

Chapter # 5

HISTORY OF SCULPTURE & ARCHITECTURAL RELIEF IN PAKISTAN

This chapter explains some examples of sculptures and architectural relief from ancient past to the present historical monuments. It also presents two prominent sculptors from Pakistan and their contributions in this field.

5.1 Indus Valley Seals

Seal is a carved device, a form of relief sculpture which has embossed design, used to create impression on the surfaces like wax, clay or paper. Among the artifacts excavated in the Indus Valley, Seals are of great importance. They might have been used for trade purpose as stamps, for communicating messages, or as individual's signature.

The seals were carved in square, rectangle, circle, oval, cylindrical and disk like shape. Their sizes were as small as less than an inch to 1.25 inches. It is because of their small size that they are well preserved till after centuries, as compared to the other crafts of Indus Valley (Figure 5.1). Steatite stone (soapstone), limestone and marble. Most of the seals found are carved in steatite as it can be easily carved. Metal tools were used to cut and carve the stone. After carving, the stone was covered with alkali and then heated to create luster.

The design of the seal consists of two parts, one having the text and the other having the image. Some seals also have symbolic shapes like circles and dots, linear patterns, crisscross pattern or the Pipal leave. At the back of the seal is a hole which might have served the purpose of holding or wearing as a ring or pendant.

The carved images consist of the naturalistic figures of animals and sometimes stylized human figure. The animals depicted include tiger, elephant, one horned Indian rhinoceros, hare, crocodile, antelope, Brahman bull, unicorn and composite animal forms.

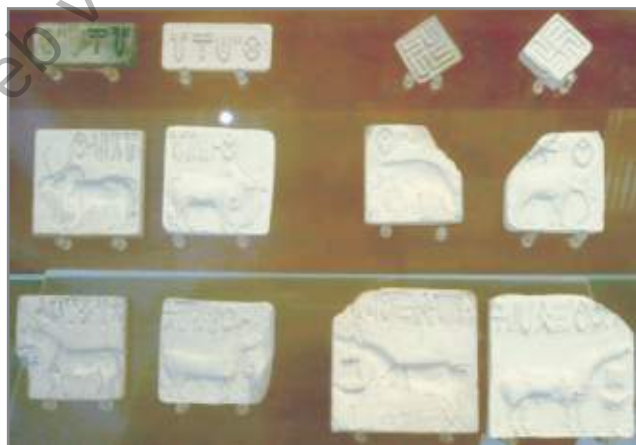


Figure 5.1 Seals and their impressions (sealing),

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/crux/2019/01/04/undeciphered-script-of-the-indus-civilization/#.XTbZN44zYs4>

Seal having a Unicorn

An ox with a single horn, known as unicorn, is the animal which appears in most of the seals (Figure 5.2). The depiction of a single horn suggests artist's awareness of the perspective and overlapping of the horns in the profile view. It has been carved in a naturalistic way showing the curves, contours and bulging of the muscles out of the plain surface. The text carved out on the upper side of the seals is not yet deciphered.



Figure 5.2 Seal depicting a Unicorn, <https://www.harappa.com/category/blog-subject/seals>

Seal with a Three-headed Animal

A square seal depicting a three headed animal, carved in gray-brown steatite, is discovered from Mohenjodaro (Figure 5.3). The three animals shown are bull, unicorn and antelope, all of which also appear separately on the other seals. Two rows of script are also present beside the mysterious animal.



Figure 5.3 Seal with a Three-headed Animal

Seal with a Yogi Figure

A seated male deity has been carved on a square seal (Figure 5.4). The seated posture is that of a yogic position on a throne. The naturalistic form, in the seals consisting of animals, is not seen here. The human figure is carved in stylized way with no naturalistic rendition of muscles. The two arms covered with bangles rest on the knees, while the feet are pressed together and projecting beyond the throne's edge. The head is crowned with a head-dress which has two buffalo like curved horns, two projecting vertical points and three pipal leaves rising from its center. The whole figural composition is in symmetrical form. On both sides of the head-dress is the script not deciphered. The seal is carved in tan steatite.

