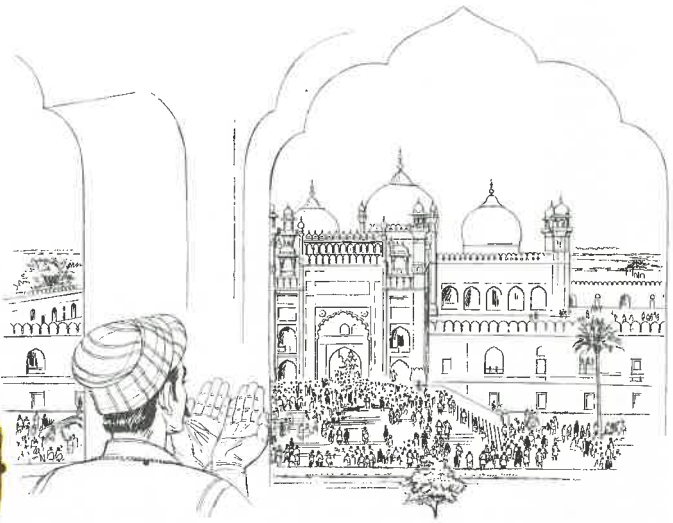
The present generation of blacksmiths can be divided into three categories. The gypsies and village craftsmen produce in large numbers kitchen necessities and simple farming implements. They are entirely concerned with utility objects which do not cost more than the poorer consumers can afford, and considerations of art seldom influence their work. Yet it is not uncommon to see circles and triangles and floral motifs etched on ordinary iron objects. They have certainly not lost the capacity to turn out objects of art. In recent years the old families of craftsmen in Kotli Loharan (town of iron-smiths) have demonstrated their inventive genius on many occasions. To the second category belong craftsmen who concentrate on making various things with iron strips and wires. In recent years they have taken to

1. Chased and incised silver tashtri'.
2. Aftaba,, Lahore.
3. Engraved vessel, Mughal period.
4. Damascening, bronze and steel.
5. Brass for decoration.
6. Pandan.



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making grills, doors and furniture as more and more people are replacing wood with iron. Much of this work may not attract notice but wherever circumstances permit the craftsmen create on gates and screens highly impressive geometric and floral designs. The third category of black-smiths comprises highly talented

persons who have moved up into industry and have earned fame for surgical goods (in Sialkot), electric fans and motors (in Gujranwala-Gujrat region), threshers, harvesters, etc. (Multan and Mardan).

Although brass is still not favoured as a material for cooking vessels, the alloy is increasingly being used by craftsmen to produce functional-cum-decorative objects in large numbers. The decoration may consist of engraved or embossed designs. The art of 'minakari', patterns made with enamel, has again become very popular. A large body of objects has stones set in different patterns. Of late brass lamps have reappeared all over the country. The design varies from simple cylinders to conical forms with richly ornamented tops and foundations.

However, it is in copper that Pakistan's metal-craftsmen's ingenuity is at its highest. The metal-ware markets of Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi are full of handsomely crafted objects. There are cooking pots in different sizes—from small 'degchis' to big 'degs'—and a number of other kitchen items. By tradition considerable attention has been paid to chasing intricate patterns on 'surahis' and 'aftabas'. Looking at the elegantly shaped and superbly decorated 'aftabas' made by Peshawar and Lahore craftsmen one can believe that once they inspired the European designers of Chinaware. Then there are wall-plates in different shapes and sizes. The most popular variety these days is the perforated floral design with some of its parts in relief. Quite a few pictorial designs are also popular. There was a time when 'pandan' (betel box) used to be one of the most attractive items in a bride's dowry, one which could be proudly displayed in the house. The home 'pandan' is now used much less than before but its decorative value has not been affected and craftsmen continue to chase and emboss myriad patterns on its top and sides. The only thing that threatens to dethrone it is the vase which is available

1. Brass lamps are again popular.
2. Peshawar metal-craftsman at work.
3. Enamelled aftaba.
4. Brass 'surahi' and goblets.

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in scores of different shapes. Other copper items include ash-trays, lamp-stands, soup bowls, goblets, spoons, Mohenjo Daro seals, panels in relief, etc.

All the techniques of ornamenting the metal evolved over the centuries—chasing,

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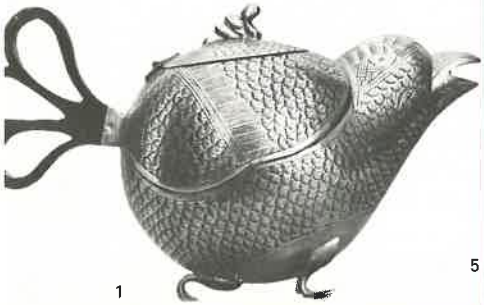

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perforation, and repousse—are practised by contemporary Pakistani craftsmen. Chasing consists of engraving a design on the surface of the metal. In the first phase an imprint is created with a chisel. Then one of the many methods of decoration is resorted to. The space within the design may be cut away with a graver to give the surface a granulated look, called frost work, or punched lines and dots may be arranged in different patterns, or the design may simply be etched. Perforations are made by first chasing the design on the surface of the metal object and then cutting through the lines so that the patterns come out. For repousse or embossing work, the outlines of the design are traced in dots by hammering. The article is then

inverted and placed in a warm bed of wax, resin, mustard oil and brickdust, which on cooling serves as a cushion. The craftsman depresses the design along the dotted line with a hammer till the desired depth is reached. On the obverse the design will appear raised. The inlaying of one metal with another, called damascening, perhaps because the Europeans came across it first in Damascus, is described by Pakistani craftsmen as 'koftgari', from the original Arabic word 'koft'. The base metal is heated and numerous grooves are made in it. A lac base is fixed and on it the design is drawn. Small bits or threads of inlay metal are then hammered into the grooves. The article is heated and rubbed with lime juice and sand to refine the pattern and rubbed again with grease to give the surface shine.

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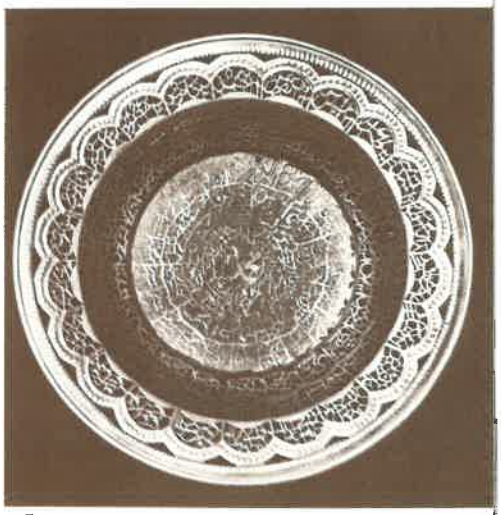
A branch of 'koftgari' is called Bidri work, after Bidar in India where it developed. Families of craftsmen migrating from Bidar to Pakistan have found opportunities to enlarge the scope of their work in the last few years. The base is generally an alloy of zinc though sometimes copper and lead are also used. First the metal base is moulded into the desired shape. The article is then smeared with a solution of copper sulphate which gives it a black colour. Patterns are drawn on the object and then engraved with a sharp chisel to the desired depth. Finally, silver wire or pieces of sheet are hammered into the cavities. The description of the various forms of inlay work reveals the Iranian origin of the popular styles. When wire is inlaid, it is called 'tarkashi': when sheet is inlaid, it is 'tehnishan': low relief is described as 'zarnishan': high relief is 'zarbulund': and cut-out designs on the overlaid metal sheet are called 'aftabi'.



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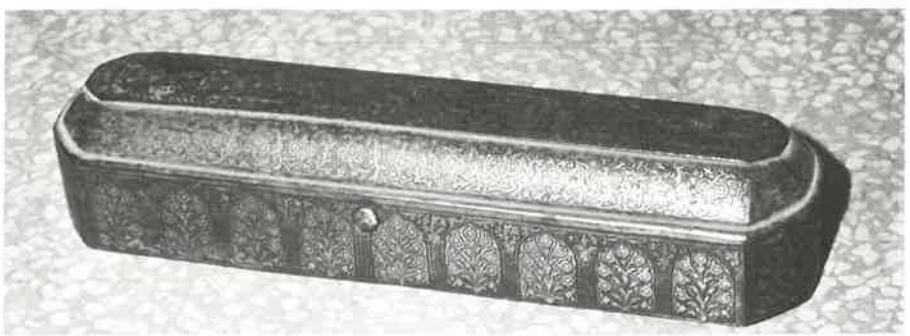
Another distinct school of engraving and enamelling is called Moradabadi which is being continued in Pakistan by craftsmen who migrated from Uttar Pradesh in India. Two types of engraving are common. In one, called 'naqqashi' (sketching), patterns are etched with a steel point. In the other, called 'khudai' (scraping), the ground is scraped and the pattern left to stand out. Before engraving the article is coated with lac on which the pattern is traced. Now the practice of drawing standard patterns is quite common but one can find in a corner of Anarkali in Lahore, or in the backyard of a hut in Lalukhet in Karachi, a craftsman sketching patterns from memory or just the way his fancy takes him. While in Bidri work designs are engraved only against a dark background, Moradabadi craftsmen make decorations in golden colour on a surface made white by tin polishing. Enamelling is also a feature of Moradabadi ware. But of late the craft of enamelling has been taken up by other schools as well. In this process patterns are engraved and then lac is poured into the grooves.

1. Moradabadi teapot.
2. Copper engraver.
3. Enamelled brass plate.
4. Glittering metal-ware.
5. Enamelled wall-plate.
6. Embossed copper tray.
7. Carved in the open, Mughal period.
8. Pen-case, Mughal period, Lahore

The possibilities of making decoration pieces of metal have also attracted a large number of amateur craftsmen. The students of the National College of Arts are experimenting not only with sculptural forms in the different metals but also with scraping and chasing new designs on copper and brass. They are also encouraged to design diverse utility objects—like lamp-stands, tin containers of iron strips woven like mats, and jars. Elsewhere also students and young enthusiasts are making relief panels through the techniques of raising, scraping, or laying patterns in applique-like style.



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8

jewellery

ever more alluring

One of the largest communities of craftsmen in Pakistan is that of the jewellers. Every major town has one or more 'sarafa' bazars and lavishly stocked jewellery stores, and small villages have at least one goldsmith each. Anyone who notices the endless queues at these shops can easily be converted to the belief that the South Asian subcontinent has one of the world's largest hoards of yellow metal and precious stones. The reason lies not only in the Pakistani women's extraordinary passion for ornaments but also in history.

There is good evidence to suggest that till a few centuries ago this part of the world had a great deal to export and needed much less to import, and the trade surplus was usually balanced by the acquisition of gold, brought by intrepid merchants from as far off regions as Siberia. Also, gold was an ideal form of saving which was not affected by migration from one place to another or by any change of rulers and their currencies. The village peasant as well as the nomad could easily carry the bulk of his wealth concealed under the loose robes of the womenfolk. 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 its 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 togther 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.

The earliest specimens of noteworthy craftsmanship are, however, from the Gandhara period. A rich collection of gold ornaments has been found at Taxila showing the several foreign influences that had contributed to the culture of the region. They include all-metal ornaments as well as pieces studded with stone. 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. 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 elsewhere 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 themselves with heavy jewellery and conferring awards on princes and courtiers in the form of precious ornaments.

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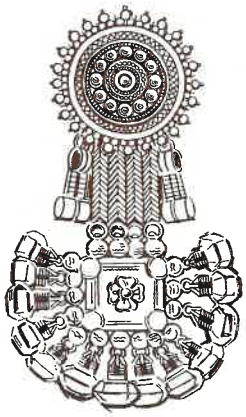

Under Muslim rule, the jewellers' trade was exposed to radically different influences. The Arabs established themselves in Sind at a time when the spirit of asceticism fired by the young faith was still running strong and the injunction against wearing jewellery, especially gold, was largely complied with. This, coupled with a fall in the demand for temple sculpture, dealt a blow to the jewellers' craft. 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. Most of the ornaments produced in Pakistan at present acquired their shape in that period.

