

The Art of Cholistan Tottams in Bahawalpur, Punjab Pakistan

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Abstract: The Indus Valley in Pakistan, straddling along the River Indus, from the fertile plains of Punjab to the lower course of Sindh along, was the first cradle of civilization in the subcontinent, emerging in 2000 years BC. The hand basin is divided from that of the Ganges by a desert known as Cholistan in Bahawalpur Division, and Thar in Sindh. It is a part of Great Indian Desert, called Marusthali or Region of Death. Cholistan's rich history dates back to the civilizations that flourished along the banks of the Hakra River. Cholistan has not always been a desert. It is separated from the central region of Bahawalpur Division by a sadness called Hakra, which at one time carried the waters of a large river, which flowed all around its length and breadth. Thus the area was fertile, well cultivated, and well-populated till the early twentieth century, when with the changes in the courses of the river Sutlej and Sindh took place and curved it into a sandy infertile land.

Cholistan wires a human population of 0.155 Million pastoral nomads depending completely upon livestock for their livelihood which are predictable to be over 10 times of the human population in Cholistan. Life sustainability in this desert revolves around annual rainfall where average rain fall is less than just 2 inches per annum. The best part of the people live on the margin of the desert and the

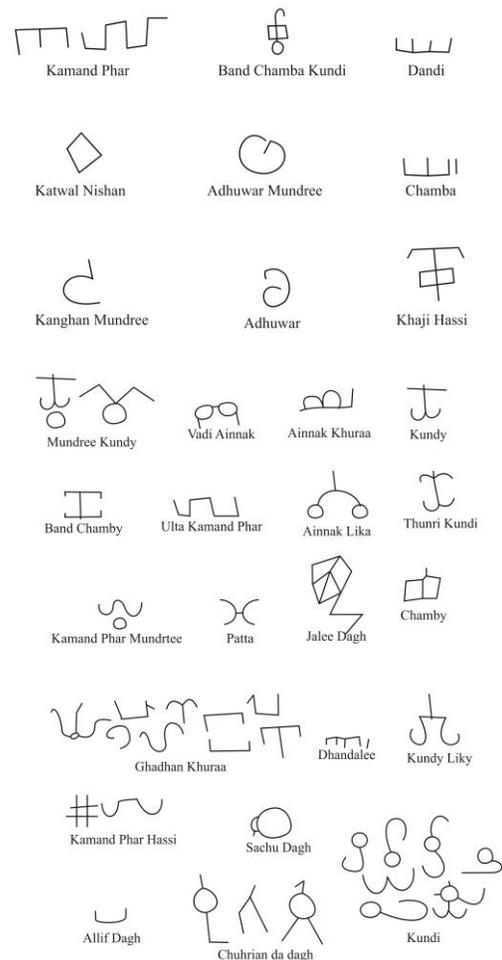
INTRODUCTION: I am a Cholistan. The beautiful Desert of Cholistan is my Identification I belong here. The word Desert gives a barren imagination to mind but the Desert of Cholistan is full of bright colours, enthusiastic cultures and rich customs with magnificent history and marvelous architecture. I found all this very interesting to me. I as its resident feel responsibility and the curiosity within me compels me to explore its fascinating aspects, of which one is the art of tottam, ideograph on camels & cows for the identification of tribes. Cholistan or as known in the local tongue 'Rohi' is a land of glorious sand dunes and vast planes; blowing wind, big sound and long silence, festivals and dance,

