



## THE ART MOTIFS ON EARLY HARAPPAN POTTERY FROM HARYANA

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### **Abstract:**

The subject matter of the present study is on the various trends of pottery and its associated cultures of Haryana. The study of pottery from the excavated and other non-excavated sites in this region has enabled us to understand the settlement pattern of the Harappan cultures. Thus the study of pottery has once again helped us in understanding the settlement pattern of the Harappan cultures in Haryana. The most distinctive item in Early-Harappan assemblage is the pottery. Pottery of this period has been divided into six fabrics i.e. A to F as noticed at Kalibangan in Rajasthan, is also found in the region under study. These wares are wheel made, well fired, of thin to thick fabric, red, pinkish, buff and grey in colour. Most of the vessels are painted with designs which include a large number of geometric patterns, such as horizontal bands, loops, wavy lines, cross hatched triangles and semicircles, horizontal and vertical chains as well as faunal and floral motifs. Some pots are decorated with incised patterns like wavy lines and criss-cross designs.

**Key Words:** Art, Pottery, Paintings, Designs

### **Painted and incised Decoration:**

The pottery samples are collected from different sites falling in the region of our study during the course of explorations. The Early-Harappan culture has been unearthed at several sites: Rakhigarhi, Kunal, Jogni Khera, Mitathal, Siswal, Bhirrana etc. The Early Harappan pottery can be equated with degenerated Siswal and Early Harappan of Kalibangan. Culturally these sites seem to have been related to Kalibangan-I. These are painted in black generally with geometrical designs, sometimes the black designs were combined with white over dull red surface. The graffiti marks, horizontal bands, oblique lines, groups of verticals lines, arched and criss-cross designs and a few specimens of reserve slip is also the distinct feature of Early Harappan pottery. The birds and animals represented on the Early-Harappan pottery are usually and rarely in stylized forms. The animals in painting on sherds include bull, dog, goat, etc. The incised designs are mostly geometrical and rarely naturalistic ones in this period. The geometrical designs such as wavy line, sets of zig-zag lines on the interior as well as on exterior lines, criss-cross on exterior forming diamonds, ladder, lenticular etc., usually occur on this Pottery.

#### **a. Painted Design:**

The painted designs on Early Harappan pottery include horizontal and a few specimens of reserved slip ware on which designs are produced on bands, oblique lines, groups of verticals lines, arched and criss-cross designs scratching by a comb like instrument<sup>1</sup>. Special mention may be made of faunal designs. The painted designs on pottery of this period are executed drawn in black on red brown or over cream to buff surface. Some pots treated with red or pinkish red slip. The designs are made on the rim, neck and at the beginning of the shoulder of the pots<sup>2</sup>. The painted designs are found in abundance while the incised-motifs are rare. Sometimes both styles of decoration-painting as well as incision decoration found simultaneously.

The colour of painting on the Kunal fabric-A pottery is black often supplemented with white<sup>3</sup>. The painted designs are mostly geometrical on the pottery of this site. The use of a thick ubiquitous horizontal band is a basic feature at Kalibangan<sup>4</sup>. The geometrical designs, including broad bands, criss-cross, group of converging lines, triangle, Upside down triangles hatched with criss-cross designs, lenticular, double axe, fish scale, ladder pattern or (flag-like design), loop, rhomb like design, sigma's, semi-circle, petal-flower, etc.<sup>5</sup> The depiction of naturalistic designs include the animal, bird and curvilinear plant representation<sup>6</sup>.

The painted bands on fabrics B to F (except fabric D) are made with black and red pigments. A single band or a group of band is a basic geometrical design, which is found frequently on Early Harappan vases. Generally horizontal bands were executed on the shoulder, rim and neck of the pot<sup>7</sup>. Sometimes bands are executed on the belly followed by rustication on the half lower portion of vases<sup>8</sup>. The band is not only used as the frame to demarcate a focal point, but also for separating a design. On the Early-Harappan pottery the band is found mostly in the form of a broad and thick horizontal line. Sometimes it is so thick that it covers the space of the rim up to the beginning of the shoulder of the pot. Bands are also in form of flowing lines. The depiction of a wavy lines also a geometrical element, which is found in, horizontal or diagonal form. It is used sometimes as the border frame or design separating the panels. On the Early-Harappan pottery, wavy design is found in single or multiple fashions. It is depicted in horizontal form, bordered by the bands. In multiple forms the design

resemble to an irregular diamond<sup>9</sup>. Along with the band, the loop is also one of the geometrical designs. It is drawn in single or double form suspended from the rim band. Sometimes it is shown in inverted fashion<sup>10</sup>. The depiction of a pair of loops suspended from a horizontal band, forming a triangle or frond-like design at their meeting points<sup>11</sup>.

Circle is also a geometrical design and is rarely drawn<sup>12</sup> on the (Rindhana- II)<sup>13</sup> Early-Harappan pottery. The groups of incised concentric semi-circles enclosed by horizontal lines are found on sherds from Rindhana-II and Mitathal. Sometimes a design is formed by a series of blank semi-circles in between two horizontal lines. Consequently the space found below is filled with black color.

