

# "Artistic Heritage of the Sindh Region, Pakistan: Ornamentation Artwork of the Mosques and Tombs of the sultanate period: Historical and Archeological Appreciation: A Comparative Study with that of the Art of the said Muslim Monuments in Bangladesh "

Dr. Shamshad Chowdhury

Date of Submission: 20-03-2023

Date of Acceptance: 30-03-2023

## ABSTRACT:

The subject of traditional ornamentation artwork on the Mosques and Tombs of the sultanate Muslim period in the Sindh region (province) of Pakistan and its historical archaeological, ethnological, artistic and aesthetic elements arouse interesting study, as embraces specially this art in different sites and places of this region from different generations esp. the Muslims' contribution in this respect. "And here there is emphasis on the contributions of the traditional artisans to this artifact which has traditionally flourished and bloomed in this region. It is an attempt to explore the past artistic values of the traditional-artists of the Sindh Region in the creation of their artworks through their social, cultural activities, religious practices, beliefs and faiths their background and importance".<sup>1</sup>

"Sindh was the site of one of the Cradle of civilizations, the Bronze Age Indus Valley civilization that flourished from about 3000 B.C. and declined rapidly 1,000 years later, following the Indo-Aryan migrations that overran the region in waves between 1500 and 500 B.C. Sindh is sometimes referred to as the 'Gateway of Islam', as it was one of the first regions of the Indian subcontinent to fall under Islamic rule".<sup>2</sup>

**Keywords:** Sindh, Mohenjo-Daro, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Artisan.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Sindh is prominent for its history during the Bronze Age under the Indus Valley civilization, and is home to two UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites: The Makli Necropolis and Mohenjo-Daro. From the beginning of the 12th A.D. during the regime of the Muslim emperor Qutbuddin Iyebek (c.1206-10 Centuries A.D.) the sultanate-period was introduced. But in real sense, the history of the Muslim architectural monuments began right from the later 7th century A.D. is noteworthy for its

Dr. Shamshad Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Fashion Design and Technology, Shanto-Marium University of Technology.

glorious historical background. In this period, the great Muslim warrior and the chief of the army staff Muhammad -bin-Qusim conquered the Sindh, and in result of that Muslim rule was introduced and set fully in the North-Western part of the Indo-Pak-Subcontinent and then flourished all over the sub- continent from there. "The Islamic artistic influence can be found and traced mainly in Persian, Moorish, Timrod, Ottoman, Turkish, Fatimid, Mamluk, Mughal, Afro-Islamic and Sino-Islamic architectures."<sup>3</sup> The eminent scholar in Islamic art and culture Dr. Syed Mahmoodul Hasan also writes the same viz. "decoration for architectural ornamentation work on different edifices through terracotta plaque and also stone curving and some other medias have come into

practice and existence since very ancient period.”<sup>4</sup> Prof. Dr. Farzand Maish, head of Dept. of Archeology, Univ. of the Punjab, Lahore, writes also almost the same matter viz. existence of edifice decoration came into practice since very ancient period “when he (Man) started excavation or construction of structures, the decorated caves or temples with different motifs and carving on the rocks or stones.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Resources of Study-previous works of scholars:

“Excavation carried out at the different sites of the Sindh province, Pakistan Viz. Bhanbo, Nirun (at present in Hyderabad), Brahmanabad, Al-Munsura, Al-Mahfuja and some other places and different sites in Bangladesh Viz. Abina, Pandua, Gaurh, Chapai- Nababganj in Rajshahi, Bogra, Bagerhat, Tangail and other places where the most prolific ornamented mosques, tombs and mausoleum have been traced”<sup>6</sup> (reported from the sites: and refer to the p. 1-150, Muslim Architecture in Bengal by Dani, Ahmad Hasan, Dr and recovered at the sites of both the above mentioned countries. He also write same viz. in History of Pakistan Pakistan through: ages, p. 218.They are made of terracotta, stone, fiancé and glazed-tiles etc. Media's. It is learnt from literary sources viz. The Archaeology of India, p. 41-108, by Khanna Amar Nath, Lothal & the Indus Civilization by Row S. R., Muslim Architecture During Sultanate Period, by Rahman Mokhlisur Muhammad Dr. p. 1-14,Ancient Monuments in East Pakistan, (1970, p.180-187, by Hassan S. Mahmoodul).Muslim Stahpattho and Shilpakala,by Hassan S. Mahmoodul, p. 1.Archaeologist Dr. Farznd Masih also writes that, “with the beginning of the structural temples the architects or sculptors started decorating these buildings of gods which in the early stage were simple but became gradually more and more developed in later phase.”<sup>7</sup>Lahore Museum Bulletin, vol. XII, 2000 No. p.33.and many more publications and Journals. Unique architectural ornamentation artwork has been found on many mosques, tombs, mausoleums and some other religious edifices in this region. Field survey in different sites in said region of such matter is also be included for exploring and executing on the stated matter and findings. We also learnt about the architectural ornamentation works of the Sultanate Mosques, tombs and mausoleums in Sindh through the description of the books and volumes with their writer’s name of the scholars in this field which given below:Dr. Shahariar Talukder writes inArchitectural Ornamentation Art-work of the Historical Monuments: Heritage of Macau, (an unpublished article, manuscript), p. 1the writer,