No discussion on Pakistan jewellery can be complete without taking into consideration the culture that has grown around it. The central purpose of wearing ornaments is that a woman should appear to her husband as beautiful as possible so that he is happy with her. The prized ornaments are therefore meant for the bride. There are ornaments that a girl must not wear till the time of her wedding and some others which a woman is expected to give up the moment she loses her husband. This is best illustrated by the custom surrounding the wearing of nose ornaments. In order to prepare a girl for wearing bridal ornaments the left side of her nose is pierced at an early age and to ensure that the hole does not fill up a wooden pin is inserted into it. The richer one can have silver or golden pins instead. When she becomes a bride she is entitled to wear the 'nath', a large loop hooked to the ear with a chain. For quite some time the newly-wed is expected to wear all her bridal ornaments when meeting guests or attending ceremonies. On such occasions she may put on the 'nath' also. But soon afterwards the ornament is put aside till its owner can pass it on to her daughter or daughter-in-law. For the rest of her life, she contents herself with wearing a 'long', a clove-shaped pin topped by an elaborately designed head. Similarly, a married woman must have something on

her wrists; bangles (usually of glass) are a sign of her happy marital status. The first thing a woman is supposed to do the moment her husband passes away is to smash her bangles. However, it seems that at some point in history rich and influential women became widows and they managed to change the rule to the extent that a widow could eventually replace her glass bangles with golden ones. Many a happy widow has found this change welcome for she can sheathe both her forearms with gold.

The wide range of Pakistani ornaments can also be understood by reference to two aspects of the custom. First, they have been designed to cover every part of the woman's body except the torso. Second, the popular fashion is to wear ornaments in ensembles—matching pieces for ears, neck, hands, and feet. The essential pieces are meant for ears, nose, neck, and wrists. A woman seen with ears or wrists 'naked', i.e. without any ornaments, is put down as one in dire straits. However, the main thing that matters in the designing of jewellery is, obviously, the amount of money the bread-winner can spare on this account and the social status of the lady. That is the dividing line not only between women of different means but also between jewellery fashions and the materials used to make ornaments.

Although most of the Pakistani ornaments are made of both gold and silver, the latter is generally used for folk jewellery. A rich tradition is found throughout the rural areas of the country but the most striking pieces are found in the Northern Areas. The common items are 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. Whatever their origin 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 all the time. Delicate pieces of jewellery and fancy hooks would not go with her style of living.

1. Punched-sheet necklace
2. Heavy pieces in silver, Northern Areas
3. Beads for common people

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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.

The nose ornaments—'keel' (pin), 'long' (clove) and 'nath'—have been mentioned earlier. In some parts of the country women wear 'long' on both sides of the nose. In the most expensive 'nath' the golden hoop carries a big pearl between two rubies. 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, plain or latticed discs, or leaves set with a stone in the centre. A little higher in estimation are

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'bundey', 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). But nothing compares in glamour with the 'jhoomkas'—fringed bells suspended from tops—and 'jhularian'—multi-tiered strands hanging from tops.

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

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Ear-pendant, Taxila; most complex pattern. 1.

Kara; little change. 2

Pazeb. 3

Ear-pendant, Taxila. 4

Tauq and ear-rings to match. 5

Jewellery from Harappa. 6

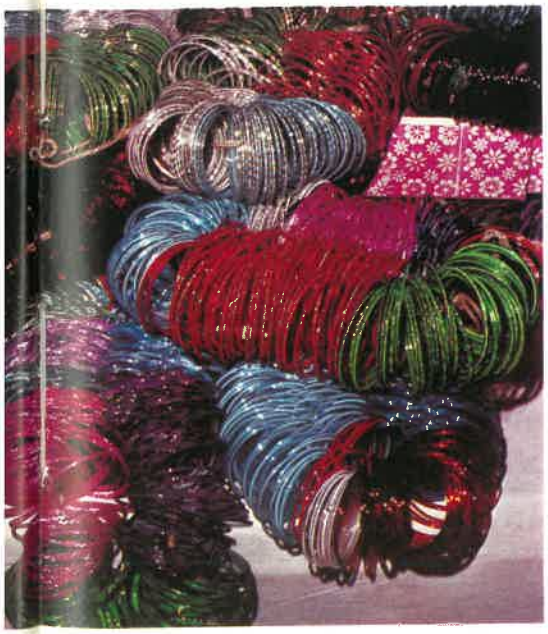
Malas for a goddess, Mohenjo Daro. 7

An extraordinary passion for ornamentation. 8.

Jhoomkas, designed by Noor Jehan. 9

Nothing like glass bangles. 10

Kundan necklace set; trial of skill. 11



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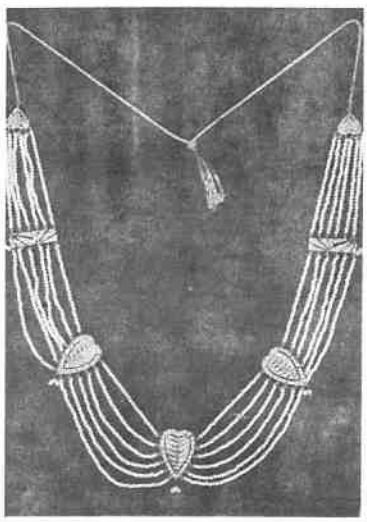
little lower it is described by the generic name of necklace. Still lower down on the breast is worn 'champakali', so called because the fringe is made up of a row of champa buds. Then there are 'hars', 'malas' and lockets. For the more sophisticated there is 'satlara', a necklace with seven identical strands of pearls, and 'chandan har'.

Har; pendant and pearls 1
Har; folk style. 2
Teeka and singhar patti; silver. 3
Bali, pattey and drops. 4
For the bride; jhoomar, nath. 5
Buttons, silver; Swat. 6
Jhanjhan has survived. 7
Locket. 8

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 in chasing or 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 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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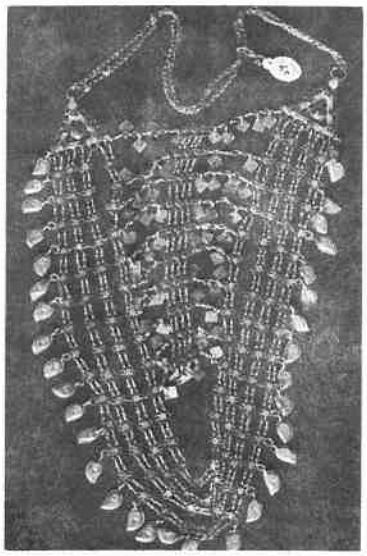
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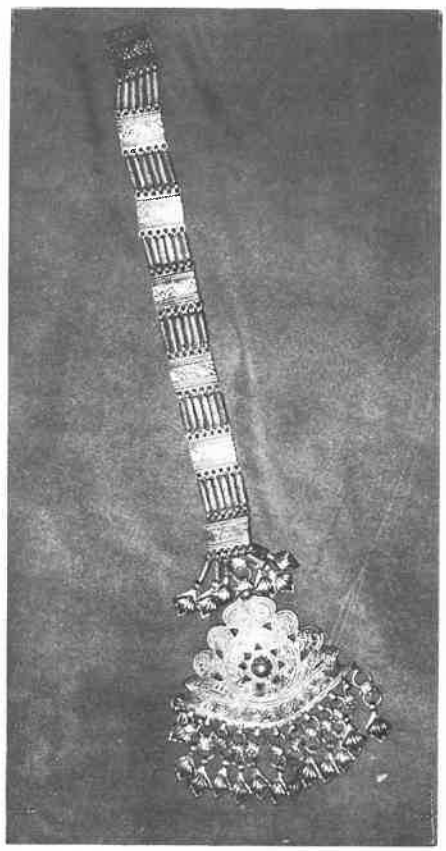
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and with separate chains to rings for all the five fingers. Finally, there are finger rings in countless designs. The one topped with a mirror is worn on the forefinger and called 'arsi'. It is specially meant for the bride. A most romantic moment in the wedding ceremony is when the bridegroom is invited to catch a glimpse of the bride's face in the 'arsi' mirror.

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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 students 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, 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.

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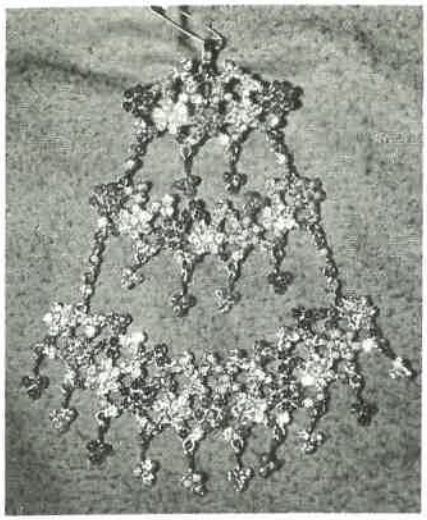
Some of the traditional ornaments, like 'hansli' 'kangan', 'pariband', 'jhanjhan', 'lachhey', 'pazeb', etc., are usually made of silver, while a few, like 'paunhchi', only of gold, and the rest of both. The recent spurt in gold price has led to its replacement by palladium set with diamonds, particularly among Pakistanis working abroad.

For those who can afford neither gold nor silver, imitation jewellery is available in enormous quantities. For this the craftsmen use copper, brass, bone, ordinary stone and glass. All the traditional ornaments are available in cheaper materials. Indeed, some of the heavy ornaments, like 'satlara', 'ranihar', and even 'jhoomar', are now made of gold only on order but in imitation jewellery shops they are readily available. A large variety is also available in conchshell. In the Northern Areas, the 'kauri' is used to create magnificent ornaments, from ear-rings, pendants and necklaces to large head covers that appear to be the most striking development of the ceremonial wig.

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 repousse 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



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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 1,063°C, when gold is heated with copper both melt at 890°C. 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',

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1. Jhoomar.
2. Ensemble: matching pieces for the neck, ears, and fingers.
3. Necklace.
4. Tauq.
5. Pariband; now rare.
6. Necklace, popular design
7. In imitation, even a Rani-har.
8. Stone beads, still in use.
9. Bala, 5"x5".
10. Patterns on bangles.

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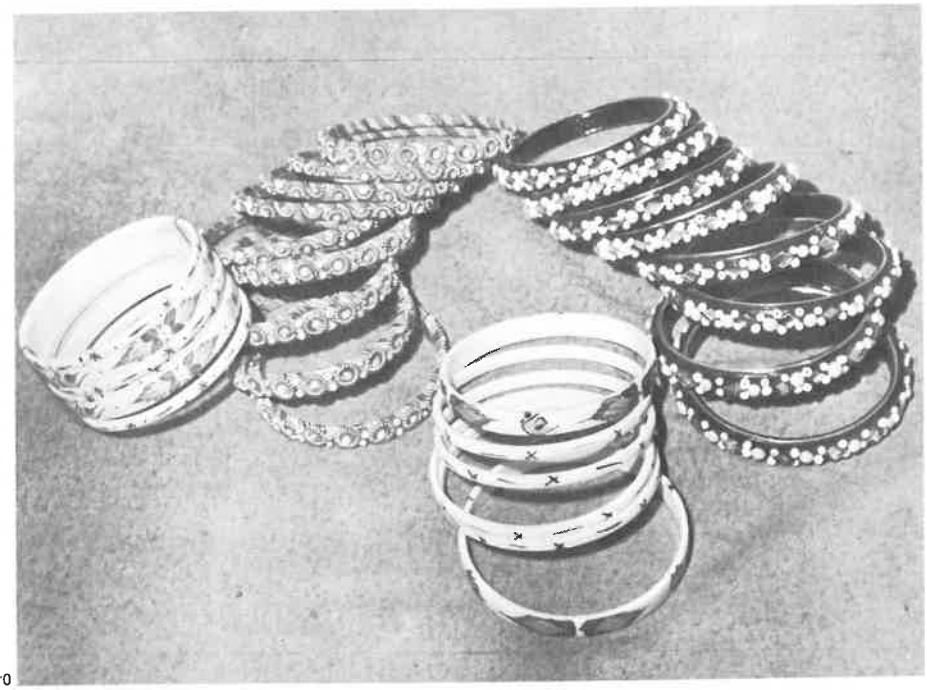

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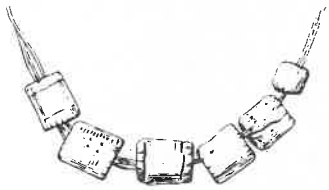
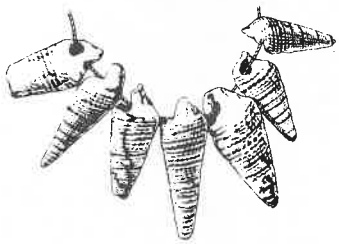
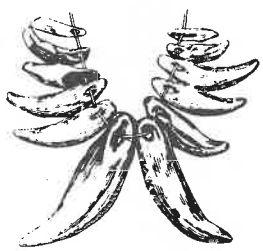
The first necklaces.