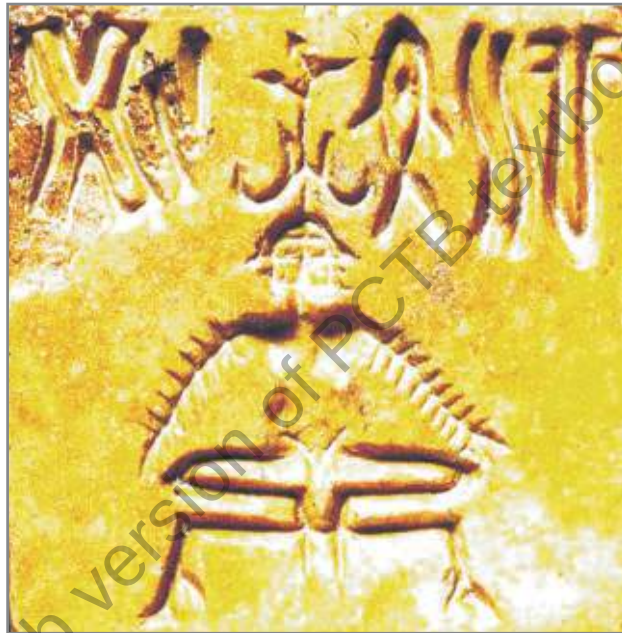


Figure 5.4 Seal with a Yogi Figure, <https://www.harappa.com/category/blog-subject/seals>

5.2 King Priest

Some round sculptures found in the Indus Valley Civilization are of considerable importance because of the skillful technique. The material used were steatite, alabaster and limestone. One of the best examples carved in lime stone is a sculpture which is named as King Priest by some historians (Figure 5.5).

This sculpture consists of shoulders and head. The eyes are half-closed which suggests that the person was in meditation. The hair on the head and beard are carved in linear pattern, while the upper lips are shaved. The nose is long and continues directly from the forehead. Lips are broad and the forehead is low. A band tied on the head represents the dignitary status. The ears are simplified and has a hole for the earring. The drapery is embroidered with trefoil pattern, and covers one shoulder, while the other one is bare. The overall dress up depicts some religious connection.



Figure 5.5 King Priest, <https://www.harappa.com/slide/priest-king>

5.3 Fasting Buddha from Gandhara

The Buddhist art of Gandhara reached its peak during the Kushan period. Buddha is always depicted seated in some certain position of hands and legs, or standing in a static pose. Two types of sculptures were found in Gandhara Art ¹⁰ (Figure 5.6).

1. High Relief (Round sculptures but attached with the background)
2. Low Relief

The sculptures were placed in the monasteries and stupas, and were meant to decorate the architecture or for the worship.



Figure 5.6 Fasting Buddha,
<http://mykoolcovercollection.blogspot.com/2013/01/pakistan-fasting-buddha-in-lahore-museum.html>

¹⁰Roy C. Craven, *A Concise History of Indian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).

The sculpture of fasting Buddha is one of the finest examples of Gandhara art. It is made in schist stone, measures 84cm, and displayed in the Lahore Museum.¹¹

The sculpture shows Buddha during the fast and in search of enlightenment. And as a result of it, his body weakened, and his bones became very prominent, particularly the rib cage reveals beneath the thin flesh. Eventually he gained enlightenment when he was thirty five years of age. The human body has been treated in a realistic way by the sculptor, which shows the artist's study of the human skeleton.¹²

Buddha is sitting in yogi pose with his hands set in the lap in the style known as dhyana mudra. There is halo at the back of the head which is the symbol of glory, ushnisha – a slight lump on the head and urna – a mark between the eyebrows. The growth of beard on Buddha's face is a rare depiction and shows that he completely disregarded his body during the fast. His eyes recede into the dark sockets and ears are elongated. A cloth covers his legs, while another cloth hangs from around the back on the arms. The pedestal on which the Buddha seats is carved with low relief depicting the figures of worshippers.

5.4 Makli Hill

Makli hill near Thatta, Pakistan, is one of the largest graveyards in the world housing a magnificent collection of historic Middle Eastern tombs. From 14th to 18th century CE, the local royal families inhabiting in Thatta used Makli Hill as a common burial site.

“The Samma dynasty ruled over Sindh as an independent country for more than 190 years i.e. from 1333 to 1524 A.D. The reign of Jam Nizamuddin was not only the longest one (1461 – 1508), but is considered to be the most glorious period in the history of Sindh.”¹³

All the successive rulers built and elaborated differing tomb structures, thus creating profusion of varied designs of graves. Figures of great importance, around some 120,000, were buried there, including kings, queens, scholars, holy men, and other significant figures.¹⁴ Apart from tombs, there are also found mosques, temples, swimming pools, educational institutions, manuscripts, recreation halls¹⁵ (Figure 5.7 to 5.12).