Minahan, James (2012),Ethnic Groups of South Asia and the Pacific: An Encyclopedia. ABC-CLIO. ISBN 978-1-59884-659-1, p. 257–259, The volume Bangladesher Pratinathatha, (1984, p.15 – 17, by khairul Alam Monir); The Archaeological heritage of Bangladesh, (2011p.357–366, by Zakaria, Abul Kalam Muhd); Discovered the Monuments of Bangladesh, (1949, p.135–165, by Dr. Edited-Johan Sanday); Ancient Monuments in East Pakistan, (1970, p.180-187, by Hassan S. Mahmoodul).Development of Muslim Architecture Duning Sultanate Period, By Rahman, Mokhlisur Muhammad, Dr. p. 1-14, “that the Sindh has a very rich and remote glorious heritage in its traditional arts and culture with indigenous quality and impact.”<sup>8</sup>Eminent scholar in Islamic Art and Culture Oleg Grabar writes, on his book, The Formation of Islamic Art, p.1044 “It is customary to separate secular and religious impulse in the formation and development of an art. It is often said that the separation is not entirely meaningful in Islam which did not make a distention between the realms of God and of Caesar.”<sup>9</sup>

List of the site’s villages and centers of the ornamentation work have to be made this information has to be collected and known from the scholars and experts of this work from museum and other centers of this art and form 11 books, journals and magazines. According to the above mention program the field survey work and side visits has to be started to the most important sites places where the artisan groups live. Necessary photographs of the specimen materials shall be taken and sketch and drawing will be made. Interviews will also be conduct with the scholars and artisans of these artwork and their family members especially with the early people.

Study of museum and other art centers specially the traditional artifacts and archaeological and ethnological museums in the Sindh, Punjab, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi and other places in Pakistan and other centers where the said artwork is kept in collection has to be studied thoroughly to reveal and explore their findings.

Library study to learn the ethnological social religious and social background of the artisan family and other information, matters and factors relevant to this work, library work is necessary.

#### Site exploration:

“The Sindh is one of the greater regions (province) of Pakistan once it was a contribution monarch under the Indo-Pak- Subcontinent. The whole Sindh is in the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro in Larkana district located on the right bank of the

Indus i.e., the Sindhu - river that is locating toward the West and the North-Western part of this sub-continent".<sup>10</sup> Following Alexander the Great's invasion, Sindh became part of the Mauryan Empire. After its decline, Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians ruled in Sindh"<sup>11</sup> (information obtain from website, internet). "Local Sindh Muslim dynasty that ruled between early 11th century and the 14th century."<sup>12</sup> The people of Sindh are called the Sindhi nations with far off their language and culture. They are also known as the Sindhi nations with far off and remote glorious heritage with a rich Art and traditional Cultural history flourished and bloomed from the alluvium valley of the great river Sindhu and from the Mohenjo-Daro i.e., Indus-Valley civilization. It is also regarded as the famous and very important historical place and archaeological sites of the world and the world human civilization. The importance of a world -wide effort to preserve Sindh, one of the most important and distinctive Monuments in the world, is quite obvious.

The traditional artifacts of the Sindh are renowned in the areas of pottery, toys, dolls and small deities made of terracotta, stone and ceramics, embroider designed costumes and different articles, folk ornaments and some other articles in rich design elements with indigenous motifs, forms and patterns in vivacious color. The traditional ornamentation artwork of the Mosques, tombs and mausoleums are also included with emphasis in such factor as quality, artistic and aesthetic involvements in glorious tradition. And they've also the importance of the cultural, social and importance and background which is closely associated with every aspect of such findings and it continues to be an integral part of country life since early period.

#### **Objects, expected output and target beneficiaries:**

There is a large scope for investigation and exploration of the above-mentioned research project. It is possible through survey in the important places and different sites in this region where the important work of ornamented mosques and tombs are found and built, and the artisans of said artwork are lived. And it can also be revealed through studying and the museum and library and also studding and the exploring the art materials - making centers and places along with their relevant matters and factors mentioned earlier that will awake the interest of the people and researchers in this precious tradition. Discussion will be made also with the experts, researchers and scholars in this field. And interview shall be conducted with

the artisans, their family members especially the elderly people of the artisans' family and the persons concerned to such art, practice and activities.

