

## A Short Note on the Ceramics of Gandi Umar Khan in the Gomal Plain, Pakistan

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**Abstract:** This paper is focused only on highlighting and categorization of the decorative designs on the pottery of the Bronze Age site of Gandi Umar Khan on the Gomal Plain, excavated in 2003 and 2004 by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. The study of ceramics especially of the proto-historic phase is very significant that unfolds many hidden aspects of a primitive society such as socio-cultural and socio-economic.

**Keyword:** Gandi Umar Khan, Ceramics, Bronze Age.

### Introduction

The art of making ceramics is one of the hallmarks of the ancient societies especially the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. It is one of the primitive and practical techniques of all ages that changed from a simple to complex craft over the years. Likewise, the production of plain pottery also turned into more decorative style ceramics depicted with variety of designs. Human societies of the Bronze Age (3500 – 1000 BC) relatively produced large amount of ceramics with great variation than the Neolithic (6500 – 4000/3500 BC). The site was excavated systemically in 2003 & 2004 and the cultural profile had been divided into four major periods (i.e. Tochi/Gomal, Transitional, Kot Diji and mature Harappan) on the basis of ceramics (Jan, 2008; Ali and Jan, 2009).

### The Pottery

As every cultural phase of the Bronze Age have distinct ceramic traditions, so there is also great diversity in the collected pottery from Gandi Umar Khan that varies in fabric from thin to medium thick and thick as well. The nature of clay, firing technology, colour schemes, selection of designs, vessels

shapes, forms and frequency also show diversity. Majority of the ceramics, with the exception of only a few, are made on fast wheel from well kneaded and fine clay. Red is a predominant slip applied on the ceramics. However, occasionally pink and cream slips are also there. Buff and white colours are also used especially in the pre-Harappan pottery of the site. In the selection of paintings on the pottery black colour is a natural and good selection by the potters of the site to make the designs prominent and beautiful. Gandi Umar Khan is a very rich archaeological site of the 'Indus Age' on the Gomal Plain that yielded a huge amount of ceramics and other associated cultural artefacts not only from the surface but also from the archaeological context. The main lot of ceramic from the site is however, plain and unpainted. But a good amount of red ware having black painted designs have also been collected (Ali and Jan 2009).

### Classification

Based on motif style and painted designs, the pottery of Gandi Umar Khan has broadly been

divided into floral, faunal, geometric and anthropomorphic. As a whole the geometrical and floral patterns are large in quantity as well as variety than faunal and anthropomorphic, which are very limited in number. Study of the collected pottery suggests that there are the following six categories.

1. Plain
2. Structural
3. Geometrical
4. Floral
5. Faunal
6. Anthropomorphic

The detailed study of motifs revealed that there is a wide variety of plain vessels with no decoration or designing, but some are decorated in different shapes and forms. Among these plain pottery most of the pottery is for functional use but there are some that could have been used for decoration purposes. The pottery with structural designing consists of different variations like; impressed, grooved, perforated, undulating, slurry and textured.

The decorative pottery of Gandi Umar Khan is divided into four main groups which are further divided into sub groups. The geometrical motifs are divided into two major categories i.e. simple and complex. Geometric is a very wide term as it includes a variety of elements.

The simple geometrical motifs are further divided into vertical lines/bands (simple, lozenge, vertical); horizontal lines/bands (simple, bands, horizontal with dots); diagonal lines (wavy, double); circular (semi, spiral, concentric); loop pattern (semi-circle); dots (connected, eye & dot, dots in bands) and wavy pattern (vertical and horizontal). In most of such designs, the lines are used in combination with each other but separate applications of these lines are also found in a few cases. Dots and semicircles in different styles are also found

with the combination of triangles and hatched pattern.

The complex geometrical motifs have also been further divided mixed geometrical pattern; intersecting floral (intersecting with straight bar, curve bar, radiating sun, filled leaves); net pattern; triangle (solid connected, double line, connected and reverse with dots); chevron pattern (simple, double, filled) and step pattern (simple and complex).

Next category is the floral motifs which basically includes leaves and flowers. In pottery of Gandi Umar Khan the floral motifs are divided into three groups such as simple, floral hatched and leaf pattern. In a few designs, the simple floral motifs are very clearly shown whereas the specific rosette and Maltese cross patterns are also found on some sherds as decorative designs. There are two more patterns which show the irregular efforts of making branches and leaves as floral motifs on the pottery of Gandi Umar Khan.

The faunal motifs that consists of the animal body parts or full body images is the next category of decorative designs. In this context, there are many examples found which show different faunal symbols like horn of animals; bird; goat and fish motifs.

The faunal motifs used in the pottery of Gandi Umar Khan are in natural as well as in symbolic forms. The faunal motifs of horn, bird and goat are found in only one example whereas the fish motif is more commonly used in various patterns on ceramics. In two instances there is a single fish motif. But there is a pattern in which fish motif is drawn in double circular row with simple lines and dots. It is a very unique style of placing fish motif as it is not found at other contemporary sites.

The sixth and last category is of the anthropomorphic motif, which is based on

human figures. There are only three vessels found with anthropomorphic motifs. The human face is drawn only on a single sherd, which is symbolic. The figure is having the combination of a buffalo and human features, representing the famous so-called 'horned deity' associated with the Kot Dijian culture (Khan 1965; Durrani et al 1991; Durrani 1988). On three different patterns the human eye motif is found, where it is used in a natural style and in a symbolic way.