“Jam Nizamuddin Sammo (Sultan Nizamuddin Shah) like other Samma rulers is also buried in Makli historical graveyard near Thatta. His tomb is an exemplary pattern of architecture. A row of birds, sun flowers, lotus arrangement on its walls as well as windows (Jharoka) show that Sindh has its glorious past even in the primitive ages” (Figure 5.7).¹⁶

The tombs constructed in stone are categorized into four different periods of creation according to the ruling body at the time. Some of the tombs comprise of tall columns, whereas others are ornamented with arches. Altogether, the hill is an assemblage of varied architectural motifs.¹⁷

Some of the graves are inscribed with Quranic verses, while some structures show Hindu architectural elements.

¹¹ Craven, A Concise History of Indian Art.

¹² Craven, A Concise History of Indian Art.

¹³ http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html

¹⁴ <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/makli-hill>

¹⁵ http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html

¹⁶ http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html

¹⁷ <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/makli-hill>



Figure 5.7 Tomb of Nizamuddin Samo, Makli Hills, Thattah,
http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html



Figure 5.8 A grand structure on Makli Hill
http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html

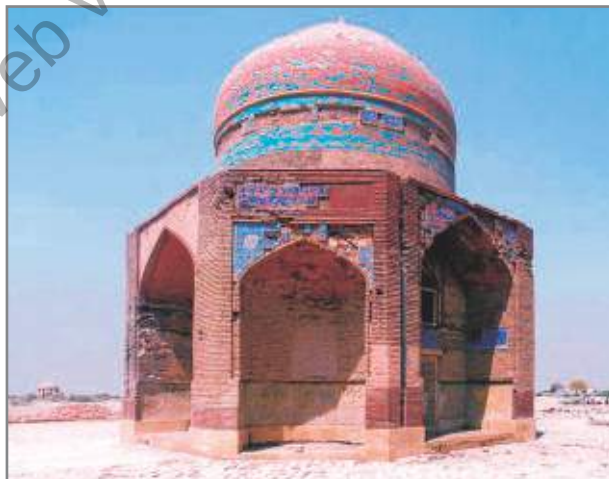


Figure 5.9 Tomb Structure on Makli Hills,
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/makli-hill>



Figure 5.10 Interior of a Tomb Structure on Makli Hills,
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/makli-hill>

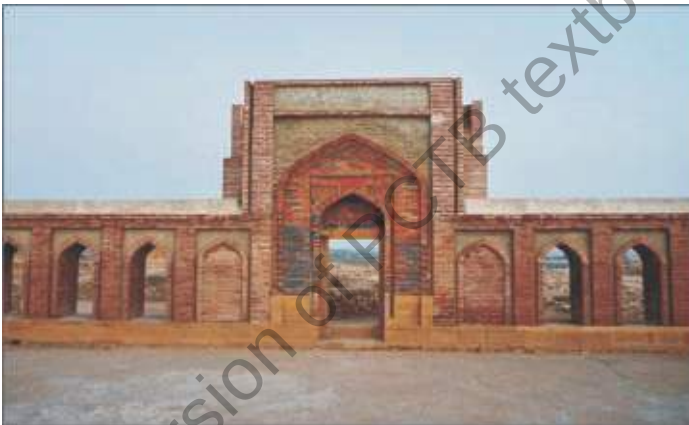


Figure 5.11 Wall of one of the enclosures around a tomb,
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/makli-hill>



Figure 5.12 Calligraphy on the grave of Diwan Sufaa Khan,
<https://www.youlinmagazine.com/story/tales-from-thatta-makli-necropolis/MTAyNQ==>

5.5 Chaukandi Graves

Chaukandi graveyard is another example of exquisitely constructed tombs. It is located near Karachi and houses sandstone graves embellished with stone carvings consisting of intricate patterns, and are remarkably well-preserved (Figure 5.13 to 5.18).

“Chaukhandi Tombs are generally attributed to the Jokhio and Baloach Tribes of Sindh and were built between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries A.D. Chaukhandi literally means four corners. The tombs are built of yellow sand stone which were acquired from Jungshahi, a railway station near Thatta.”