interior of the desert is finely populated. The climate of the area is arid, hot subtropical and monsoonal. It is characterized by great annual and daily variations in temperature and rainfall. The bioclimatic structure falls in the category of "Tropical desert" and is famous for plant formation. The summer in the desert is really unkind and harsh. Whereas, temperature varies from as low as 2°C in winters to over 50°C in summers. Groundwater is mostly brackish and main resource of drinking water is the rain water which is stored in Tobas/ Ponds and Kunds. However areas near the old Hakra belt have underground freshwater availability. Even in dry tract there are hundreds of species of plants with well-established root system in the environment. The lesser Cholistan has loamy soil with lot of vegetation. Green areas are intensively cultivated with thriving plantation. Most famous variety of local wildlife (Parha (hog deer), Neel Gae (blue bull) and Black Buck) are still available in the areas near border. Majority of these creatures is night-time and shy, so watching of these requires endurance and good duo of binocular. Wild cat, jackal, wolf, mongoose, squirrel, field rat and over 200 types of insects and as much as sixty varieties of snakes are found in 26,000 square Kms of this rain less zone.

Beautiful deers, camels dressed in amazing costumes, vivid pattern lehngas, bright colour and embroidered clothes, grand forts, jeep rally, and the Sufi poetry of Khawaja Ghulam Farid. The word Cholistan has a Turkish origin, and means 'Land of the Desert. The Cholistan Desert of Bahawalpur keeps an ancient and cultural identification. According to Archeologists this region of this land was once consisted of luxuriant green valley. On its one side River Saatluj, second side River Sindh and third side River Hakkra flows. This land of three rivers as regards historically and culturally contains a great lack ground. The Cholistan Desert of Bahawalpur consist of extensive area. Cattle grazing Shephards with their heard move

along from one place to another with green meadows. One or two heard men is responsible for taking care of hundred of animals. Bags of flour, dried molasses, nions etc remains with them as food for many days. They use milk for fooding purpose and to quench their thirst. These shephards sometimes return to their places after several months. Many Cholistani leave their camels or calfs and cows without any keeper heardman, for grazing in the desert and these animals roam freely in the desert for months. There are those people in Cholistan who recognize his camel just from one glance at the foot print of that camel from the heard of hundreds of camels. Sometimes they this much expert in this talent that they recognize the young camels from the footprints of their mothers but it is not possible for everyone to do so. Where the number of animals reach to hundreds and thousands, there like present it would be a big problem for one to recognize his animal in the past as well. For the solution of this problem every tribe made a unique and interesting tottam, symbol, mark, tattoo or such stamp which is marked on the muscle of hind leg or on the face of the camel/cows. This stamp is made up of iron rods which is heated first and then is stamped on the skin of the animals and this mark remains for ever on the skin of that animal and work as the big reference for the identification of that animal. Although there are some educated population in Cholistan. It was possible that they derive these tottams, symbols, marks of tattoos from their letters of alphabets but these tottams or shapes have got no relation with the regional alphabets rather then most of them are like the ancient writing style [1] **Aryan** [2]**Buddhist** [3]**Hinduism** [4]**Indus Civilization** and resembles from the old available script of antiquated Civilization of Multan and Jaleeplpur. It can be assumed that these must be the tottams, signs and symbols of the Great Indus Valley Civilization but at the moment their understanding is not possible. These tottams/shapes are used for the identification of these clans for ages. In thousands of animals a tribe identify his animals easily by the help of these tottams/shapes. This suggests that they may have been used (tottams,ideaographs,symbols,marks of tattoos)by traders for marking bales of cloth and other goods. **Pictographs:**At some point in time, people began to communicate visually. They made simple drawings of the things that existed in