"The Sindh and its adjacent area Harappa comprise the vast majority of the people who have been living in the countryside of this wider area from a long time. They are the rural dwellers whose artistic and aesthetic expression in art is purely indigenous. They are the farmers, potters, fishermen, blacksmith, goldsmiths, small traders and businessmen, teachers, students, Mawlanas, Pirs, priests and other (information obtained from personal communication with the great archaeologist and historian Dr. V. S. Wakankar and Dr. Ahmmed Hasan Dani)".<sup>13</sup> Prof. Dr. Shahariar Talukder writes, also in this regard that, "The ornamentation of those of the monuments, edifices and buildings as well as ancient religious edifices as mentioned above sound the pride of wealth of past glory of old golden days which bears the magnificent evidences of the ornamentation of the monumental-art."<sup>14</sup>

#### **Cultural Sequence, Background: Origin and Antiquity:**

The earliest well-dated remains of human habitation in the whole region of the Sindh are flint object that reflect from the Indus valley i.e., Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and the cultural Eastern and the western part of the subcontinent i.e., stone flaking technique and microlithic stone industry found in these excavation sites quarry near border of the India and inside Pakistan. These objects come from the Neolithic and Paleolithic sites. The Paleolithic culture has been documented in the sites of Bhimbetka hilly region of the central and from the Western parts of India, Kashmir and in open excavation sites in the above mentioned excavation sites (information is obtained from the lecture Archaeologist and Historian Dr. V.S. Wakankar, that delivered at the Rock Art Institute, Ujjain, Central India on 25th June 1984 and also his book ' Dawn of the Indian Art' and the Stone Age painting and also learnt from the sites exploration, visit, study and analyzing the archaeological artifacts of the collection specimens of the Museum's as mentioned below).

It might be true that in the early period and in the later times, the whole extensive area of the Sindh region and such place comprising the pre-historic sites and the area of such alluvium places has been a meeting ground and habitations for numerous people in the early period of the Indo-Pak-Subcontinent, different indigenous native people. Evidence of the early pre-history of the

whole region including the Central-Asia extended right up to Persia, Egypt and Asia minor culture areas, while those to the Sindh region of Pakistan and Eastern Asia had close relations to this sub-continent. It proves from the clear observation upon the characteristics and the feature elements of the different artifacts of the collection specimens of the Lahore Museum, Delhi Museum, Calcutta Museum, Indore Museum, Dhaka Museum and from different centers of the collections of the early art objects (Reported from visit of the above-mentioned Museums, 1986-2008).

It is also a matter of fact that in the early period before the advent of Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism in the whole Sindh region, the people of the different ethnic groups, tribes and savages who had been living there were in this vast area tended to follow their own and local religious faiths and believes; and the artisans of such ethnic groups, tribes and indigenous people had been in practice of their own tradition artistic styles, trends and heritage. It was most probably being practiced and happened during the lower paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and later Neolithic periods. But at latter periods, during the introduction of the Hinduism, Buddhism and the Islam and the Islamic ideology in such wider region, most probably the people of the early Sindh, Punjab and Gandhara and Taxila region had accepted such noble religious i.e., the Buddhism, Hinduism and mainly the Islamic ideology. Thus, they mixed their own heritage, art and Culture with whatever they got in such religious and their religious heritage and made their art and Culture more prosperous and richer to a great extent. This is happened not only in the Indo-Pak-Subcontinent but also in many places in the world in such way.

Hence It is a true fact that when the different ethnic groups and other early generations had accepted such religions in the said place, they did not surrender their own individuality fully, rather they modified it with the sprits of the Buddhism, Hinduism and the Islamic ideology and heritage which they observed. Hence It is quite sure that this blend should be reflected in the artwork of all objects especially traditional artifacts of the early period and this may exist with such artifacts even today.

The root of the traditional arts and culture of the Sindh was formed by the remote past generation of this wider region has based mainly on their habits and various systems of social and cultural functions and ceremonies and ritual functions of the early society observed in that region. I am optimistic that, the details of such Arts Viz. Forms, motifs, patterns, figures and other

factors relevant and associated to the ornamentation artwork of the Muslim Monuments in Sindh and all concerning matters will come out in light from the adequate exploration and analysis of the findings of such artifacts in nature of such research. And the evolution and the chronological changes of the practice and activities of the artisans to their artworks as well as the changes of the social life and activities of the country people of the whole Sindh region is also be explored and learnt.