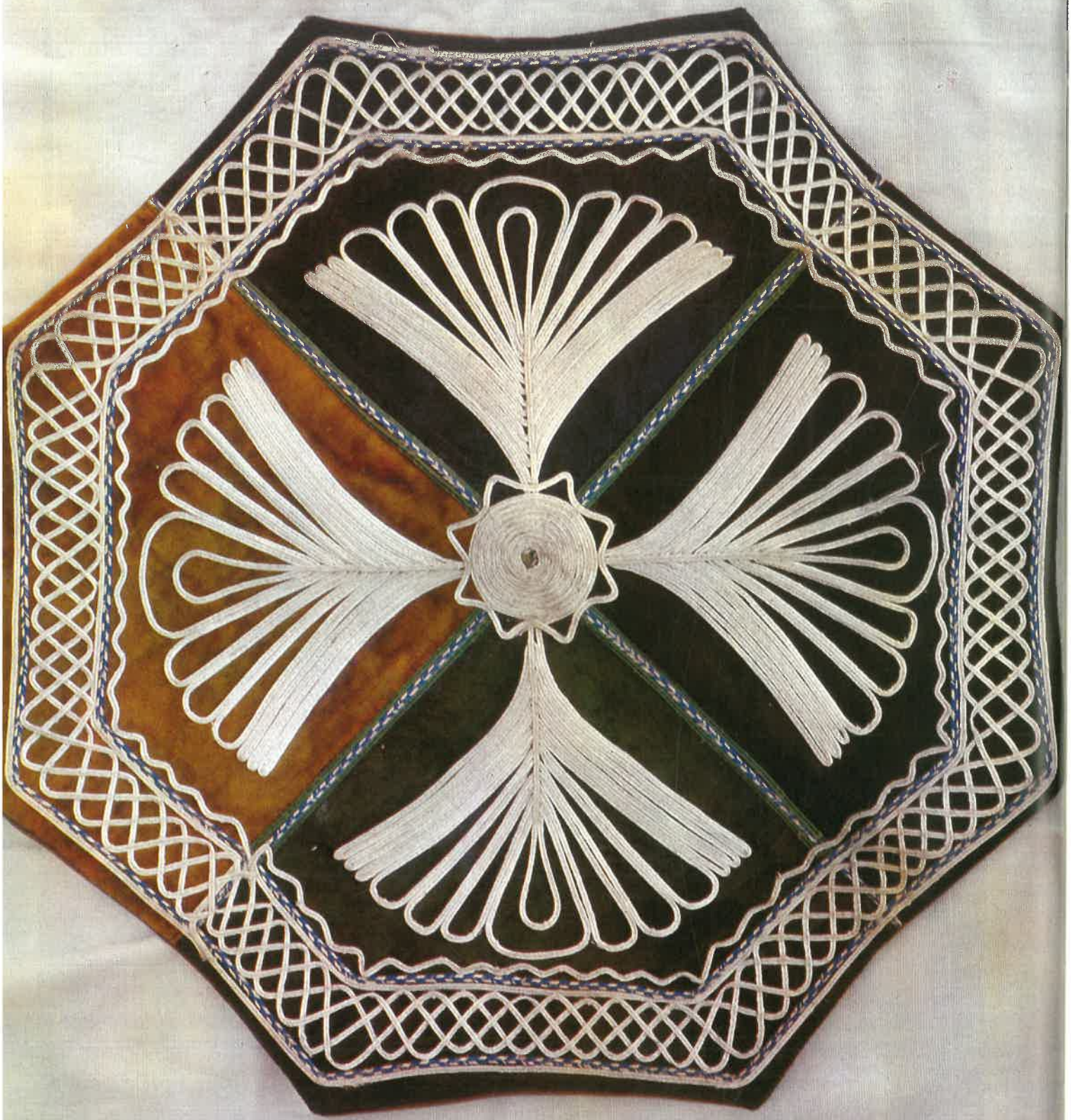




'bazooband', and 'paunhchi'—cords are used. These cords are made by coiling gold or silk thread over a core of tougher threads, and the ends are knotted in fine shapes.

GLASS BANGLES

The ornament in largest circulation is the old bangle. The style of covering the whole of the forearm with an ivory spiral, immortalized by the Mohenjo Daro figurines, is still in vogue in Sind, though in many cases the effect is produced by separately cut bangles and ivory has largely been replaced with bone. Another old style is represented by lac bangles set with stone and glass. But nothing can compete with the glass bangle in variety of designs and colours. Hyderabad boasts a vast community of glass-bangle makers. Whatever the raw material, the bangles display ornamental motifs—flowers, petals, creepers—painted or in relief.



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Leather

By Labour Restored

As one of the major livestock breeding countries (65.05 million livestock heads according to 1977 estimates) and a leading producer of hides and skins (with annual output of eight million hides, seven million goat skins and about four million sheep skins, it ranks seventh, third, and twentieth, respectively, in the world), Pakistan obviously has the basic means to sustain a flourishing leather-craft. And in this field, too, it can claim a tradition that began in ancient times.

Sheep-breeding was one of the main occupations of the Neolithic inhabitants of Baluchistan and they used sheep-skin to make tents and apparel. The Rigvedas mention the presence of tanners and leather-craftsmen in large numbers in the Gandhara Valley. Herodotus noted that people of Gandhara wore clothes of skin and Hiuen Tsang found here sheep and horses in enormous numbers. Sindhi embroidered slippers were in great demand in Baghdad in eighth to tenth centuries. By the time Marco Polo arrived on the scene in the thirteenth century, finely crafted leather mats, embossed with birds and animals and embroidered with gold and silver threads, had become regular exports from this part of the subcontinent to Egypt, Iraq and Arabia. When the European traders first reached Thatta in the sixteenth century they found that not only hides were exported in large quantities, numerous tanneries in the region were producing fine quality leather—called Sind leather. They were particularly impressed by saddles ornamented with back-stitch work in different colours.

The scarlet leather mat that attracted the attention of Marco Polo still occupies the

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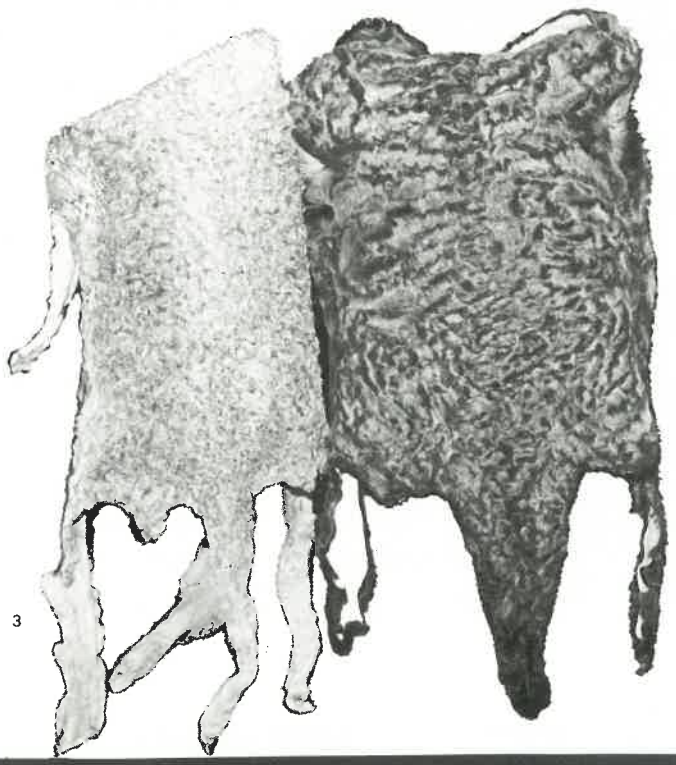

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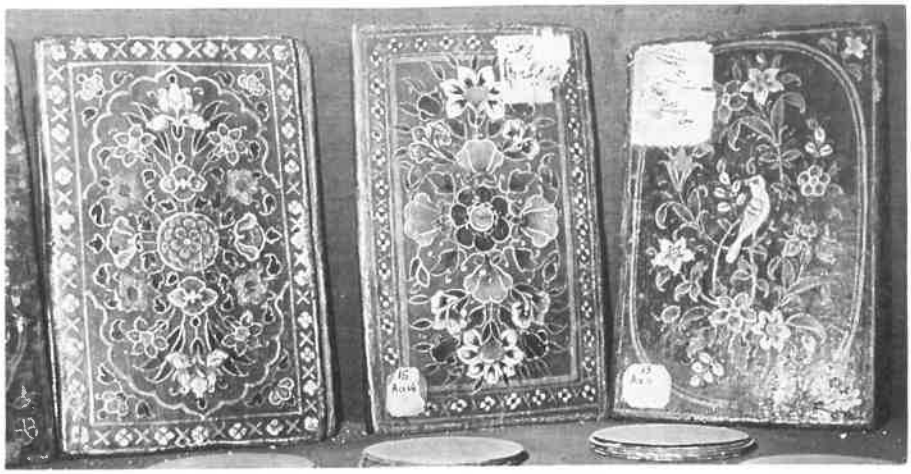
1. Baluchi needle-work
2. Camel-skin vase.
3. Karakul skins.

Floral patterns on book covers. 1
Modern leather wear. 2
Leather jacket. 3
Sambar leather chappals, Baluchistan. 4
Leather embroidery, traditional craft in Baluchistan 5



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pride of place among the articles designed by Pakistani leather-craftsmen. Called 'nutt' (from Arabic 'nataa') it represents a traditional Sindhi craft, the main centres being Mithi and Chachro in the Thar desert though small-scale production continues in Jacobabad, Khairpur, Kandhkot, Thull and Garhi Khairo in the Khairpur Division. The traditional use of the 'nutt' was as a floor rug or bed cover or saddle cloth but in the recent past it has often been used as a wall-hanging or as a cushion-cover. Made of camel, goat or dear skin, it comes in different shapes—square, rectangular and circular—and sizes ranging from three feet by four feet to four feet by six feet. In the past the skin was usually dyed blue, red and yellow but at present the rich shades of mustard are perhaps the most popular. Often pieces of skin in different colours are stitched together to form a 'rilli'-like pattern. Usually the decoration consists of a medallion in the centre with elaborately worked borders and corner designs, all embroidered with gold, silver, silk or synthetic threads. The motifs vary from geometric designs to floral patterns and animal themes. A western observer once found the highest merit in these nutts "which

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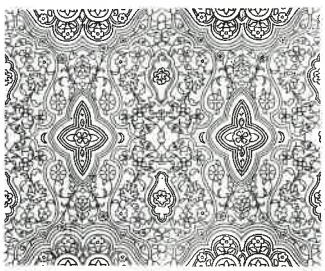
consist of Sambar leather and have central medallions, borders and corner pieces, done in applique, with black, red or green leather embroidered over the surface in chain stitch, and with silver and gold work judiciously intermixed." A contemporary authority would find it difficult to disagree.