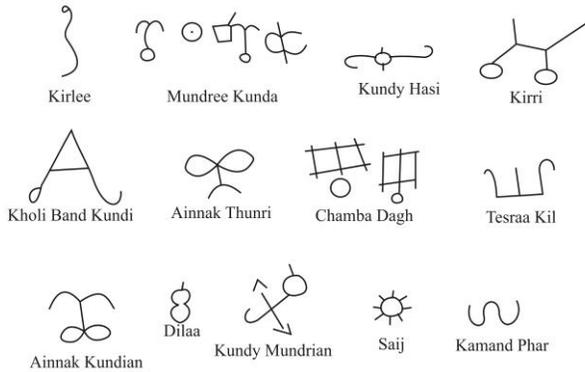
their world: people, animals, and tools. **Ideographs:**As the need developed to communicate more abstract thoughts, the symbols began to take on multiple meanings: ox, for example, could also mean food. The new symbol would represent not an object but an idea. These idea symbols are called ideographs. Abstract thoughts could also be communicated by combining different pictographs: for example, to communicate the concept of rest, the pictographic for man and tree might be combined. A contemporary example of the ideograph is the warning symbol for poison. The skull and crossbones is not seen for what it is but for what is represents: danger, death, pirates, or poison. My major was Graphic Design in which i explored tottams, marks on cows/camels of Cholistan. I investigated the roots



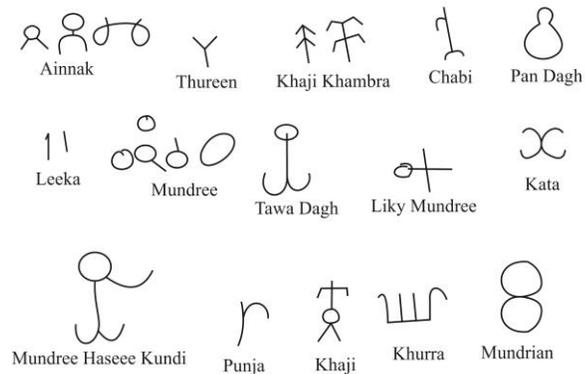
and found one hundred twenty eight tottams which were never explored before. These are Cholistani

Tottams with local language Saraiki name which are given below:

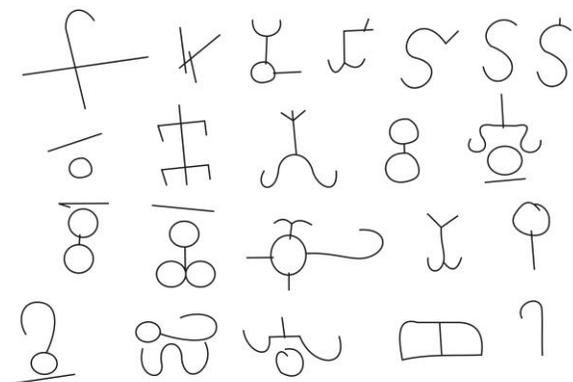
These ideographs seems so much interesting to me and I decided to explore them, their origin the



language the symbols the signs used in them and

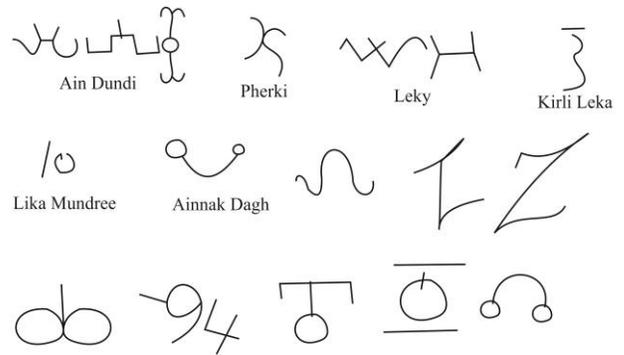


through these to originate a new font style purely depicting this region. I as graphic Designer dedicate this font style to my beautiful land my Rohi. I with the help of these tottams and ideographs has



(fig- Cholistani tottams with local saraiki names)

assembled a font style purely depicting my region and I dedicate it to my Cholistan the magnificent Desert