The arch and triangles are filled with lattice or criss-cross design below and the arch are enclosed by groups of horizontal lines above. But, it is rarely found on the Early-Harappan pottery<sup>14</sup>. The converging lines also occur as a border design, but do not intersect each other<sup>15</sup>. Early Harappan sherds are decorated with oblique or vertical line strokes in groups<sup>16</sup>. The ladder motif design is rarely found on the Early-Harappan pottery<sup>17</sup>. Two horizontal lines, diagonally drawn and joined by short horizontal lines at short intervals, form the ladder motif. Decorated the multiple and interior with two groups of Zig- Zag lines sherds are found from Rindhana-I and Siswal - I.

In a design, two rope-like vertical lines enclosing a group of five horizontal strokes. The comb design having four teeth like resembling English letter 'E'<sup>18</sup> is shown between two horizontal bands. Below it is seen a horizontally lying seed or like<sup>19</sup>. The triangle is one of the basic geometrical designs. The triangle symbols are found in the form of solid, blank latticed, hatched, elongated inverted etc. on Early-Harappan Pottery and derived probably from a hill or hillock<sup>20</sup>. The triangles are filled with check design. Sometimes joining two elongated triangles forms a canopy like design (Bedwa and Jeet Pura). The central space is occupied by a solid rectangle. Similar to above but with four vertical lines dividing space between the semi-arches occur triangles which is hatched<sup>21</sup> with criss-cross design and enclosed by horizontal lines found some sherds Mithathal, Kheri Mehram and Rindhana II. The motif formed by four or three solid triangles meeting at their apex or three solid triangles meeting at their apex at the central point, representing six or eight points. Sometimes, bordered with a circle, is called the Maltese cross. It is a geometrical motif, which appears to be quite popular on the Early-Harappan Pottery. The Maltese cross motif with eight point crosses is found on a Early Harappan shard from Banawali-A.

The net motif in a grid pattern is executed, covering a large space of the pot. Sometimes grid decoration is formed by a series of black and solid squares shown alternatively in each line. The diamond like design occurs in the form of solid, latticed, or prolonged continuous form. The design is found mostly in horizontal row. A sherd consist two panels marked by sigma is found from Siswal-A.

The birds and animals represented on the Early-Harappan pottery are usually and rarely in stylized forms. The animals in painting on sherds include bull<sup>22</sup>, dog, goat, etc. The bull is shown mostly with elongated and linear body, raised hump and big round eyes, long neck, short mouth and short raised ears. An unidentified animal figure is depicted on a sherd from Rakhi Shahpur-I. He- goat and dog have been found on the potsherds from Nuna Majra-I<sup>23</sup>. The representations of birds on the Early-Harappan Pottery are mostly depicted in natural forms. On a medium size vessel of fabric-B from Banawali is embellished with two almost identical head of a bird figure<sup>24</sup>. The figures are decorated with a grass-like plant with long leaves. The bird figure has curved lines like horns and leaf-shaped decorations close to its ears<sup>25</sup>. Beside, Peacock also found on the sherds from Farmana and Rindhana-I. There are a few representations of this category in the region our study. Snake like insects, which is depicted with Peacock in its mouth. The fish scale motif seems to be a logical development of contiguous loop lines. The fish-scale design, suspended from the rim-band and sometime, in this design sometimes each contains a dot inside. The tree and plants represented on the Early Harappan pottery are a few in numbers. These represented the 'tree of knowledge' or 'tree of life'. The club and curvilinear flowers are painted on pottery shard from Banawali-A<sup>26</sup>.

#### **b. Incised Decorations:**

In addition to the painted motifs and designs some of the potsherds of the Early-Harappan culture are decorated with incised decorations. Some painted in black example bearing graffiti marks have also been collected from Paranala, Thuska Rindhana-I & II, Rakhi Garhi, Balu<sup>27</sup>, Bhirrana. The other decorations such as appliqué or fingertip decoration appear to be rare on the Early-Harappan Pottery. On some of the pots the incised designs occur on both sides. Mostly these were restricted on the upper part of the pot. These designs are thick or thin, sometime very thin, and as such appear to have been made with a sharp pointed instrument.

The incised designs on the Early-Harappan pottery are mostly geometrical and rarely naturalistic ones. The geometrical designs such as wavy line, sets of zig-zag lines on the interior as well as on exterior lines, criss-cross on exterior forming diamonds, ladder, lenticular like designs found from Mitathal and Garhwal, usually occur on this Pottery. Early Harappan pottery are also decorated with multiple incised horizontal lines on exterior and sometimes followed by two groups of line. Decoration with deep incised horizontal lines and followed by a group of incised wavy line, sometime horizontal lines intersected by a group of oblique line (Puthi-V, Siswal -I and Mithathal).

The Early-Harappan Pottery, described above, indicates that wares are mostly painted and some of incised. The number of the painted motifs on the Early-Harappan pottery is large as compared to incised designs. The designs of this phase are made with precise, delicate and careful hand<sup>28</sup>. This phase is represented by the motifs found on the Pottery at, Kalibangan-1, Siswal-A, Banawali<sup>29</sup>, Bhirrana, Mitathal-I and Balu etc.

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