

Simple Geometric Patterns on Pottery of Gandi Umar Khan

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Introduction

Pottery is the most essential element that characterizes a culture or civilization; its evolution and devolution; and reflecting socio-religious information. Ceramic collected from various ancient archaeological sites has many identical aspects in terms of shape, design and color that provide ample stuff for researchers to discover about the past human societies. Among all the sites of Indus Civilization on the Gomol Plain, Gandi Umar Khan (Rehman, 1997; Khan et al 2000; Ali and Jan, 2005), yielded a very rich collection of pottery from the surface as well as archaeological context (Jan 2008; Ali and Jan 2009). Although the pottery from Gandi Umar Khan is mainly plain but some specific motifs of geometrical, floral and faunal type have also been found in good amount. However, the geometric designs are the most common with good variation.

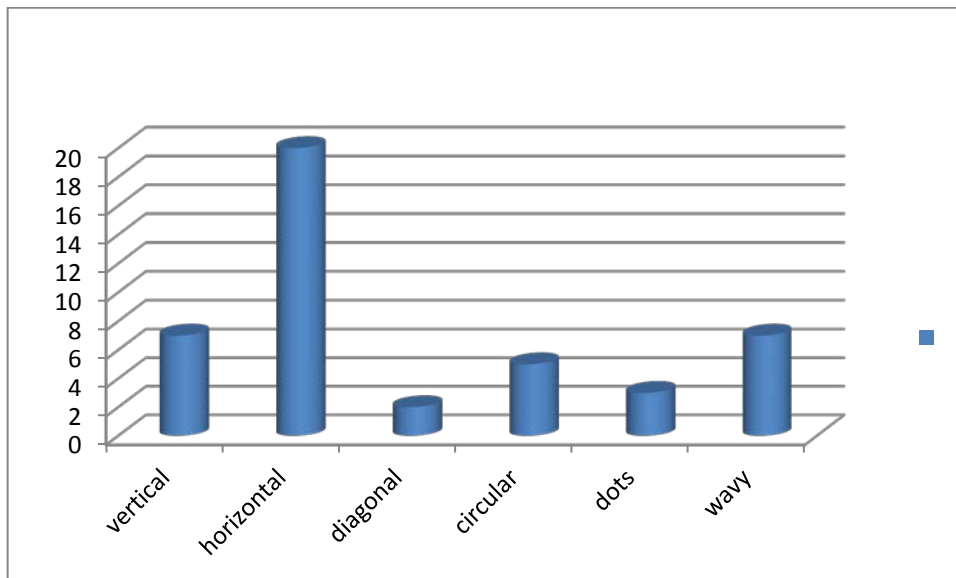
Geometrical Patterns

A geometrical shape is totally different from a natural shape; it may be mathematically precise as square, rectangular, triangle, circle, parallelogram, cube or cylindrical. Such geometric shapes are often thought of as having a dynamic quality. Geometric shapes such as squares and rectangles have one quality in common i.e. stability, due to their flat bases. Circles, ovals, spheres and ellipses, however, have no true bases and on one hand seem to be unstable and more capable of movement, while on the other hand possess a “built in” quality of equilibrium (Oei & Kegel, 2002).

Preliminary study of the pottery from Gandi Umar Khan (all the four phases) shows that there are total eighty five (85) geometrical designs identified, which can basically be divided into two major types i.e. simple and complex geometric designs. Among them, forty four (44) are in simple category and the remaining forty one (41) designs are of complex geometric variety. The following is the detail of the simple geometric designs.

S. No	Types of motif	No. of designs
1	Vertical lines	07
2	Horizontal lines	20
3	Diagonal lines	02
4	Dots	03
5	Circles	05
6	Wavy designs	07
Total		44

Table1. Graphical Representation of Simple Geometrical Designs



Vertical Lines Pattern

Vertical lines play an important role in geometric shapes. An artist uses such lines to create a shape of an object or design. There are different emotional and psychological effects which these lines can represent (Beitler 1961). In the history of art, a line has been used to express feelings, thoughts and ideas of an artist (Pinker, 2012). Lines can be long or short, thick or thin, rough or smooth and all these properties of lines can express mood of the artist. Lines can be drawn vertically, horizontally, diagonally or in wave pattern. The lines

divide the spaces on surface of any object including pottery and create effect of movement and optical illusion. Generally horizontal lines add apparent width to a shape, and vertical lines tend to carry the eye up and down, adding to its height. There are times when a simple arrangement of line will fulfill the need of decoration and an interesting line pattern can represent an animal, bird or any other non-objective shape. Lines can also attract the attention towards the central point, express emotions and identify areas in a composition (Beeson, 2009).