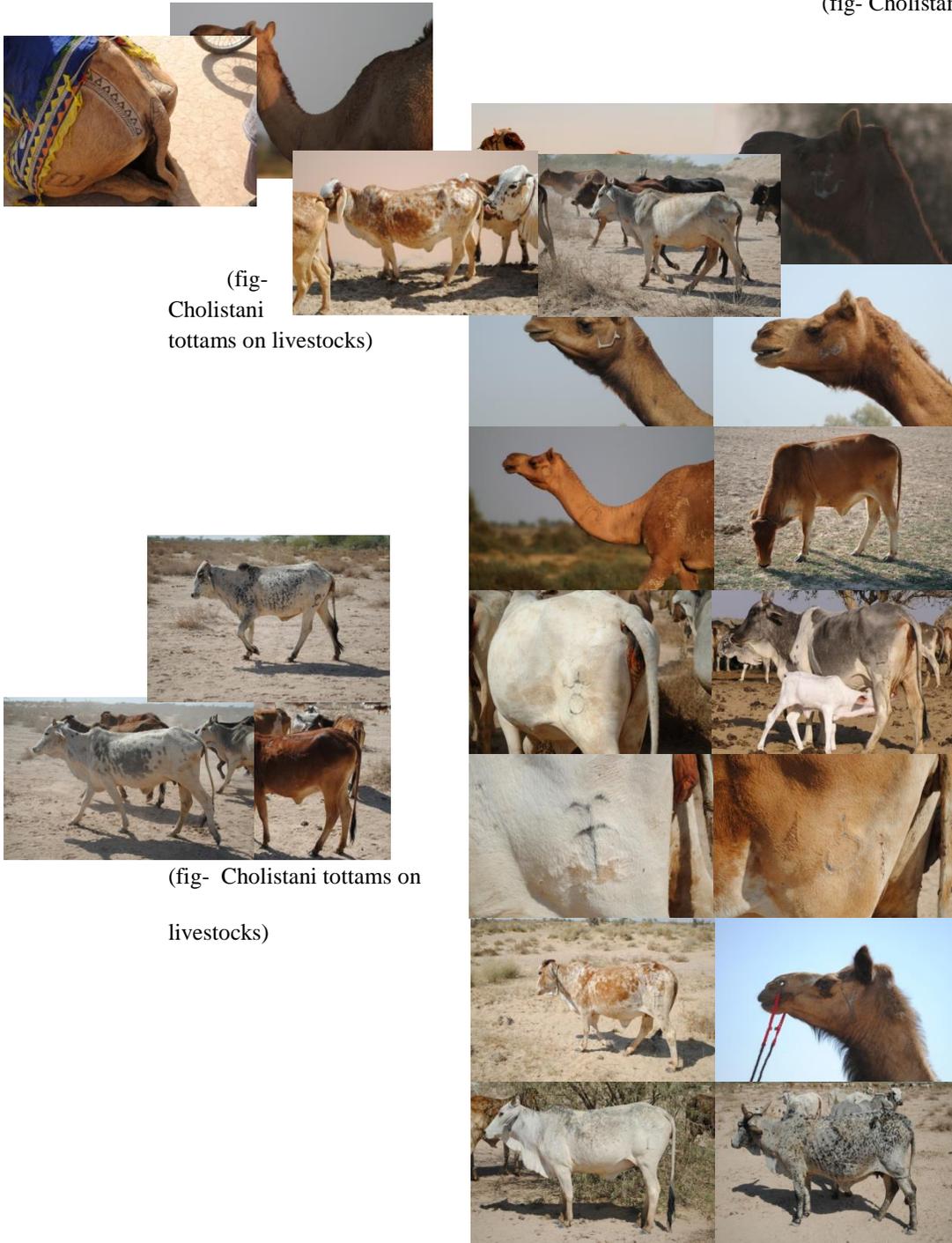


(fig- Cholistani tottams with local saraiki names)

These are research base photography of Cholistani tottams on livestock which is marked on the muscle of hind leg or on the face of the camels/cows



(fig- Cholistani tottams on livestock)



(fig- Cholistani tottams on livestock)



(fig- Cholistani tottams on livestock)