Likewise, the art of decorating a variety of leather goods with chain-stitch embroidery with gold, silver, cotton, and woollen threads has continued down the ages in Baluchistan and the adjoining D.G. Khan district of the Punjab. The craft is practised by both men and women and different varieties of leather are used. Finely stitched geometric designs are executed on leather mats, bags, purses, and belts. Often polygonal forms are laid one within another in different colours. The region also produces embroidered saddlery and trappings in dazzling variety

Among the conventional forms of leather-craft the most widely practised is that of footwear. Although the country has about twenty fully mechanised shoe factories, over seventy per cent of the people wear wholly or partly hand-crafted shoes, and it is not uncommon to find a European visitor valuing a pair of shoes made by a craftsman sitting on the footpath higher than the more expensive machine-made variety. Each region of the country has developed its own traditional footwear to suit the terrain and the climate. In the Frontier region, the thin-strapped sandals and two-strap 'chappals', named after Peshawar, remind one of old Greek designs that have survived because of men's need of heavy wear and comfortable shoes for use in rough hilly areas. The simpler 'chappals' have plain uppers of chrome leather but a new fashion of cutting floral patterns into the uppers is becoming increasingly popular. The best pieces of craftsmanship, however, are sandals and 'chappals' embroidered with golden, silver, woollen or synthetic threads. For women there are lighter sandals and slippers with far more intricate embroidery. The Salim Shahis, popularised by Jehangir, are also elaborately decorated. In Baluchistan, Sambar leather 'chappals' decorated with embroidery, beads and frills possess a unique attraction. Similarly, in Sind the women's traditional footwear, 'triguli', with



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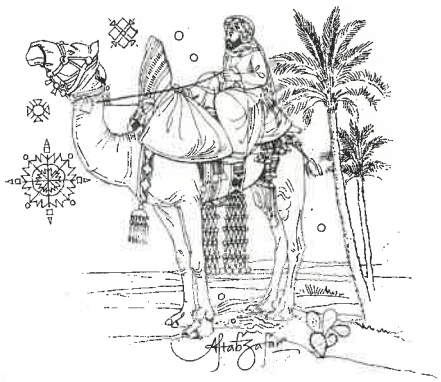
Embroidered khussa. 1
Embroidered leather, Baluchistan. 2
Camel from camel-skin. 3
Embroidery on leather. 4
Large camel-skin vase. 5

a broad embroidered toe, covered with fluffy pom-poms, remains a prized possession. In the Potohar region of the Punjab, a sturdier version of the Salim Shahi, with a turned up toe, fits in with the rugged terrain and the robust taste of the strongly-built menfolk. Lahore craftsmen specialise in embroidered buff or velveteen uppers for the traditional Punjabi 'jooti'. In the Multan-Bahawalpur region the close-fitting, thick leather 'khussa' has held its ground for centuries. A common feature of these traditional 'jootis' is that both-pieces of a pair are identical in shape and each can be put on either foot. Also, they are without extra heels except for a thin piece of leather nailed or stitched to the rear part of the sole. The 'khussa' has an additional peculiarity in that its front and back halves leave identical imprints on soft soil, which makes it difficult to determine the direction in which the man leaving these marks was moving.

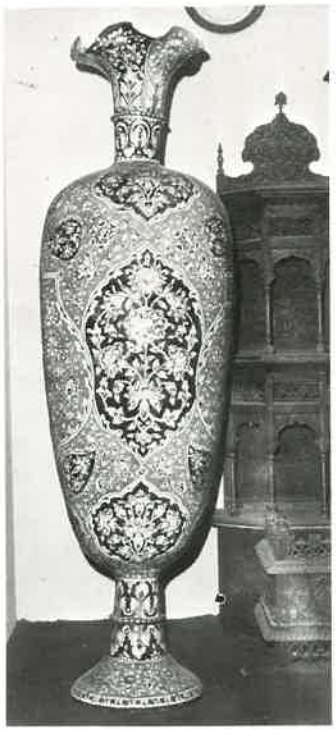
A notable branch of the traditional leather-craft is book-binding for which medieval Muslim craftsmen were famous throughout the world. Examples of fine book-covers, made in Peshawar, Lahore and Hyderabad between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries are found not only in museums in Pakistan but also in libraries in London, Paris, Berlin, Tashkent and Dushambe. The more outstanding specimens are decorated with miniature paintings or embossed floral motifs. Unfortunately, the growing availability of printed books and the ease with which they can be replaced has led to a fall in the demand for leather-bound volumes. Even the lawyers, who constituted for quite some time the bulk of lovers of such binding, are no longer sure that the contents of their books will retain their value long enough to warrant stout leather covers. However, the demand for leather-bound presentation copies of the Quran and some cherished chronicles has kept the tradition alive and if one went around Lahore, Peshawar, or Hyderabad, looking for accomplished book-binders, the search could end fruitfully in any one of the dozens of humble-looking establishments presided over by veterans of long years.

In the villages a large number of craftsmen continue to use home-cured leather to stitch sturdy shoes or make attractive animal trappings. The water-carrier still uses a leather 'mashk' to bring water from the well and where water to irrigate lands is drawn from wells the 'charas' is quite commonly used. Leather is also used in the 'hookah' bottle. A popular style is to insert a strip of leather between two metal walls of the hookah and rivet it with nails. In Peshawar and Rawalpindi, where most of the tongas are painted and decorated with loving care, horse trappings are embroidered and studded with brass nails, strips and cut-out patterns.



Besides, leather craftsmen turn out travelling kits, belts, sword-sheaths, gun-cases, sports goods, ladies' hand-bags, purses, pouches and whips in different shapes. Many of these items are decorated with, besides embroidered patterns, beads and applique work. Stool-sized leather cushions were quite popular till some time ago but now most people use leather for only the top of 'pirhis' and 'moorhas'.

Apart from the 'nutts' a number of other leather goods are made from skins. There is a sizable production of shoes, hand-bags, pouches and wallets made of reptile skins. In these items, however, the craftsmen concentrate on experimenting with forms and little effort is made to interfere with the natural pattern on the skin. Another branch of craftsmen has taken to producing caps from Karakul skins, the most famous variety of which is called Jinnah Cap since it was adopted by the founder of the State, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Patterned on the style common in the Central Asian region, the Pakistani Karakul cap is generally lower in height and tapers upwards, obviously because of the milder climate in this part of the world. In the northern regions sheep-skin is sewn into winter coats and a large variety of hats for both men and women are made of fox-skin and minks.



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In terms of colour scheme and fine lacquer painting there is nothing in the range of leather crafts as exciting as the camel-skin work made famous by skilled artists in Multan-Bahawalpur region. They mould camel skin into all the shapes of pottery and apply lacquer colour mixes to create breathtaking patterns. The technique is partly quite simple. The skin of the camel is stretched on clay moulds and allowed to dry. The moulds are subsequently broken and the skin cleaned, washed and dried again. But the second part of the operation that of lacquer painting demands skill and imagination of the highest order. The patterns and motifs painted on camel skin articles are in different colours and vary from intricate floral designs and arabesque to reproductions of Mughal miniatures, folk legends, and famous places of religious or historical importance. The most popular item is the camel-skin lamp. When lighted the hollow stand and the canopy emit a most fascinating glow. No less striking are camel-skin vases, bottles, bowls, dishes, and circular plates bearing exquisite floral designs. Strangely enough, among the many animal figures the camel-skin is moulded into the one done best perhaps is the camel.

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1. Embroidered khussas, Multan.
2. Jootis, different styles.
3. Camel-skin lamp, fascinating glow.
4. Leather-bound presentation copies.
5. Applying lacquer on camel skin.
6. In craftsman's workshop, Baluchistan.
7. Camel-skin lamp.
8. Zari sandals, Peshawar.

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miscellaneous

throwaways for art

The white, gleaming tusk of the elephant has had a unique attraction for aesthetes in all lands and all ages, and has been used by craftsmen to create objects of imperishable beauty. Anyone not familiar with Pakistan's history might be intrigued to find exquisitely carved ivory pieces in a country where the elephant became extinct centuries ago and where the high cost of the imported raw material as well as the difficulty in marketing expensive ivory articles cannot but discourage the general body of craftsmen. But, apart from the fact that till only a few years ago the territory of Pakistan included a part of the subcontinent where elephants have survived to this day, the ivory craftsmen of the country, like workers in othermedia, have a long tradition behind them. They can claim at least a part of the legacy of artists whose work was acquired by King Solomon in tenth century B.C. and by Darius four centuries later. Excavations at both Mohenjo Daro and Taxila have yielded many specimens of ivory craft—human figures, draughtsmen, combs, and spindle whorls—and the wearing of ivory bangles by the women of the Indus Valley

1. Sea shells, natural beauty.
2. Carved from bone.
3. Ivory carved in the open.

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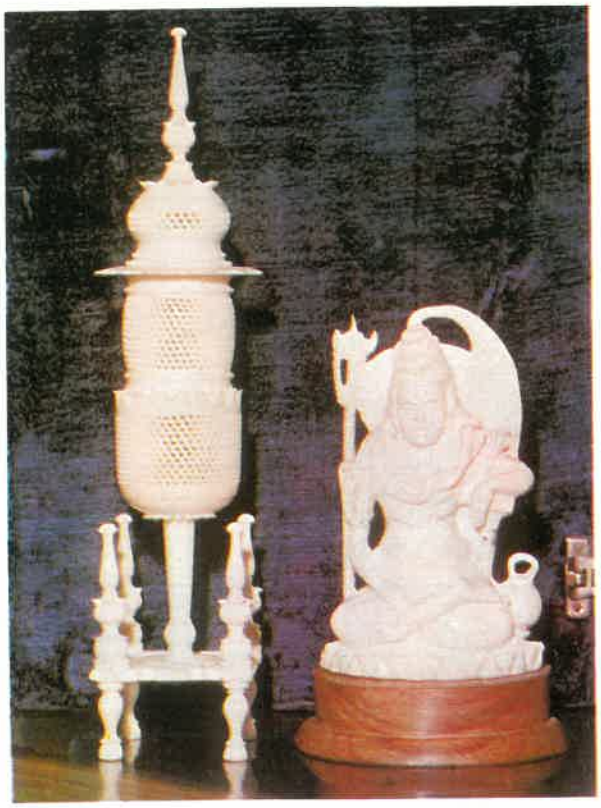

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has remained a fashion for at least five thousand years. Sir Mortimer Wheeler is not sure that the elephant had been tamed by the Indus Valley people but agrees that "its ivory was freely used." While thrones changed hands and dynasties of rulers rose and fell, the ivory craftsman hardly ever lost his clientele. Armed with only a saw and a few chisels he continued to cut and etch and carve. While his techniques remained unchanged the evolution of new designs and decorative motifs was a necessity forced by the changing beliefs and social values. During the Muslim period his craft also was inspired by the Islamic genius for ornamentation and under the Mughals he reached the pinnacle of glory.

1. Ivory, several motifs.
2. With needle and chisel.
3. Diverse techniques.
4. Ivory inlaid table-top.
5. Ornaments, too.
6. Carved ivory, fight for survival.