Figure 5.13 Overview of Chaukandi Graveyard,

<https://www.mydestinationguide.com/category/tourists-destinations-in-pakistan/sindh/>

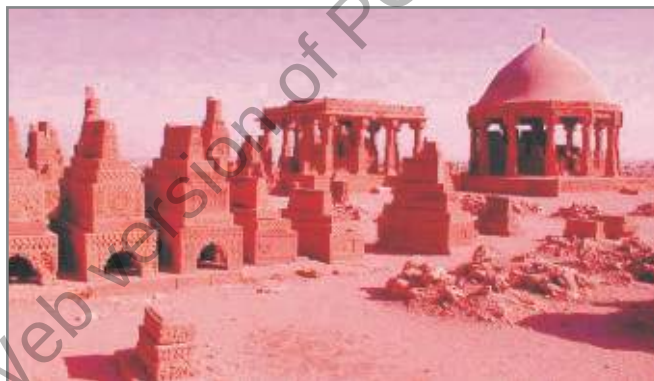


Figure 5.13 Overview of Chaukandi Graveyard,

<https://www.mydestinationguide.com/category/tourists-destinations-in-pakistan/sindh/>

“The most impressive tombs are like Egyptian pyramid structures. They are rectangular in shape... The geometric designs that cover the entire surface of the tombs are extraordinary. The intricate carving in geometric designs is unique and its delicacy gives the impression of wood carving. It is interesting to mention that the same designs are found in the textile pattern, jewellery and wood carving in Sindh and Balochistan today... These tombs found only in Sindh and Balochistan can be seen along the Makran coast by the Indus river upto Sehwan Sharif. The most elaborately carved tombs are located at sites such as Haidan, Lasbella and

¹⁸http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html

along the old trunk road at Malir, Dunblotte and Mirpur Sakro. The tombs have also been found on the east side of the Indus River at Gujjo, Tharriba, Sonda and Sehwan Sharif.”¹⁹

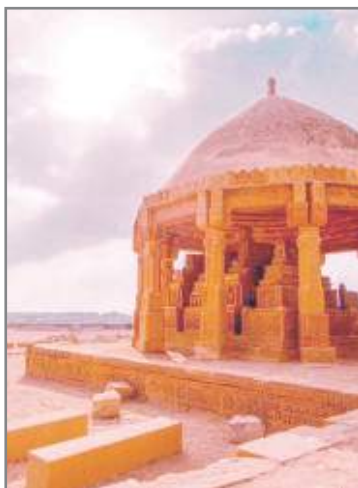


Figure 5.15 Chaukandi Tombs under a Stone Pavilion,
<http://www.arabnews.pk/node/1275156/lifestyle>

There are several tombs which present very beautiful geometric and floral designs; such as “crosses, squares, pentagons, hexagons, octagons with a star shape or contained in circles, chevron lines, strip patterns and amulet patterns are found on the tombs.”²⁰ Some historians wrote that many structures had human and pictorial representations “such as the presentation of hunting scenes, and of jewelry and arms, allowing the viewer to decipher whether the grave belonged to a warrior or a craftsman, are distinctly missing.”²¹

Some canopies are also found (Figure 5.19), one of which has a square plan and is eight-pillared, and is superimposed by a hemispherical dome crowned with a finial. The shafts are octagonal and ornamented with chevron pattern and the four brackets also are decorated. The dripstone and parapet are also carved adding to the beauty of the canopy.

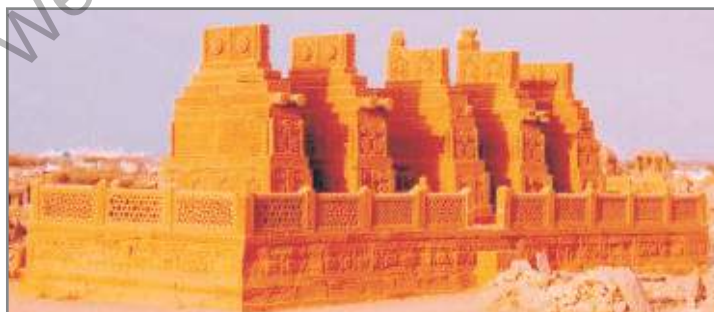


Figure 5.16 Chaukandi Tombs, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/chaukhandi-tombs>

¹⁹http://www.sindhishaan.com/article/history/hist_01_03.html

²⁰https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254443847_Tombstones_of_Fallen_Heroes

²¹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1195322>



Figure 5.17 Intricately Carved Chaukandi Tombs,
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/chaukhandi-tombs>



Figure 5.18 Close-up of Marvelous Stone Carving,
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/chaukhandi-tombs>



Figure 5.19 Square Canopy, image taken from Zulifqar Ali Kalhor, Tombstones of Fallen Heroes, 2009, https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/30355/1/MPRA_paper_30355.pdf

5.6 Master Sculptors of Pakistan

I. Shahid Sajjad (1937 – 2014)

Shahid Sajjad is one of the prominent and internationally celebrated sculptors of Pakistan.

