

Crafts of Cholistan (Bahawalpur Punjab Pakistan)

Mohammad Shafeeq

Graphic Designer & Photographer Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan

Abstract- Cholistan is locally known as Rohi. This famous desert is 30 km from Bahawalpur. East of Bahawalpur is the Cholistan Desert which covers an area of about 15,000 km and extends into the Thar Desert of India. The region was once watered by the Hakra River, known as the Saravati in vedic times. At one time there were 400 forts in the area and archaeological finds around the Derawar Fort, the only place with a perennial waterhole, indicate that it was contemporaneous with the Indus Valley Civilization. The average annual rainfall is only 12 cm, and the area's scant cultivation is made possible by underground wells, drawn up by camels. The water is stored in troughs, built by the tribes, between sandhills and in waterholes called tobas. The people are racially similar to those in Rajasthan - tall, with sharp features. They live in large, round, mud and grass huts, usually built on the top of sandhills. On the whole, they are pastoral and nomadic. The word Cholistan is derived from 'Cholna' which means moving and the word Cholistan is derived from the [Turkic](#) word *chol*, which means "desert". Cholistan thus means Land of the Desert. The people of Cholistan lead a semi-nomadic life, moving from one place to another in search of water and fodder for their animals. The dry bed of the [Hakra River](#) runs through the area, along which many settlements of the [Indus Valley Civilization](#) have been found. The local people are known as "Riasti" immigrants from other parts of the Punjab and India are known as abadkar and mohajir. Most local people speak Seraiki, but Punjabi and Urdu are also widely spoken. Bahawalpur is a cotton growing region hence a large number cotton based products are being manufactured here. One of the main features of Cholistan Crafts is that bright and attractive colours are being used irrespective of the area in which these are produced. The 'Khais' woven cloth, "Rilly" patch work, "Zari" thread embroidery are some good examples of Cholistan Craft. It may be mentioned that cotton textiles have always been a hallmark of craft of Indus valley civilization. Various kinds of khaddar-cloth are made for local consumption, and fine khaddar bedclothes and coarse lungies are woven here. A beautiful cloth called Sufi is also woven of silk and cotton, or with cotton wrap and silk wool.

Now I come to the crafts of Cholistan an art which comes into being due to necessity, the residents of the outskirts area of Cholistan work day and night to fulfill their needs, but even in these necessities the element of creativity is found their choice of colours and design is not less than a veteran artist. The most of the requisite items are crafts and a variety of crafts are being manufactured by them at home. The known Crafts of Bahawalpur region are Elaborately embroidered shoes locally known as "Khussa", "Cholistani Hand Fans", "Carpets", "Lady suits (block prints with vegetable dyes)", "Bed Sheets (block prints with vegetable dyes)", "Crinkles (cross stitch and bnasi stitch)", "Towels", table mats ladies and gents kurty, cushions table sheets, ladies suits (Zardozi, tarkashi and thread embroidery). Scarves, cotton men's wear, hand made shoes, women's wear (block print and sussi), crinkle shiffon (with Gita work) pillow covers (with wool thread embroidery having traditional motifs), bed sheets (traditional Ralli pattern in traditional colours and styles), a wide range of choli and ghagra (tic and die). Bahawalpur is also famous for pottery made of clay found in these areas. These wrought by the inherited skill of artisans into paper-thin pottery noted for its elegance, delicacy of design and decorative pattern painted there on. Dried date tree leaves, Basket work include stripped date leaves woven by skilled craftsmen to produce article of utility such as basket, hand-bags, ladies bags, mats etc, in elegant design decorated with traditional pattern which make these article coveted owing of their exquisite craftsmanship. The handicrafts made of dried date tree leaves are very famous among the tourists and local residents. The golden hands of craftsman use different sticks of plant materials to twist and turn them in such a way to shape it like baskets and seaters which look beautiful as well as have utilization process. The design and bright colours of these crafts reflect the art taking birth and associated with this soil to great extent, displaying the growing plants and trees, wild bushes, flowers, birds, hand fans rug, khais etc. This factor can be observed. These Cholistan bright colours sometimes refer to the scorching sunshine to Cholistan desert sometimes of the cool sand and at other times.

I. INTRODUCTION

Now let's review the crafts of Cholistan.

Khussa:

Khussa is the Hall-mark of the craft of Bahawalpur Cholistan, the Khussa which is famous all over the World. The gilltarning thread used in it is locally called "Tilla" and the soul of this shoe is made by skin of cows and other animals. Visually, these shoes are very beautiful attractive and are the status symbol over here.



(fig 1-Khussa making)



(fig 2 -Khussa final product)

Chahbian:

Another craft of date tree leave is chahbian. A decorative plate used for meals and is must at the dining place. Dyes are used to decorative it and golden/silver foils are used for embelishment of these chahbian. Like big plaques, these are also made of palm leaves in different bright colours with beautiful patterns and geometric designs. These are used for keeping the 'chapatis' (bread) and also as wall decoration.



(fig 3-Chahbi making)



(fig 4 -Chahbi final product)

Pottery Making:

The finest clay pottery is not remarkable in its charming appearance but also have great use. Specially pitcher (Ghara) which keep the water cool in scorching summers of the sand. The people who make pottery called Kumhar. They are skilled people in this art. Colourful and simple pottery are made in this region.



(fig 5-Pottery making)



(fig 6 -Pottery final product)

Hand Fans:

Dried date tree/palm leaves are used by these magnificent craftsman to weavethem into round our square shapes with sticks. Colourful frills (gola kinari, sitary moti etc) and dyes are also used to adorn these hand fans.