It would be difficult to list all the uses to which ivory has been put and enumerate all the shapes the craftsmen's imagination has given it. It shares with the diamond the distinction of being prized even in uncut, unpolished form. Not long ago, a pair of ivory tusks forming an arch on the wall of the drawing room could point not only to the owner's wealth but also to his manly taste. There is no significant evidence of ivory's use in architecture but it was fairly extensively used in furniture. On an even greater scale it was favoured by craftsmen specialising in jewellery and sculpture. The smoothness of its surface made it an ideal choice for handles of 'morchhals', walking sticks and daggers. And it was used to create objects of purely ornamental value as well as many which served utilitarian as well as decorative purposes.

The present generation of Pakistan's ivory craftsmen has inherited all of these traditions. Because of the high costs and scarcity of raw material most of the ivory objects made now are small in size but where sponsors are willing the craftsmen can make bigger pieces. In the simplest form ivory is used for inlaying wood and making bangles, chessboards, plain jewellery and snuff boxes, combs, card-cases, paper-cutters, 'surma salais', and handles for bags and walking sticks. A higher level of workmanship involves the etching and engraving of sculptural, floral or geometric motifs on the surface of these objects. More elaborately crafted are solid objects such as animal figures. A favourite theme is the carving of a cavalcade of tigers, elephants, or horses from a single ivory piece. The animals can be of a uniform size but often the size is reduced till at the tail of the row there is only a tiny figure. Many craftsmen specialise in carving animals in postures when their strength and the instinct to survive are most in evidence. Some of their creations show lions or crocodiles in combat or the classical clash between the snake and the mongoose. One can feel not only the taut sinews but also the energy vibrating through the limbs and muscles of the superbly chiselled and etched animal figures. The ultimate in modern Pakistani ivory craft is floral tracery and lace-like

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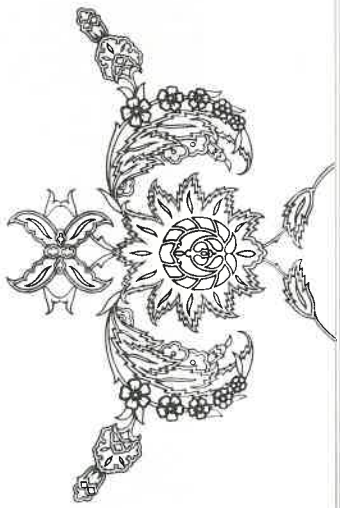

perforation work done on all kinds of objects—jewellery, caskets, decoration pieces. A popular trend these days is to design intricately carved lamp-stands. The entire surface of the hollow cylinder is carved in round with a free blending of motifs from the floral, the arabesque and the calligraphic to the sculptural. One may even find the stand topped over with an eagle or the Mohenjo Daro Dancing Girl.

In some of the stages in ivory craft the use of turners is now common but essentially the craftsman relies on his hands. The quality of his work depends on how precise the movement of his fingers can be. To begin with, he should know to what uses the

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solid and hollow parts of the elephant tusk can be put. The cutting of the tusk to get solid pieces for carving and conical or flat pieces for bangles and plate-work is no simple operation. The real work begins with the drawing of the desired object's sketch on the ivory piece in pencil and then comes the most delicate part of the operation—etching, engraving or carving—when each stroke of the chisel or the needle must be carefully measured. When the object is ready the surface may need to be smoothed with sandpaper. Finally, to bring out the maximum lustre the piece is dipped in methylated spirit or water mixed with hydrogen peroxide.

For those who are not rich enough to buy ivory, bone and horn have always served as vastly cheaper substitutes. In the last few years bone inlay work on wood has become extremely popular in Pakistan. Bone jewellery is also produced in a large quantity and present-day craftsmen are creating almost all the designs that made ivory work the delight of the royalty. But horn should be considered as something more than a substitute for ivory. Because of its natural shape and tonal variations it can stand on its own. Deer horn is a nature-carved walking stick or leg of a table. Exact replicas of horn goblets of the ancient times make attractive pieces of decoration, especially the ones with onyx-like colour patterns and lustre. The same characteristics have guaranteed the continued use of horn for making combs, hair-pins, buttons, handles for umbrellas, knives, bags, ash-trays, pen stands, candle-

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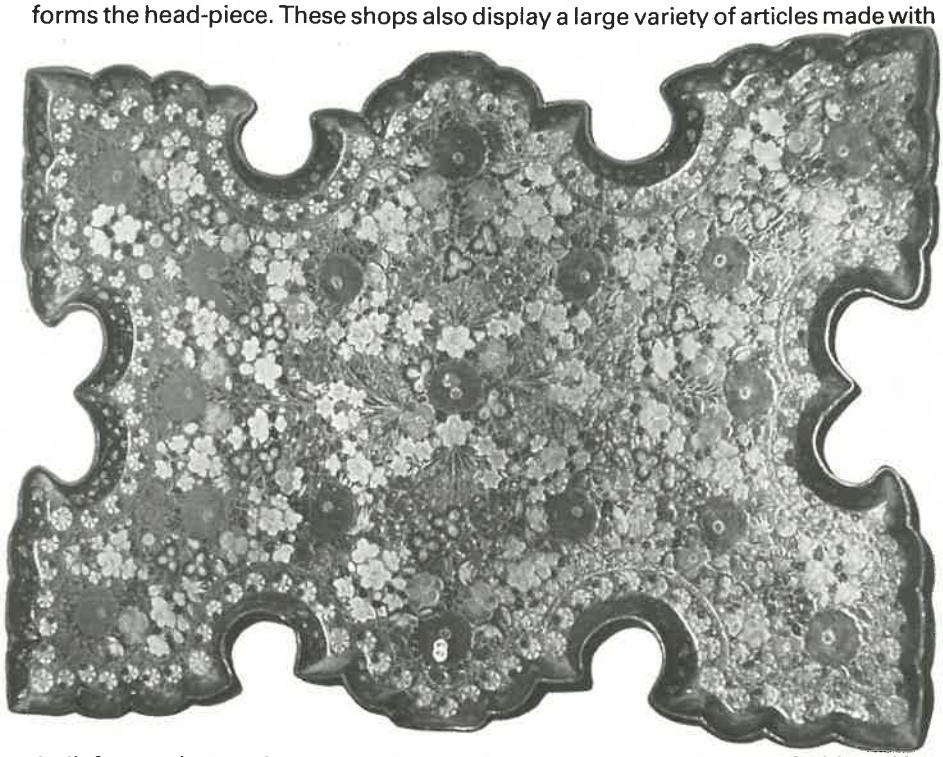
sticks, lamp-stands, toys, etc. The more sophisticated horn craftsmen enhance the beauty of their products not only by engraving and carving but also by inlaying them with ivory or metal thread.

SHELL

The extensive use of the 'kauri' in ornaments in the Northern Areas has been noted in the chapter on jewellery. In the plains 'kauri' ornaments have been discarded by women except in some gypsy tribes. But there too the hardy shell has survived, and not only in the proverb coined in the days when it used to be the lowest denomination of money. It is still widely used to make necklaces and trappings for animals. The large-sized, brown 'kauri' makes an attractive paper-weight and the souvenir shops along the beach in Karachi are full of shell dolls in which the 'kauri' forms the head-piece. These shops also display a large variety of articles made with



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1. With shells and pebbles.
2. Sea-shell dolls.
3. Fish-scales flowers.
4. Papier-mache tray.
5. Papier-mache, Mughal period.

shell, from ash-trays in natural shape and colour to toys and trinkets fashioned by craftsmen generation after generation. Scores of items are made of conch-shell alone. Certain varieties only need to be cleaned and polished before use as table decorations. The smaller pieces are used to make attractive ear-rings. In many cases the beauty of the object owes as much to the craftsman's skill in cutting the shell and in putting together pieces of different colours as to the natural shape and colour of the shell itself.

PAPIER-MACHE

There was a time when small girls in most families in Pakistan were taught to make papier-mache baskets and dishes. Then waste-paper started fetching money or came to be exchanged for utensils and trinkets, and interest in papier-mache largely disappeared. The craft has recently reappeared and quite appropriately the agents of its revival are the same that had made it one of the most important crafts in the subcontinent three-hundred years ago—Kashmiri craftsmen. No visitor to the Lahore Museum can fail to note the superb craftsmanship of papier-mache dishes, jewellery and powder boxes, and 'qalamdans' (pen cases) made in the Mughal period. The finely painted floral patterns on these smoothly shaped objects speak volumes of the craftsmen's skill and sense of colour.

During the dark period of colonial rule this craft suffered grievously and the break in

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tradition shows in present-day work. However, the popularity papier-mache items have again begun to enjoy and the variety in designs and motifs already visible encourage the hope that new Kashmiri artists will soon begin to match the ingenuity of their ancestors. Their common products are dishes, bowls, vases, powder boxes, cigarette cases, jewellery boxes, pen-trays, etc. The patterns and motifs elaborately painted on these objects are mostly floral but also include human figures, birds, orchards of fruit-laden trees, and legends. Golden yellow ground is still preferred but there is an increasing use of green, blue and red. If some of the patterns, like arabesque, calligraphy and scroll work, point to the Arabic and Persian influences the trees and flowers found in Kashmir tell of the craftsman's attachment to his soil.

The craft is wholly traditional. In some cases fully pulped material is used, but more often than not paper is softened by water and pasted in layers over the mould till the desired thickness is achieved. While still wet the object is given a thin coat of plaster of Paris mixed with glue. The surface is smoothed with wet stone or a metal piece and then the ground colour is applied. After the piece has fully dried the design is painted in water colour. Finally it is varnished with a glaze of copal in turpentine. Most of the craftsmen now use common paint brushes but some old ones still use home-made brushes of goat hair or, for extremely fine work, of squirrel's hair.

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1. Revived by Kashmiris.
2. A companion for the child.
3. And get married.
4. With rag and thread.

DOLLS AND TOYS

Something about dolls and toys has been said in the previous chapters but there are varieties that could not be mentioned because the material used for them does not justify a detailed treatment. The most important is the rag doll. Nothing among the items turned out by modern toy factories has reduced the magic of the rag doll for Pakistani girls. With a rag stuffed with cotton, wool, straw or saw-dust, the facial features and hair drawn in ink or stitched with coloured threads, the village mother provides her little daughter with a companion for apprenticeship in the art of living. For the child the doll is a living thing which must be clothed and fed and affectionately put to sleep. For it she must learn to stitch clothes and cook all the delicacies she has seen her mother preparing or heard her talk about. The doll should be taught to wear ornaments and to read and converse. It has to visit the neighbours, receive guests, host parties, and finally get married. Throughout this

play-acting the child is learning the customs and social values of the family. Good and evil, charity and mockery, affection and satire are all represented by the shape and features the rag doll may be given.

As elsewhere the use of dolls to project the cultural characteristics of the people has promoted a new tradition. Organised groups of craftsmen produce dolls that portray the physical features of people in the different parts of the country, the costumes they usually wear, and the rituals and ceremonies they observe. One may choose from a large array of gorgeously costumed dolls—singles, couples, ensembles and tableaux.

The rise of plastic toy industry has relieved most mothers, especially those living in cities, of the necessity of making cats and dogs and horses of cloth and cotton wool for their young ones. But such toys are still among the prized possessions of children. Produced mostly by women working at home, these toys come in different materials.