“At a young age, he became interested in calligraphy and soon mastered the skill. He practiced drawing and carefully observed signboard painters at work. He became a successful commercial artist, dabbling in film making and painting. A restless soul, he spent three years travelling across Europe and Asia on a motorcycle. He was particularly fascinated by the woodcarving of Bali, the Philippines and Japan, and by wood reliefs by Paul Gauguin in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.”

²²<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/05/09/shahid-sajjad-%E2%80%93-the-pioneer-of-sculpting-in-pakistan/>



Figure 5.20 Sculptures by Shahid Sajjad, image taken from <http://www.artnowpakistan.com/18379-2/>

Shahid Sajjad, started his professional career as a sculptor with large wooden figurative sculptures (Figure 5.20). In these works his source of inspiration was the sophisticated beauty of the East Bengal villages. After a training with a Japanese master, his work developed to the phase when he began casting small bronze sculptures having “organic forms based on human figures.”²³ In the late 1990s he returned to wood, making figures of male and mother and child carved out of single piece. The sculptures of mother and child have interlocked parts and are well expressive of the meaning. He used to prepare the wood for carving from the fallen trees, and while this process he learnt about textures and characteristics of different kind of woods.

In 1974, his solo exhibition of wood and bronze sculptures was held at the Karachi Arts Council. In 1977, at the National Sculptures Exhibition which was held in Islamabad, he won the first prize. He executed a commissioned mural in bronze for the Pakistan Army entitled Cavalry through the Ages in 1981. His next mural in cold cast bronze was for the Maritime Museum in Karachi. An exhibition held in 1994 displayed a collection of large sculptures having carved forms titled as My Primitives which depicted his visit to the Rangamati forest in Bangladesh. In 1996, he became a fellow at National College of Arts. He was also one of the founding member of Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi.²⁴

ii. Rabia Zuberi

Rabia Zuberi is one of the Pakistan's pioneer woman sculptors. She born in India in 1940 and devoted her life to flourish the art and art education in Pakistan. She graduated from Aligarh University India in 1959. Later she got enrolled in Govt. Art College Lucknow India for a graduate degree in sculpture.²⁵

²³Salima Hashmi and Quddus Mirza, 50 Years of Visual Arts in Pakistan (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997), 136.

²⁴<https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/516905-noted-sculptor-shahid-sajjad-dies>

²⁵Rabia Zuberi, Karachi School of Arts, Accessed on August 20, 2018, <https://www.ksa.edu.pk/rabia-zuberi/>

Rabia Zuberi remained enthusiastically engaged to promote the art education and establishment of new art institute and galleries in Pakistan along her sister Hajra Mansoor and later joined by Mansur Rahi a well known artist of Pakistan. She established Karachi's first art school, Karachi School of Art (KSA) in 1964. This institute acclaimed the production of numerous fine artists and educationists.

Her masterpiece: an artwork consisting of seven figures, each one seven feet tall in a circular composition ten feet in diameter is titled: Peace Message to the Progressive World (Figure 5.21). It is the culmination of three years of intensive work in the media of bronze fiber and steel, and is part of the national collection shown at the National Art Gallery, Islamabad. She is also a fine painter and her drawings often carry an architectural linearity.

The recurring theme of Zuberi's artworks is humanism. Through the medium of drawing, painting and sculpture, she voices out to the world to seek for love, forgiveness, social justice and peace (Figure 5.22).²⁶ She is the recipient of numerous national awards for art including the President's Pride of Performance and the Lifetime Achievement Award.



Figure 5.21 Peace Message to the Progressive World, a sculpture by Rabia Zuberi installed in front of National Art Gallery Pakistan National Council of Arts Islamabad Pakistan

²⁶ Marjuri Hussain, "Rabia Zuberi: Life and Work", Asia Art Archives, Accessed on August 20, 2018, <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collection/search/library/rabia-zuberi-life-and-work>



Figure 5.22 A Sculpture in bronze by Rabia Zuberi in the collection of Clifton Art Gallery Karachi Pakistan