

Historical Analysis of Indus Valley Civilization for Knitting; A Case of Dera Ghazi Khan District

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Abstract

The Indus civilization, also known as the Harappa civilization, is one of the oldest and most significant civilizations in the Indian subcontinent. It flourished in the Indus River Valley from about 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE, and is known for its advanced urban planning, agriculture, trade, and craftsmanship. One of the most important aspects of Indus civilization was their textile industry, specifically their knitting and weaving techniques. Knitting and weaving were integral to the daily life of the Indus people, as it provided them with clothing, blankets, and other textiles that were necessary for survival in the harsh climate of the region. The Indus people were skilled in spinning and weaving cotton and wool, and used these materials to create a variety of textiles such as saris, dhotis, shawls, and blankets. The art of knitting and weaving was so important that it was often depicted in the artwork of the time, including pottery, seals, and figurines. The Indus people were also known for their intricate designs and patterns, which were woven into the textiles using various techniques such as dyeing, embroidery, and printing. These designs often featured geometric shapes, animals, and floral motifs, which were believed to have symbolic meanings and were used as a form of communication. Knitting and weaving were not only important for practical purposes, but also held cultural significance for the Indus people. Textiles were often used as a form of currency and were given as gifts during important ceremonies such as weddings and births. The production of textiles was also a way for women to

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express their creativity and skills, and was an important part of their social and cultural identity.

Keywords: Indus, Knitting, Culture, Dera Ghazi Khan.

Discussion

The Indus River and its plains has been the gigantic geographical region containing different cultural traditions, from the foundation to the early Stone Age over 12 million years ago and to the present era. Dera Ghazi Khan is situated at the heart of the Indus valley. Among textile traditions of the Indus Valley region had their deep roots in the prehistoric Neolithic Age. The farmers and herders who lived near the Indus River had their long history of more than 9000 years.. This history can be traced by the archaeological deposits found at archeological places in the Indus Region. There for it is difficult to find fragmentary and indirect pieces of evidence for early textile products in this area. The use of textiles can be traced by terracotta figurines and inscribed seals which represent different kinds of clothing such as skirts, shawls, or turbans. Other shreds of evidence can be traced by the polychrome and bichrome designs which were painted on pottery shows insights into the variety of fabric samples. The generally potted are those that have been saved from decomposed like metals such as copper or silver by some low-fired clay slips.

In the Paleolithic or Stone Age period, which dates back to around 12,000 years ago, inhabitants living in the Indus region were wanderers, hunters, and gatherers.² Probably, they used animal skins or different types of plant fibers made from roots, grasses, inner bark of trees for their clothing. They used the long hair of wild animals like sheep and goat by twisting into a rope and braiding such fibers, are used even today in Indus plains, for making rope and nets, net bags and woven belts, etc...The hunters and wanderers started to settle in communities at the end of the Paleolithic Age. Those people knew to knit or weave, made on a simple bead loom, or through complex techniques of beading and looping. The wild or domestic cotton, wool, wild silk had founded to use in making the necklace strings. There is a lot of indirect evidence for spinning of fine threads for making stringing beads, many micro-beads have been incorporated into bands.³ At the site of Mehrgarh, some seeds of the cotton plant (*Gossypium* sp.) charred wheat and barley had been founded from a mud-brick house dating to the sixth millennium B.C.⁴

“At Harappa, the early weavers used indigo-dyed blue yard changing the color with natural brown cotton or bleached cotton. Such woven patterns are still woven as bed covers or shawls of Punjab known as *Khess*. This is evidence for the production of fine fabrics, presumably made with cotton”⁵

Vats describe that no remains of textiles were revealed during excavations at Harappa, but he notes that textile imitation have been found on the center base of faience vessels. The practice of making faience vessels, shape around a core of sand that was covered with textiles may be paste had hardened, the sand was removed and the textile burned away during the firing, leave a fine impression.

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Different impressions from similar faience bottles have been founded by excavations at Harappa ⁶