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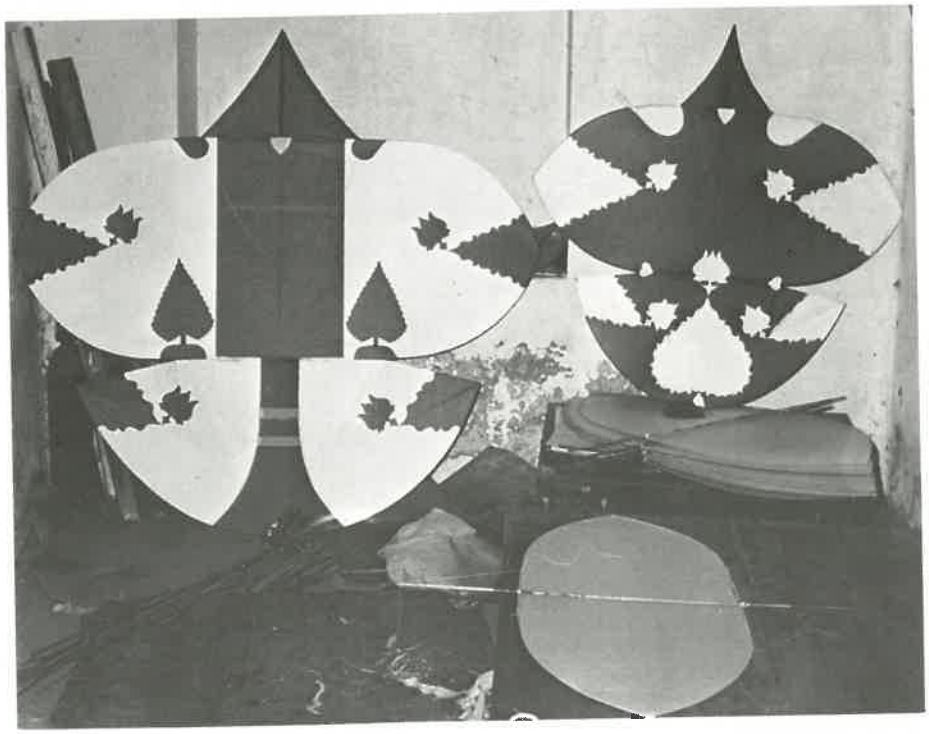
PAPER

Despite all the stern measures announced from time to time by the District Magistrates to prevent kite-flying, it remains a popular pastime in Pakistan, especially in the Punjab. Come Basant, the spring festival so named after the colour of the mustard flower, and the sky is dotted with kites in different shapes and colours. The demand is large enough to ensure steady returns to the kite-makers who occupy a notable place among craftsmen using thin coloured paper as the raw material. However, since kite flying has lost its richer enthusiasts to more modern modes of diversion, the range of kite shapes has shrunk considerably. The common kites are 'guddis', small kites with tails, 'kankawwas', which have small cones at the base, and 'tukkals', in the shape of a half-circle supporting a bigger half-circle. The skill of the kite-maker lies in so placing the supporting bamboo strips that the kite will rise with the slightest breeze. Red, black and white remain the favourite colours with kite-makers. Till some years ago there used to be considerable kite-flying at night when a paper candle lamp, 'qindeel', was tied to the string a few yards below the kite. But perhaps the facility of dreaming in front of cinema or TV screens saved people from taking the trouble of going to the rooftop and waiting till the breeze



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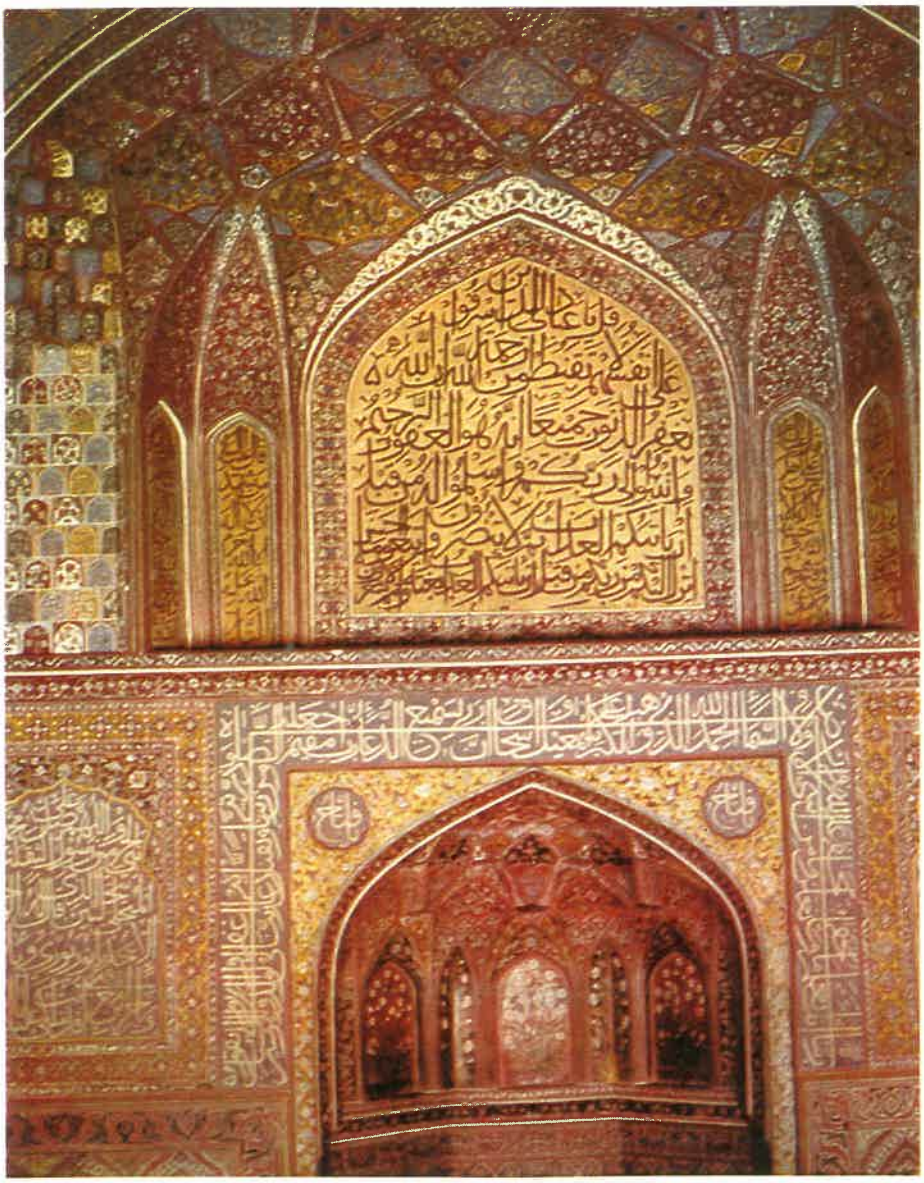

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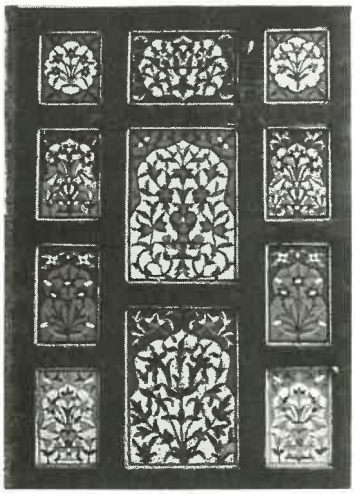

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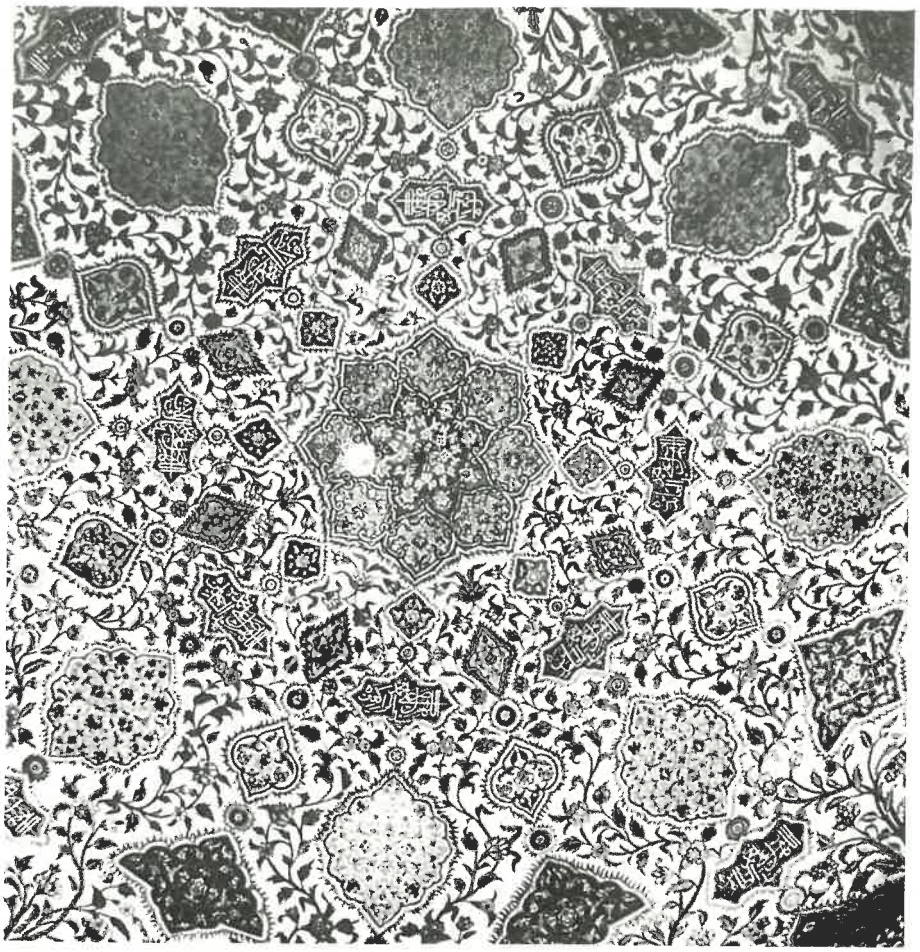
1. The kite-maker.
2. Motifs on the kite.
3. Naqqashi, G. Mohyuddin.
4. Naqqashi, Sind.
5. Papier mache.
6. Naqqashi: Many patterns.



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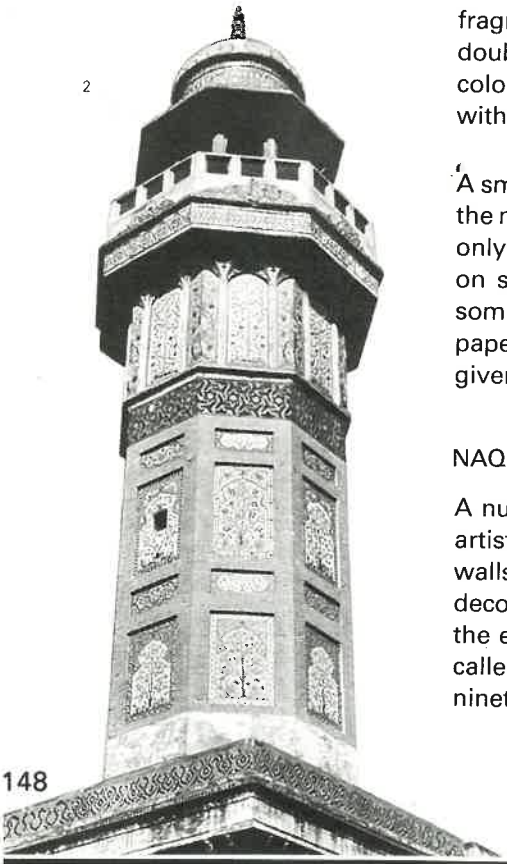
was low enough to let the candle burn in the multi-coloured paper cylinder.

Far more steady than the kite-maker's trade has been the craft of paper-flower makers, for those who can neither afford to buy fresh flowers nor break the spell the flower has always cast on man, make do with paper-flowers even if they have no fragrance. Although there is now strong competition from plastic and glass, it is doubtful that the paper-flower will ever disappear. Since its main attraction is the colour, the favourite flower with most craftsmen is the rose in all its hues, set off with the matching green of leaves.



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A small group of craftsmen concentrate on paper sculpture, mostly birds. Perhaps the most outstanding piece of craftsmanship in this category is the horse—and not only because it has become the insignia of the Institute of Folk Heritage. Standing on slightly inclined legs of reed or bamboo sticks, with a straight back and a somewhat overstretched neck tilted upwards, it looks every bit of the coloured paper, usually red and black, the majestic animal that has carried man places and given him the measure of power.