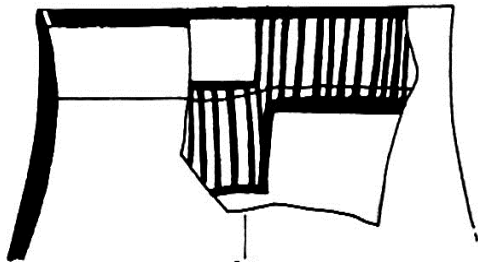
### **Conclusion**

The Gandi Umar Khan society seems to be very practical and potters gave more emphasis on the

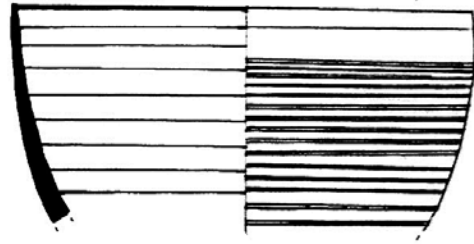
decoration of daily use pottery. The quality of pottery vessels shows that workmanship and firing processes of potters of are very good quality. Ancient potters were more focused on variety of designing as compare to colour scheming. The decorative motifs on vessels show that potters of Gandi Umar Khan do love beauty and aesthetics but more close to creative work as compare to nature.

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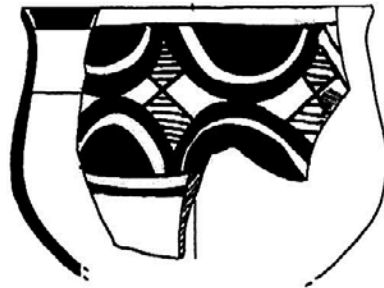
a. Vertical lines



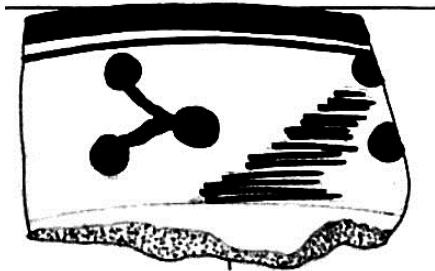
b. Horizontal lines



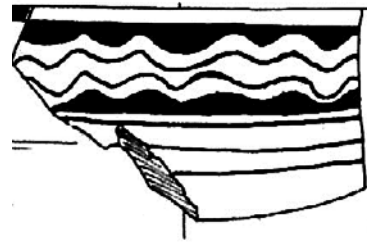
c. Diagonal lines



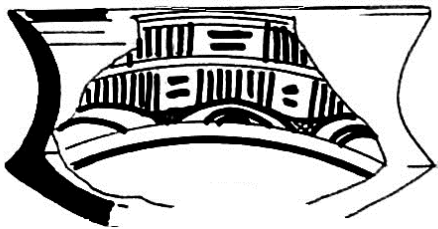
d. Semi circle



e. Connected Dots



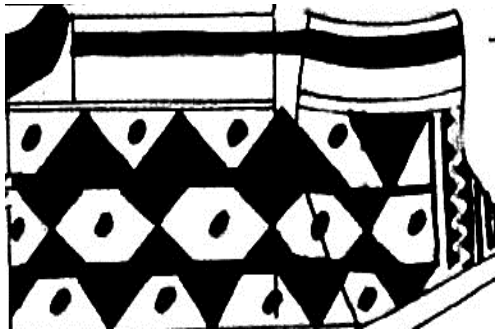
f. Wavy lines



g. Geometrical lines



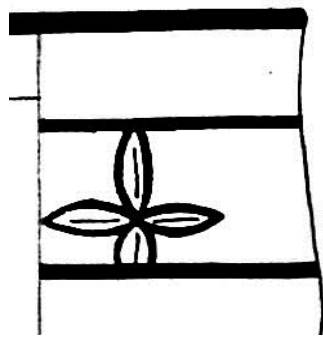
h. Intersecting floral designs



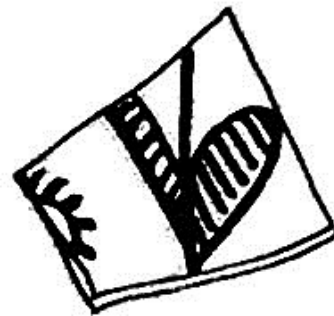
i. Triangles



j. Zigzag



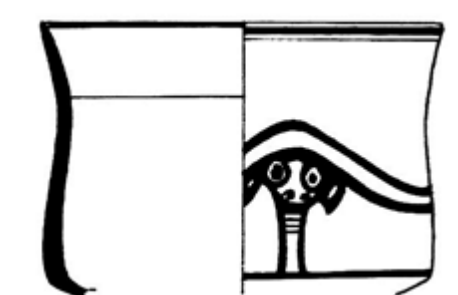
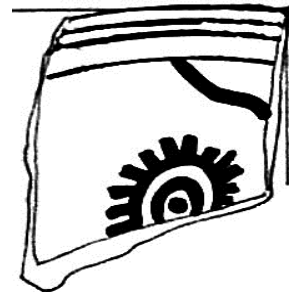
k. Floral



l. Leaf Pattern



m. Faunal (fish and human eye with radiating sun)



n. Anthropomorphic design (horned deity)



o. Impressed pattern