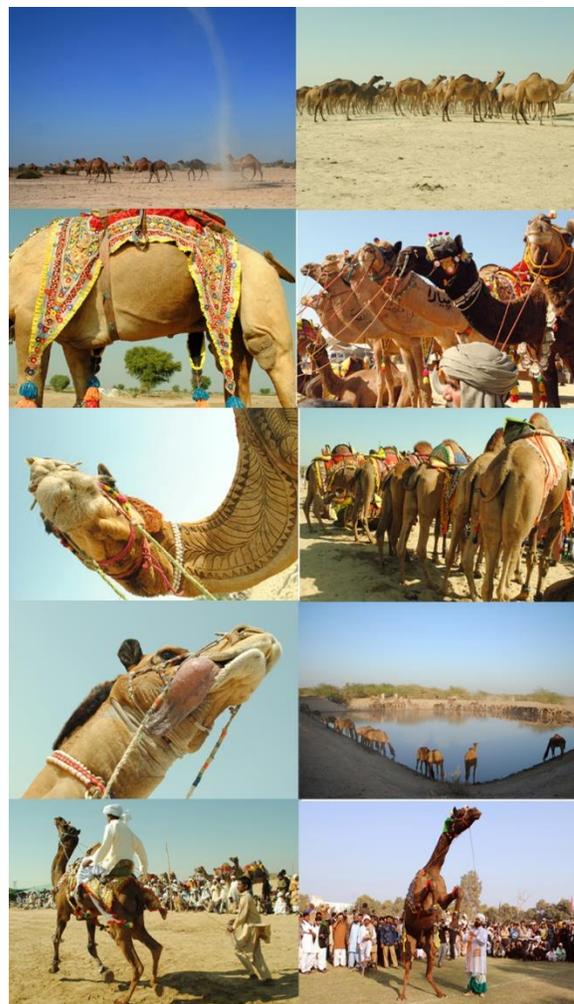




(fig- Cholistani tottams on livestocks)



(fig- Cholistani tottams on livestocks)



(fig- Cholistani tattams on livestock)

These are tribes/nations who live in the Cholistan and have tattams signs: Mahar, Radhey Mahar, Raiyपाल, Ghamna, Jhanj, Ladhai Aaly, Daar Waly Mahar, Jam, Maaka, Mathilia, Phagani, Baghani, Bai Khan, Buhar, Matuja, Nahunchah, Hamlaaly, Muba, Beijah, Sakhijah, Gigrani, Tagrani, Shairwani, Lalaani, Laar, Lapi, Tandhani, Jajywani, Ramijy, Asbani, Mithani, Marhani, Jamani, Kashmani, Rany, Dilani, Dadputra Abbasi, Bhati, Channar, Kaluwar, Panwar, Quraishi, Juya, langah, Wari nd, Chahuwrr, Daha, Rajput, Mangharia, Khandu, Gagan , Markhaba, Dars Harn, Saharr, Phalaru Dars, Reelan, Chandani, Gudaseer, Kaladi, Bhiyaha, Saran, Malkani, Gaju, Kohari, Khalti, Bhuta, Kalaar, Duny, Dawat, Sumry , Duail, Aarab, Kalaar, Tanwari, Katwal, Chatani, Sujhy,

Arpal,Junran,Meetala,Jakar,Mukal,Muhal,Kat,Salaha
,Chachar,Shaikh,Mankani,Ratani,Admani,Mamdani,
Ablani,Senrani,Rend,Pars,Burhani,Galywal,Darhiwat
,Baleem,Parhar,Chutanshar,Ramuty,Dahrani,Khatani,
Ghulara,baghiry,Mengwal,Behil,Chuhan,Chuhray,
Daiy,Missan,etc. I am the first from Bahawalpur
Cholistan who designed a new font a new font. This
is my display typeface font.I have genrated/
created/from these Cholistan tottams. Now let's
review the pure cultural cholistani font:



(fig- Cholistani Font Tottams)

Keywords:

Cholistan,Livestocks,Tottams,Symbols,Ideaographs,
Marks of tattoss

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