NAQQASHI

A number of historical buildings in Pakistan display fine work in fresco done by artists several centuries ago. For example, the ceilings and upper portions of the walls of the ante-chambers at Jehangir's Tomb in Lahore are wholly covered with decorative paintings and no visitor to the Wazir Khan Mosque can fail to appreciate the exquisite carpet-like patterns painted on the interior of its domes. This craft, called 'naqqashi' and 'kamangari', also flourished between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries and was perfected by artists working in Thatta, Lahore,

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1. Carpet design in naqqashi on plaster.
2. Art that has endured.
3. Designed with paper.
4. Geometric patterns.
5. Naqqashi.
6. Shish Mahal ceiling.

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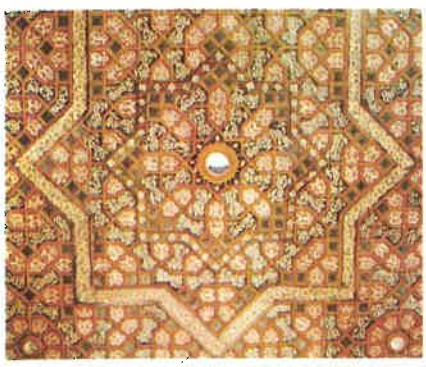

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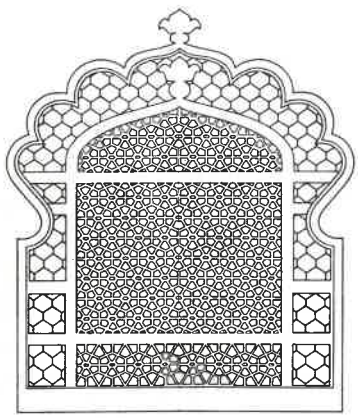
Chiniot and Hyderabad. During the British period most of the craftsmen were forced to look for alternative means of livelihood. However, those who persevered in the family tradition found an opportunity to utilise their skills when restoration of old monuments was taken up some years ago. A representative of such hardy artists is ustad Ghulam Mohyuddin of Chiniot, who is at present recreating the fresco panels at the Wazir Khan Mosque. In Sind, Mirza Asad Ali and Mirza Qadir Bakhsh have kept alive the tradition that made Tando Agha famous as a leading centre of 'kamangari'. While genuine 'naqqashi' is done with water colours on freshly laid lime plaster, quite often the craftsmen are required to work on old surfaces and then they use oil paints. In the past they made their own brushes ('qalams') of goat's hair for broad strokes and squirrel's hair for fine work, and used vegetable colours. Now some of them have begun to depart from the tradition by using imported brushes and synthetic dyes. Another indigenous tradition is the use of milk and curd, in addition to water, in the preparation of lime paste. On a small scale 'naqqashi' is also done on wooden panels.

The 'naqqash' knows no limit to his choice of design or colour. Broadly the designs are divided into four categories: floral ('gulkari'), geometrical ('chitsali'), calligraphic ('khattati'), and painting from life or nature ('musawwari'). Quite often the design and the colour scheme is the joint work of the moulder and the painter: the former divides the surface into rectangular or polygonal frames and the latter fills these frames with the desired designs.



In recent years the crafts of moulded pottery and 'kamangari' have been fused together to produce painted vases, flower pots and wall-plates. They are made of plaster of Paris in a large variety of shapes and display a wide range of motifs, from the traditional floral patterns to European designs and legends, painted in different colours. In simpler models the painting is done on plain surface but many craftsmen apply the colours on patterns in relief. It is too early to say whether the craftsmen working in this field will be able to compete on the aesthetic plane with their counterparts who have raised painted glazed pottery to the status of an art or whether they will be content to make modest commercial gains from satisfying the less affluent one's demand for minor decorations. Much of what is seen in the

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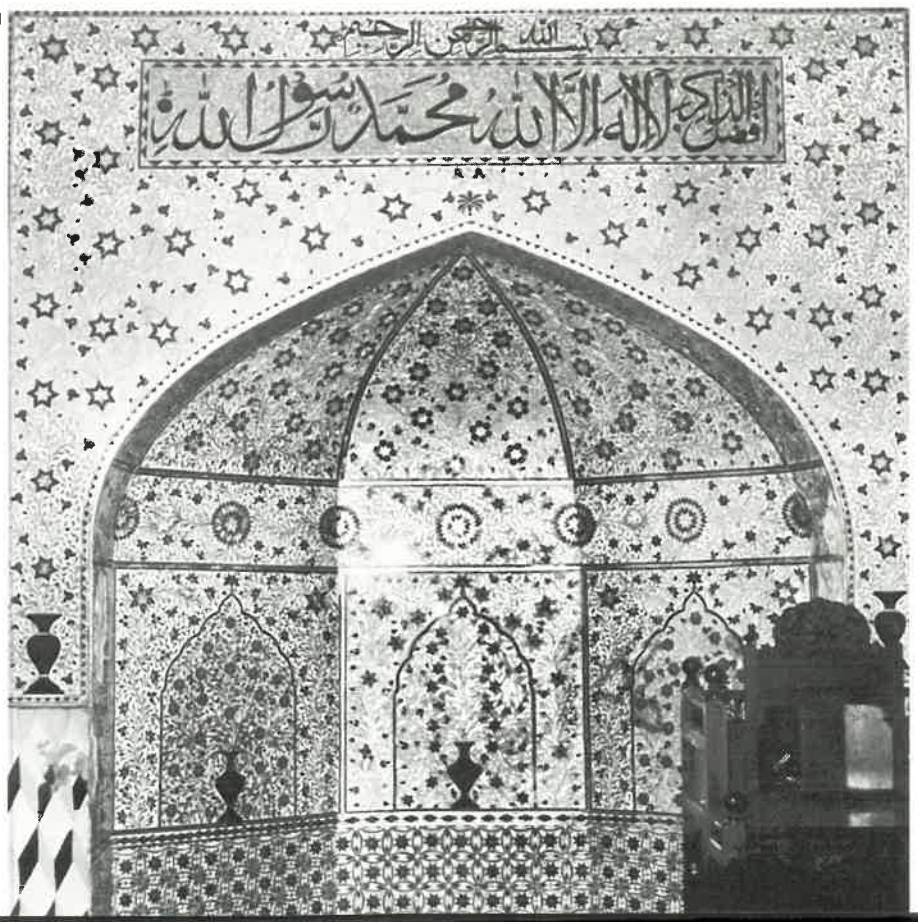

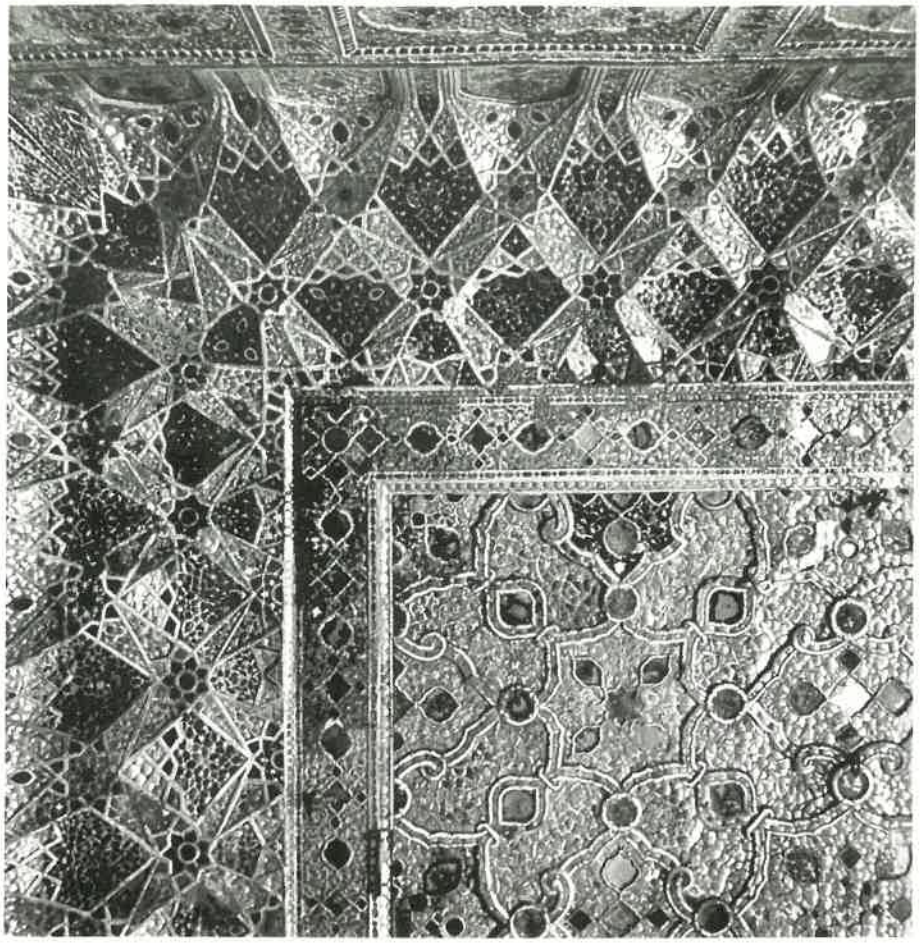

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1. Stars and flowers in the mosque.
2. Broken mirror in ceiling.
3. Ready to gallop, crushed glass.

markets at present does not encourage optimism but quite a few craftsmen have succeeded in exploiting the sensitive material to give objects a pleasing finish.

BROKEN MIRROR

In several parts of Pakistan the craft of creating patterns of mirror pieces on plaster and lac is widely practised. Both convex and flat mirror pieces have traditionally been used to decorate walls and small objects. Among buildings the walls of the Shish Mahal in the Lahore Fort furnish an example of the former and the graves of the Nawabs of Bahawalpur of the latter. Sometimes a wild pattern is created by arranging mirror pieces of different sizes to give the effect of geometric shapes scattered on the surface, but quite often equal pieces of mirror are joined together like tiles on a wall. Also mirror pieces are cut into small fragments that can be joined to form a floral design. Small objects which are thus decorated include 'surahis', animal figures, jewellery boxes, 'rehals', etc.