Mention should also be made of the ancient edifices and religious monuments with door-way, basement walls, facades, mihrabs, pillars and other parts of the traditional ornamented these Monuments in pure indigenous type, the unique ornamentations of the carved bricks, plaques, stone, panels, calligraphy, mural and the painted decor of the 12-14/15th century A.D. as far as I know that some scholars have studied on such artifacts of the Sindh Region of Pakistan, none of them has done evolutionary movement of the traditional ornamentation artworks of said region with their archaeological, ethnological, historical findings and other factors and matters in such artworks. The eminent scholar in Islamic art and culture Dr. Syed Mahmoodul Hasan also writes "Decoration for architectural ornamentation work on different edifices through terracotta plaque and also stone curving and some other medias have come into practice and existence since very ancient period."<sup>15</sup> And the comparative study between the traditions of Bangladesh ornamentation work of these early Muslim Monuments and the said ornamented monuments in Sindh province has not been made by any scholars.

## II. OBSERVATION AND CONCUSSION:

After analyzing and exploring all the aspects and the concerning elements of the early Mosques and Tombs described earlier sounds and embellishes the importance and values of the creation of the Sultanate Muslim period as well as a little early period those are being attributed with a valuable artistic expression in its traditions and heritage along with other artistic involvements in these creations. Hence, the chronological history of the traditional ornamentation artwork of all the stages has to be explored and learnt through the study of the evolutionary movement of such art.

It may also be that, some modern and urban trends of art have influenced in some extents the traditional artifacts of the Sindh but the theme of basic forms is not faced away and gone out fully from the main stream of the Sindh tradition. Because the tradition of folk art is



bloomed in such region with a pure indigenous art impact and quality which is closely associated with the earth and soil mind and memory of the traditional art artisans' groups of all who had been living in this region since the homo- sapience period.

The monetary trend neither affected the general tender of folk tradition of the urban influence did not change the folk tradition of such reason- the indigenous tradition continued with its own tradition and still is serving on. It finds that the design elements are very common the primary designing is common but the specialized designs did not continue. This happened not only in the country art of this region but also in Bangladesh and many places and countries of the world. Though the folk art of the Sindh displays some Indian Central Asian influences even to some extent the European influence, it also manifests of patronization of ancient religious and the country art Country art styles which are very often molded within the strong influence and impact of indigenous characteristic of the Sindh art trend which is noteworthy. As the proposed research is directly related to my field of research area and as I am also a learnt of the fine arts (drawing and painting), I shall take a great interest and exchanging the trends of tradition and other activities and involvements of all the aspects of traditional arts and the cultural activities of the Sindh and Bangladesh which is regarded as a beautiful and charming sceneries and landscape where the simple hearted talented folk artisans and villages with hospitable nature elements are lived.

I have strong confidence and determination that this research will cover my observation and systematic record on these findings. I hope that my humble aim will carry out the work on my research topic and throw more light on it which has a great historical, archaeological, ethnological, sociological, religious, artistic and aesthetic values on the ornamentation artwork and the contributions of the traditional artisans in this creation since early period and thus it will open a new horizon of such a study and research.

The aim of my research will the answer to all the queries and questions mentioned above and find out all the concerning factors, matters and the involvement of traditional artisans to the said

artwork of the Sindh region through a comparative study of the ornamental Mosques and Tombs of the early 12th to 14th/ early 15th century A.D., and it will also analyze with the tradition of same monuments of the same period in Bangladeshi trends and traditions.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- [1]. Amar Nath Khanna: Archaeology of India, p. 41
- [2]. James Minahan, (2012): Ethnic Groups of South Asia and the Pacific: An Encyclopedia. ABC-CLIO. ISBN 978-1-59884-659-1, p. 257-259.
- [3]. Golam Ibney Samad: Islami Shilpakala, (tr.) p. 5- 6.
- [4]. Dr. Syed Mahmoodul Hasan: Muslim Stahpattho and Shilpakala, (tr.) p.1.
- [5]. Dr. Farzand Maish: Lahore Museum Bulletin, vol. XII, 2000 No.2, p. 33.
- [6]. Ahmad Hasan Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal, p. 1-150
- [7]. Dr. Farzand Maish: Lahore Museum Bulletin, vol. XII, 2000 No.2. p. 33.
- [8]. Dr. Muhammad Mokhlisur Rahman: Development of Muslim Architecture During Sultanate Period, p. 1-14,
- [9]. Oleg Grabar: The Formation of Islamic Art, p.1044
- [10]. Ahmad Hasan Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal, p. 1-150
- [11]. Ahmad Hasan Dani, (2007): History of Pakistan Pakistan through: ages, p. 218.
- [12]. Information obtain from Internet.
- [13]. Ahmad Hasan Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal, p. 1-150
- [14]. Dr. Shahariar Talukder: Architectural Ornamentation Art-work of the Historical Monuments: Heritage of Macau, (an unpublished article, manuscript), p. 1.
- [15]. Dr. Syed Mahmoodul Hasan: Muslim Stahpattho and Shilpakala, p. 1.