(fig 7-Hand Fans making)



(fig 8 -Hand Fan final product)

Chahj:

The golden hands of the craftsmen use different sticks of plants materials (kanay) to twist and turn them in such a way to shape it like a tray to clean rice and other purposes. They also used leather threads and colourful simple threads.



(fig 9-Chahj making)



(fig 10 -Chahj final product)

Morhey:

Sticks of (kanas) and date tree leaves are tied in such a way to make it a comfortable seater and then embellishments of embroidered and velvet clothes are used to cover the seats. Cholistani bright colours are used in its. Colourful morhey are also used for decorative piece.



(fig 11-Morhey making)



(fig 12 -Morhey final product)

Ralli(Gindi):

The fascinating fabric called Ralli or Rilli is a remarkable textile artwork converted into quilts, table runners and cushion covers. Thousands of women are involved mostly in Sindh, partly in some parts of Cholistan in Bahawalpur distt. Ralli (Seraiki mean jurna, rallana, millana) means mixing of pieces or anything. Gindi/Ralli is a very beautiful and colourful craft of cholistani region and is the salient features of the craft of Cholistan.



(fig 13-Gindi making)



(fig 14 -Gindi final product)

The wonderful Cholistani bright colours and patches of clothes are overlap in tidy pattern which depict the livelyhood of the people of the Desert. It is made of small pieces of different colours of cotton cloth and needle work. It can be used as wall hanging,bed cover,carpets and blankets etc.This craft is mostly made in rural areas of Cholistan.

Khais:

Chadars and Gindian are the products of hand looms which are not apparrantly beautiful but have utilization purposes.Specially desi cotton threads are used for weaving.Traditional local Cholistani motifs are used lively colours.



(fig 15-Khais making)



(fig 16 -Khais final product)

Khara:

Khara is a big basket made by turning and twisting hard sticks of ((falsa) into round deep bowl shape utilization level of this craft is very high over here.



(fig 17-Khara making)



(fig 18 -Khara final product)

Spining Wheel:

Spindle yarning is another oldest craft of this region. Cotton is turned into thread with the help of spinning wheel. This thread have used in khais and suit. Cholistani people are mostly used this cotton thread made suit.



(fig 19-Thread making on spinning wheel)



(fig 20 -Thread made suit final product)

Pranda Making:

Pranda making is another salient craft of Bahawalpur region. Black threads are tied in such a way to grip the hairs. Women of this region wears pranda for its beauty and look elegant. Pranda are available in wide variety with colourful threads. Beautiful pearl wearing and cut mirror work.



(fig 21-Pranda making)



(fig 22 -Pranda final product)

Block Printing:

With simple technique of block printing interesting. Block printed fabrics are produced. Vegetable and fruit dyes are



(fig 23-Block Print making)



(fig 24 -Block Print final product)

used in it. The finest example of block printing is Ajrak. Carved blocks of wood with incredible Cholistani traditional motifs are used in this technique.

Embroidery:

Embroidery is one of the most sought out handicrafts of Bahawalpur Cholistan. It is full of gifted men and women



(fig 25-Embroidery making)



(fig 26 - Embroidery final product)

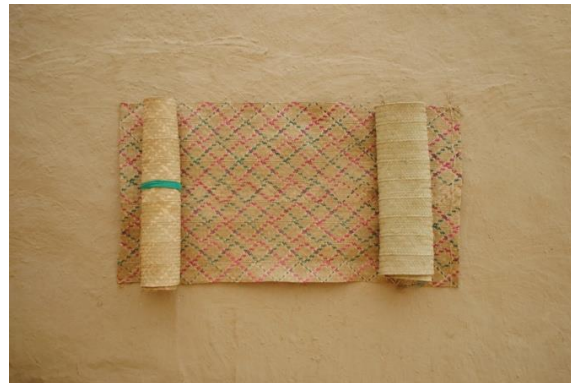
who produce one of the most adorable across stitch, using moti sitary etc. It is an attractive kind of embroidery work done on Dupata, Kurta and Chadar etc.

Parchy:

The skillful craftsmen of this region have maximum utilize the date tree leaves and palm leaves into crafts. The neatly weaved mats of dried date tree leaves in another remarkable craft of this area. Geometrical shapes and pattern are used in it.



(fig 27-Parchah making)



(fig 28 - Parchah final product)

Pillow Covers:

Pillow Covers with decorative patchwork and embroidery with woollen thread is another craft of



(fig 29-Pillow Covers making)



(fig 30 - Pillow Cover final product)

Cholistan. Geometrical shape and cholistani bright colours are used in it.

Carpet Weaving:

Carpet Weaving is one of the most important crafts of Bahawalpur state. Sheep wool thread is used in the carpet made here with traditional motifs which appears sight capturing and are finest examples of carpet making. Hand made carpet of this region is famous all over the Pakistan.



(fig 31-Carpet Weaving making)



(fig 32 - Carpet final product)

REFERENCES

- [1] Sight in the Sands of Cholistan Bahawalpur's History and Architecture Edited by Major- General Shujaat Zamir Dar(book published by OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)
- [2] Pakistan Handicrafts(book) Punjab Small Industries Corporation 4th floor LDA Plaza, Egerton Road, Lahore.
- [3] Multan, Bahawalpur Pakistan (brushier 2001) Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation.

- [4] Pakistan maen Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa/Sabt-e-Hussain/Maktaba-e Danial Karachi.
- [5] THE FABULOUS WORLD OF RALLI TEXTILES by Nayyar Hashmey

AUTHORS

First Author – Mohammad Shafeeq, Graphic Designer & Photographer Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan,
Email: shafiqgway2012@gmail.com, Contact no: 0092 03017769792