various fabrics were made with fine clothes and others like gauze with large unevenly spun threads, which shows the use of fine cotton or even wool, the form of hemp or jute. Cotton was the most common preserved form of textile in the Indus cities, the use of wool can be seen in the fabric fragments saved on corroded copper artifacts. The pointer for the use of wool is curved razors with handles wrapped in yarn (the shape of the blade is similar to the bent blades used in carpet making throughout (West Asia and South Asia). Although, there was no prehistoric example of knotted carpets founded from the Indus region.⁷ The use of well-polished bone tools, some one's in rectangular shapes bone plaques, made by cattle ribs used in weaving perforations (tools for making holes for weaving) used in a form of card weaving (comb for wool weaving) for making belts.⁸ The two small terracotta beads with a fabric impression on both faces also founded The use of uniform thread size with simple weave shows a fine textile tradition with the genius skilled craft.⁹ A Terracotta figurines show a woman wearing long skirts with a black cross-hatched (small ax) painted design. The use of colors in both the warp and the weft was the common technique indicated in most of the post regions of the world.¹⁰ The use of tiny gold sequins and discs for decoration of dresses, probably some broken off and lost in the dust or mud of the street shows that the people living in this ancient town were too wealthy that gold sequins sewn on their clothes.¹¹ Animals and cattle had shown covered with (blankets) woollen shawl which still used in some tribal areas) to protect them from the cold or insects with painted designs on some of the terracotta figurines, these blankets may have been woven with patterns or embroidered.¹² The Kot Diji Period¹² 2800 BC, the early largest towns, we found the evidence for well-developed textile crafts. The second period of growth of cities and textile is the Harappan Period (2600-1900). The clothing was considered an important part of Harappan cultural identity which was shown by dresses, depicted on terracotta figurines, and carved on seals. Different female figurines depicted wearing short skirts that were indicated weaving on small backs trap looms.¹³ The excavations both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro have been found loom weights which indicate different types of looms were being used....high quality of Harappan textiles. It is difficult to determine the type of fiber-based solely or with the impression. Different fibers have been recovered from the excavations at Mohenjo-Daro. The most studied fiber sample exposed from Mohenjo-Daro had been a corroded silver jar.¹⁴

"The analysis of this fabric shows that it was made of cotton threads with a warp count of 20 threads per inch and a weft count of 60 threads per inch. Another fabric sample had a warp and weft count of 44/43 threads per square inch, and the calculated weight of the fabric was around 4 ounces per square yard"¹⁶

By a recent survey, the discovery of silk thread is also found with copper beads from the site of Harappa which shows that wild silk was also used by the ancient inhabitants of the Indus valley. The use of silk thread was also founded at the site of Harappa in the Indus valley dating around 2450 B.C to 2000 B.C.¹⁷ At the end of

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the Harappan period, near about in 1900-1500 BC, with the rising of new culture and ideologies, which linked with Vedic traditions and the Sanskrit writings. These descriptions and later period's sculptures had provided evidence for the use of different types of textiles, many of which are still in use. Most garments were made of unstitched cloth which can be seen in the Indus figurines and sculptures. The next period of urbanization reached to be in meridian in the Mauryan Empire (322-183 B.C) during which long-distance trade networks started to be vogue with China, Iran, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. From this period to the present, the history of textiles in South Asia turns towards more multifaceted due to the peak of cross-fertilization of ideas, the latest scientific technologies, and the global cultural styles of the world.¹⁸

History of Weaving, Knitting in Dera Ghazi Khan

The main source of livelihood of the people of Dera Ghazi Khan was keeping herds.¹⁹ People of tribal areas earned a substantial income from selling their live-stock and *Fur* of goats and wool from sheep. In national language, the sheep wool was called *Pasham* and camel's wool called **Malis** which was sold away to local yarn spinning mills where woolen yarn was made.²⁰ Goat's hair, locally called *jut* was sold only in tribal areas. The local people made yarn also called **Jut** from goat hair.²¹ Goats and sheep of this area still fulfill the meat requirement of the entire province. The people of the tribal area made many usually used items from the sheep wool and goats hair some of these products were made from goat hair or Jut. These products reflect the culture and traditional tangible assets of the people

This was woolen **Durée** called *Flassy* made by local people with goat fur with the combination of sheep wool and camels *Malis* was also used to make *Flasiyan*, *Daryan*, *Lokar*, *Dusa*, *Khathi*, *Dohar*, *Goni*, *Plantr*, *Mahar*,²² these were used to cover the floors of guest-rooms, especially used in the winter season. This was an important part of Balouch tribal culture.²³ Its width four feet and length was eight feet. Local people who called *Pauli* manufactured cotton *Khaddar* cloth *Chaders* and *Muslin* on handlooms with pure homespun cotton yarn.²⁴ In Dera Ghazi Khan, there were many colonies called *Basti Channal* inhabited by a specific tribe called *Channals*. These *Channals* engaged only in this profession of weaving *Daryan*, *Flassiyan*. This was their ancestral profession. This craft usually remains in their families from generation to generation. These colonies were situated near the towns of Chotti Balla (at *Basti Birmani*). These craftsmen were usually Balouch and worked in the hilly areas. They remained away from their homes even for months. Sometimes, their families, even women helped them in preparing *Flassies*.²⁵