In present study there are three different types in which vertical line are used on the pottery of Gandi Umar Khan such as simple, making lozenge pattern and vertical bands.

The patterns made by vertical lines are very thin and seems to be drawn free hand. These types of vertical lines always give an impression of delicacy and height (Fig.a). Another design of lozenge pattern is referred to as non-intersecting angles. It is mostly used in the decoration of ceramics, silverware and textiles (Fig.b). In the third type of design, vertical lines become thicker and show the impression of bands, (Fig c) the thickness of these bands gives the feeling of strength and height. Common colors used in vertical designs are red and black, which is a prominent feature of pottery of ‘Indus Age’.

Horizontal Line

A horizontal line gives an impression of calmness, steadiness, stretch and peace. It adds width to a design. A horizontal line gives a feeling of rest and calmness because objects equivalent to the earth are at repose form (Goldstein, and Goldstein, 1963). There are three types of patterns found in horizontal design on pottery from Gandi Umar Khan i.e. simple, thick and thin bands, and horizontal bands with dots (Fig d to h). These lines and bands actually enhance the structural beauty of the vessels. They add some idealistic effect on plain pots and also add a feeling of strength and stability, which is very important for delicate and breakable material like clay. In these designs the basic color of the pottery is red, while the lines and bands are shown in black. However, other commonly used colours in these design are chocolate, buff, pink and cream.

Diagonal Lines

A diagonal line gives an impression of motion, which also has a dramatic quality of excitement. A diagonal line conveys a feeling of movement, restlessness and uncontrolled energy (Goldstein, and Goldstein, 1963). There are two types of diagonal lines on the pottery of Gandi Umar Khan; diagonal lines with wavy pattern (Fig i) and double diagonal lines (Fig. J). The first pattern is very bold and prominent and is perfectly repeated after the same intervals. In the second design, two simple lines add an interesting effect that actually enhances the beauty of the vessel.

Circles or Circular shapes

A circle is an important geometrical shape which expresses the feeling of unity, perfection, completion and mobility. Circle is a basic shape through which one can design many other circular shapes like arch, semi-circle and intersecting designs. Among all the geometrical shapes, circle is the only one which holds an exceptional position. It has no beginning or ending point and never expresses the direction or orientation (Oei, and Kegel, 2002). On the ceramics of Gandi Umar Khan, circular designs can be divided into three categories; semi-circle, spiral and concentric circle. All semi-circle designs are different from one another, the circles are filled, hollow and with the combination of other geometric shapes as well. The combination of thick semi circles and lines creates a very different and complicated pattern (Fig k). It is a very bold design especially on utensils. This type of design is most preferably used on decorative items.

The next type is coil or spiral design (Fig l) that is also a variation of circular design. It creates an interesting feeling of movement. In spiral shape the line is circling around a center at a continuously increasing or decreasing distance. There is a spiral shape design similar to an incised pattern on a bowl at Rehman Dheri as well (Durrani, 1988).

Concentric circles are shown (Fig m) in between the horizontal bands with the addition of a loop type motif. The basic difference in spiral and concentric pattern is that in

the former a single line moves around the center and in the latter design small to large size circles are adjusted together. The most common color in circle design is cream and black but buff and red color is also used in the background.

Dots

Dot is the starting point of any geometric creation. It may be recognized in random spots or arranged in dotted lines, figures or in free forms (Oei, and Kegel, 2002). Dots always create an interesting feeling and can be used in a variety of ways for example, combined with lines, circles or in band form. Dot's size can also vary from small to large and bold. These types of dots are also reported from Mehregarh (Samzun, 1991) and Jhandi Babar (Ali and Khan, 2001). Dot design on Gandi Umar Khan pottery is divided into three types; connected dots, eye and dot, and dots in bands (Fig n, o & p).

Wavy pattern

Most of the wavy lines on the ceramics of Gandi Umar Khan is in horizontal direction except figure (Fig q), which is depicted vertically. The vertical wavy lines resemble the movement of a snake but horizontal wavy style gives the feeling of a stream or flowing water (Fig r, s & t). The thickness of these lines also varies from one design to another, and it is divided into three steps: very thick and bold, medium and thin.

Conclusion

The decorative designs and motifs of Gandi Umar Khan are the true reflection of the 'Indus Age'. While studying the individual motifs it is to be noted that most of the symbols are of the same character as used in Mohenjodaro and Harrappan cultures. Simple Geometrical motifs on the pottery of Gandi Umar Khan show that potters are very creative and imaginative because they focus on geometrical designs; they produce these designs by their imagination and are less inspired from items of nature.

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Figure