THROWAWAYS

All crafts are inspired by man's insatiable urge to give shape to a shapeless material (clay), or alter the shape of matter to suit his needs and tastes. Nothing illustrates this creative instinct better than the transformation of useless throwaways into objects of utility and decoration. Waste-paper, rags, straw, palm have all provided the basis for the growth of major cottage industries. But there is no limit to human ingenuity in finding a practical use for things that appear completely useless. The instinct that told a housewife that dry twigs arranged in a certain order in a vase could artistically fill a vacant corner of the room also led her to discover that torn and tattered 'saris' could be coiled and plaited to make rugs and wall-hangings. In numerous Pakistani homes, children, especially those who are not rich enough to

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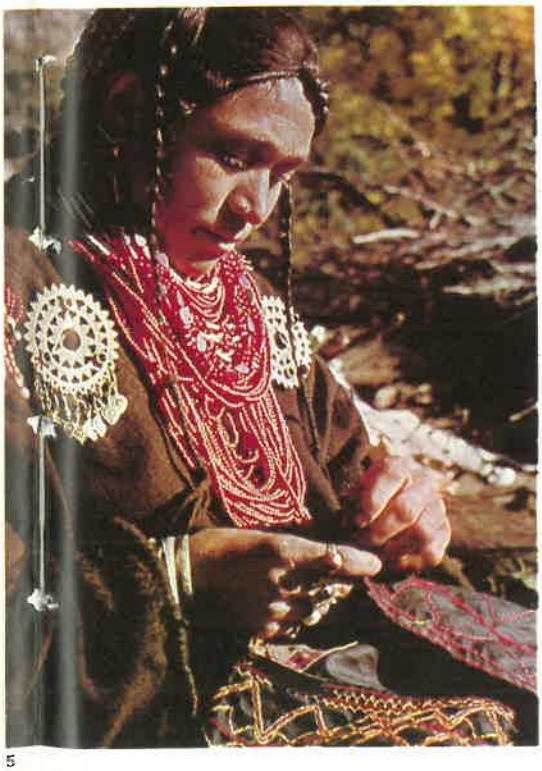

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1 Different styles in different regions
2 Horn, natural radiance.
3 Ajrak printer.
4 Onyx pieces.
5 Beads for decoration. .
6 Man with straw
7 With beeds, bells and string.

buy mechanical means of diversion in leisure hours, learn to cut off the neck of the empty glass bottle to make a vase or a pen-holder. Examples of such inventiveness are far too many to be listed here. Leaving aside those who look on a particular skill as a hobby or those whose interest in saving rubbish for use as raw material is very limited, like the cigarette vendor who weaves strips of empty cigarette packets into geometric and floral designs to decorate his shack, there are persons who pursue the craft of turning trivia into beautiful things as a means of expression in different forms. A most notable representative of such artists is Begum Ruqayya Jafri in Islamabad. Her broken glass cowboy looks set to gallop away and her egg-shell cranes against a blue sky can make any photographer of birds envious. Her collection of painted pebbles, rag dolls, sculptural figures made with pistachio and pea-nut shells, broken bangles, dry leaves and fish-scales, and a host of other items reveals a remarkable flowering of talent for original craftsmanship.

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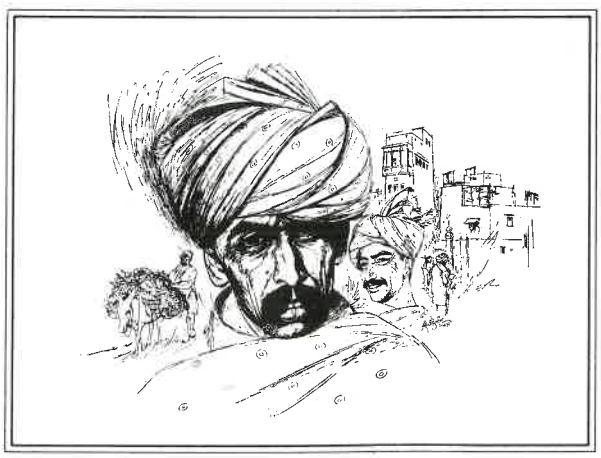

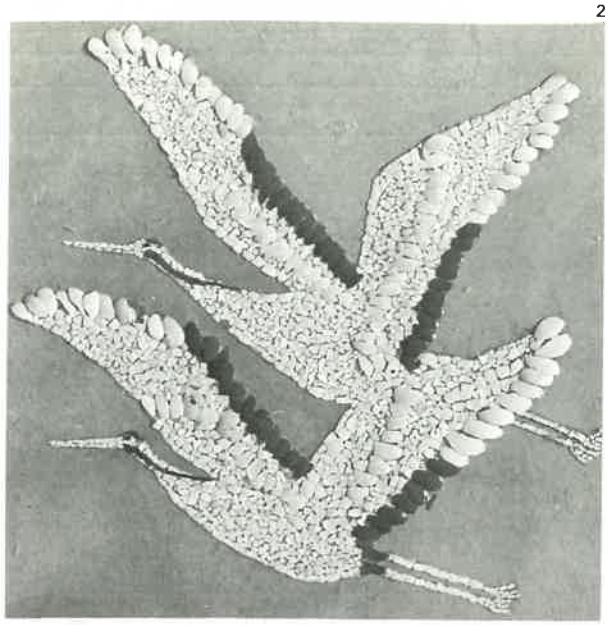

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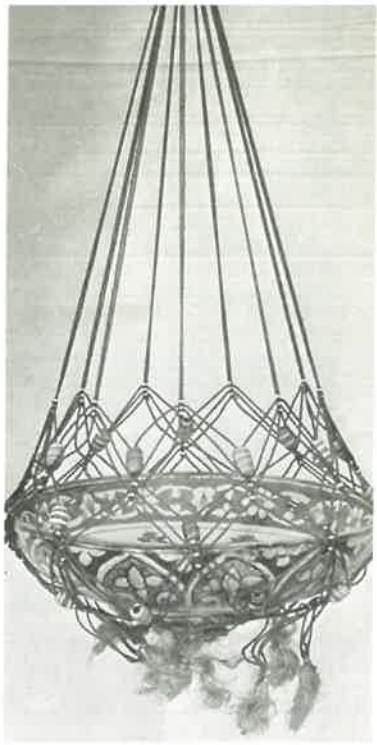

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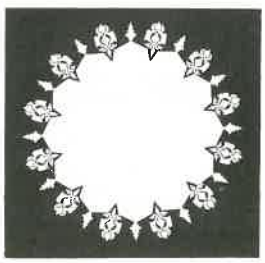

Paper-horses; the measure of power 1

Cranes, egg-shell. 2

Hanger, beads and pom-poms. 3

Beads. 4

Egg shells. 5

To hang a plate. 6

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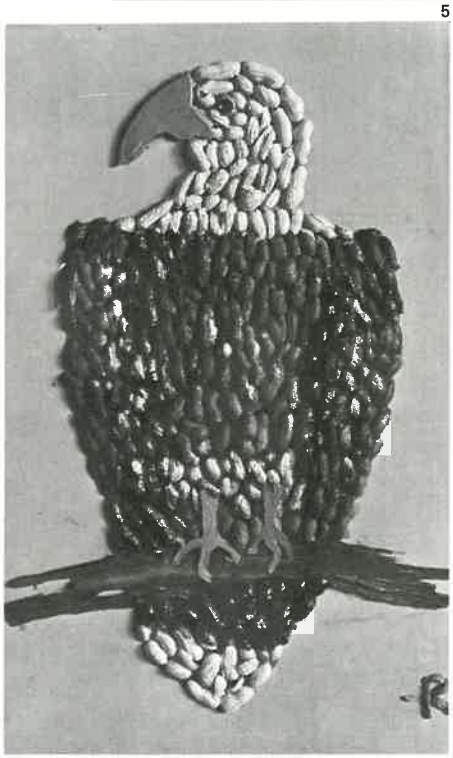

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Baluchi belle; crafts borrowed from nature 1

Flowers and birds from sea-shells 2

Wire and beads. 3

Dried wheat pike. 4

Peanut shells. 5

Dry leaves, etc. 6

Saris into floor coverings. 7

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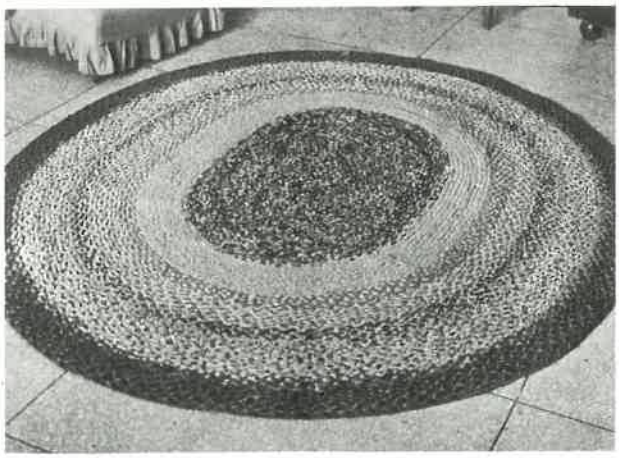

The ultimate in wigs.

reference

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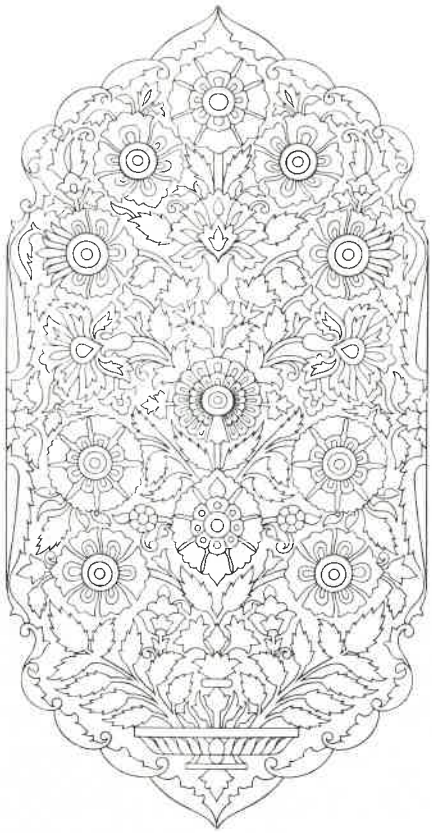

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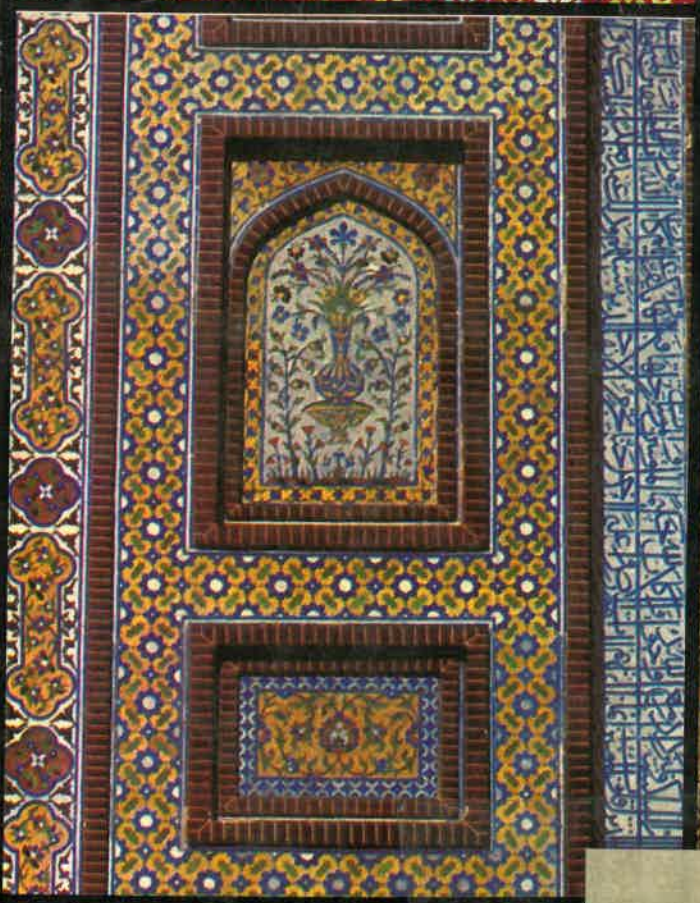
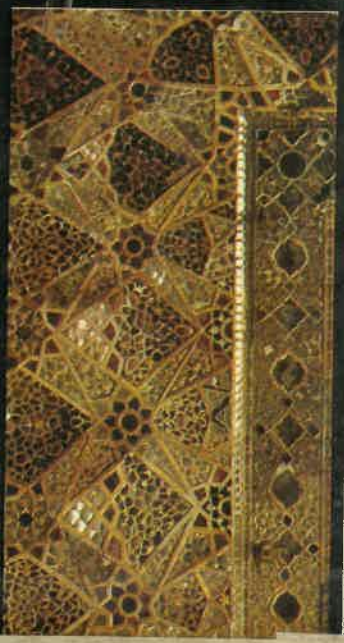

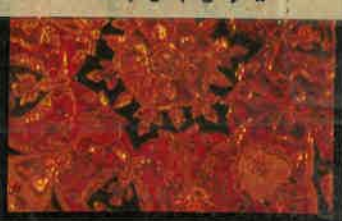

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