The *Flassi* work in Dera Ghazi Khan started from the period of Mughal Emperor Humayun. During the reign of Humayun, an Irani was sent to jail for some crime. He was an expert in making woolen *Daree*. He started weaving *Daree* when he was in prison. Another man who belongs to *Channal* Tribe was also in prison, which learned the art of weaving *Darre*.²⁶

After that this skill communicated by him to other members of his clan. There was another version for learning the art of *Flassi* that a person named Baja Khan

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resident of *Basti Musa Khan Channal* near *Choti Bala* went to Rakni (Balouch istan) and had learned this art and later, many other pupils gradually learned this craft by him from this *Basti* (locality) and started this art for business purpose. These *Channal* families also knew the craft of tie-dye and block printing.²⁷

Designs of Flassi

These were made in a different type of geometrical designs. These were woven in fine and delicate threads and combination of different deep and fresh colors which adds their beauty. The craftsmen had not any drawings for making these articles. Only their creative mind can create different designs and combination of color some important design and their names are mentions below.

Dilber Mohra - This was a beautiful geometrical design and locally termed and famous as *Dilber*.

Hand Knotted Carpets

There are two theories about the origin of carpet weaving, first theory argues that the origin of carpets started by nomads, and used horizontal looms which can easily be dismantled, transported, and assembled. For nomads, the carpets made by wool saves the users from cold floors, and they can easily pack up their tent while the second theory considered that this craft started from the urban area, and used for beautification purpose of homes, they augmented that aesthetic purpose preceded the utilitarian.³⁸ This way vertical looms overlapped the horizontal looms. Hand-knotted carpets were the oldest craft of the world. This has also proved by Homer's *Iliad*, which was the oldest testament of the world but documented references of these crafts started from Sassanid's dynasty³⁹

A Russian Archaeologist, named, I.L.Rudenko excavated some tombs of emperors at the Altai Mountains in *Pazyryk* valley, near the border of Russia and Mongolia, in 1949 AD.⁴⁰ In the excavation of a tomb, he found a frozen carpet which dates back to 500 B.C. This was considered the oldest carpet in the world, about 2500 years old. It was an ancient Scythian tradition that when a king or ruler died he was buried with his precious belonging so for his dignity and honor.⁴¹ This piece of carpet was remained unfrozen, so it was badly decayed and damaged and now displayed in the Heritage Museum at Leningrad (Russia).⁴² This carpet has Terracotta colored field and woven in Turkish Hordes knots with pale blues, beiges, and yellows. Its design has small squares, which were filled with simple flowers and octagons which resembles later Turcoman weaving style, its borders have the design of lifelike elks, the procession of seven horsemen to each of four sides. This pattern shows the Scythian custom of burring seven horsemen with each chief.⁴³

In the above evidence, historians and researchers have agreed that carpet weaving started from Central Asia.⁴⁴ Some fragments of carpets discovered, during the excavation in eastern Turkistan in 1920 A.D. These belong to the 2nd and 3rd century BC. It can be said that carpet weaving started in eastern Turkistan and Mongolia. Archaeologically it confirms that this craft originated from the eastern

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border of Central Asia or Mongolia.⁴⁵

In the reign of Persian Emperor *Kaechosroe* (531-579 A.D.) the largest carpet of history was prepared called the Spring carpet of *Chosroes*. It was woven for his palace. *Taq-i-Kisra* at Ctesiphon.⁴⁶ It considered the most expensive carpet which was woven by gold and silver threads and studded with precious jewels. Its design consisted of, gardens, trees, pathways, streams, and flowers.⁴⁷ Being defeated *Chosroes II* in 627AD, it was cut into pieces by Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. Its weight was more than two tons.⁴⁸ The famous pair of *Ardabil* carpets now have displayed in Victoria and Albert Museum London and Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, USA. It was woven in silk thread. The circle of the design is a yellow medallion and the ground is deep sapphire blue. It has a woven inscription, which had mentioned that the carpet was woven by *Maqsud of Kashan* in 946 A.H/1539 A.D.⁴⁹

From ancient times, people decorate and beautify their clothes with needle-work which is called hand embroidery. This work included sewing of shells on a shirt, floral patterns in leather skirts, stacking gold, and precious stones with threads on their dress, or stitching needle-woven border on linen shifts. Early civilizations found many ways to embellish their clothing.⁵⁰ Embroidery in different forms remained existed as long as fabric. Likewise, embroidery remained vogue all over the world; it has its origin started in China and the near East. The word *Embroidery* derived from the French word '*broderie*, meaning embellishment.⁵¹ Egyptian textile finds of the period from about 1340 B.C.⁵²

Ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Phoenicians, and Hebrews used embroidery for decorating their robes.⁵³ During the medieval world which was considered luxurious and wealthy, a person such as a castle lord, a wealthy trader, or a monastery had thick stone walls with tapestries to keep themselves in heat, included woven embroidered cloth.⁵⁴ The oldest embroidery works date back to the Middle Ages; embroidery was used in religious dressing to perform religious customs. It shows the sign of wealth. The people who have high status and wealth were easily willing to pay a large amount of money for their luxurious embroidered dressing.⁵⁵ Embroidered work is connected with the introduction of a needle with an eye-hole.⁵⁶

Embroidery is the handicraft of decorating fabric or other materials with needle and thread or yarn. It has been practiced for centuries and decades, from generation to generation.⁵⁷ The history of the origin of embroidery can be dated back to 30,000 B.C. During recent archaeological finding, fossilized remains of heavily hand-stitched and decorated clothing, boots, and a hat were found in Siberia, around 5000, and 6000 B.C. elaborately drilled shells stitched with decorative designs onto animal hides.⁵⁸ Chinese thread embroidery dates back to 3500 B.C, the embroidery of clothing with silk threads, precious stones, and pearls was also used. Examples of surviving Chinese chain stitch embroidery worked in silk thread have also been found and dated to the Warring States period (5th-3rd century B.C).⁵⁹ Embroidery and most other fiber and needlework arts are believed to originate in the Orient and the Middle East. Recorded history,

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sculptures, paintings, and vases depicting inhabitants of various ancient civilizations show people wearing thread-embroidered clothing. Smaller seed pearls and beads sewed on to decorate religious items clothing during the 1100-1300 A.D. By 1500 A.D., embroideries had vogue all over the world. Until 1700 A.D. thread and bead embroidery gained more popularity.⁶⁰ Embroidered dresses, religious items, and household items have been a sign of wealth and dignity in many cultures of the world. Traditional embroidered folk techniques and methods were transferring from generation to generation in cultures. In traditional embroidery, the fabrics and yarns used vary from place to place. For thousands of years linen, and silk threads have been in use for this craft. Most commonly floral motifs were used to create. Embroidery techniques as chain stitch and couching embroiled work were the most economical and expensive.⁶¹ Machine-made embroideries get started in St. Gallen in eastern Switzerland, near about the 19th century. Recently embroidery work stitched with a computerized embroidery machine. In this way, digitized patterns are used with embroidery software and different types of fills, add texture & design the work.⁶² Until the 19th century, embroidery had spread as the preserve of the upper-status people and considered a hobby of rich people. Embroidery was done not only on expensive clothes like silk but on cheaper and rough materials fabrics too. Historically Embroidery work has been done by women; however, this has not prevented men. Some famous personalities found relaxation in embroidering. Actor Henry Fonda mentioned in an interview that his favorite hobby was embroidering. During film shooting, when he has spare time; he sat and embroidered to relax him and pass the time. Emperor Gustaf V, King of Sweden, (1907-1950), relaxed by embroidering. It was very unusual employment among men. Henry's King Gustaf's had a deep devotion to the noble art of embroidery. These are evidence that embroidery is for everyone beyond the ages, sex, or status, famous or unknown the passion only needed a needle, fabric, and some spare moment for relaxation.

Conclusion

Knitting in the Indus Valley Civilization was not merely a utilitarian craft but also held symbolic importance. The intricate patterns and designs found on knitted artifacts reflect the artistic creativity and technical expertise of the ancient knitters. The use of various materials, such as wool, cotton, and silk, suggests the diversity of resources available in the region and the mastery of different techniques employed by the knitters. It is evident that knitting played a pivotal role in the production of garments, household textiles, and decorative items, contributing to the overall material culture and aesthetics of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Furthermore, the existence of knitting in the district of D.G.Khan underscores the widespread nature of this craft across the Indus Valley region. The intricate network of trade and cultural exchange that flourished during this period likely facilitated the diffusion of knitting techniques and traditions among various settlements. This points to a sophisticated level of craftsmanship and social

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interconnectedness within the civilization, as individuals and communities shared knowledge, skills, and resources related to knitting. The historical background of knitting in the district of D.G.Khan sheds light on the significance of textile production and its role in shaping the economic and cultural landscape of the Indus Valley Civilization.

In conclusion, the historical analysis of Indus Valley civilization for knitting in district of D.G.Khan reveals a rich and vibrant tradition of textile craftsmanship. The discovery of knitted artifacts, the intricate patterns and designs, and the use of various materials highlight the skill and artistry of the ancient knitters. Moreover, the widespread presence of knitting across the Indus Valley region signifies the importance of this craft in the social, economic, and cultural spheres of the civilization. By exploring and understanding the historical roots of knitting in D.G. Khan, we gain a deeper appreciation for the diverse and interconnected nature of human creativity and cultural expression.

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