



Dear Guest,

MuslimFest Pakistan Pavilion

August 04, 2017

Welcome to Pakistan Pavilion at MuslimFest.

Pakistan is celebrating its 70th and Canada its 150th anniversary this year. This pavilion is dedicated to tolerance, accommodation and inclusiveness so deeply valued in both Pakistan and Canada.

The cultural influence of Pakistan has transcended boundaries –geographical as well as political - to areas as far as the edges of South, Central and East Asia. Before you start, let us briefly review conditions which chiseled our society and culture into its current splendor and magnificence.

Near Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, runs a small river, Soan. The banks of this river have been repository of stone tools, estimated to be more than 500,000 years old. These tools, believed to have been designed by the primitive anthropoid types, furnish the oldest traces of human life in Pakistan. Evidence so far collected by archaeologists, shows that the first villages in Pakistan were established in Balochistan and lower Sind in the closing period of the fourth millennium.

A precursor of Indus Valley Civilization, Mehrgarh is one of the most important Stone Age (3000-7000 BC) sites discovered in Balochistan, Pakistan. Evidence of wheat farming and cattle herding as well as making of ornaments from sea shell, limestone, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and sandstone have been discovered. The discovered items, inter alia, include simple figurines of women and animals. It has been suggested that Mehrgarh's techniques of jewelry and pottery making with possible use of fire and later metal were learnt by the Indus Valley inhabitants who succeeded Mehrgarh in the neighboring provinces of Sindh and the Punjab.

Archeological finds at Kot Diji, Sindh indicate that only a few hundred years after the emergence of Mehrgarh in Balochistan, settlements along the Indus started developing into cities. Not long afterwards there arose the largest Bronze Age river civilization, the Indus Valley civilization (1300-3300 BC). Identified mainly by the two principal cities of Moen jo Daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab, Indus Valley Civilization stretched over more than 950 miles from north to south. These ancient cities developed a brick manufacturing industry, and an elaborate system of drains, sewers and soak pits pointing to the availability of efficient masons.

Besides, there were artisans who worked in precious stones, silver, shell, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and jadeite. A more popular craft appears to have been the making of seal used extensively in trade and commerce. Considered as the mark of identification and even distinction of the Indus Valley Civilization, the fine engravings of these seals show craftsmanship of high order and use of precision tools. The art of sculpture was also quite developed and some of the pieces which have survived are proof of the sculptors' advanced knowledge of human anatomy as well as their impressive craftsmanship.

Another field in which the Moen jo Daro craftsmen have left a treasure is that of terracotta miniatures designed probably as toys for children though some seem to have been clearly meant for use as ornaments. Cotton grown in the Indus Valley is considered the first of its kind in the world. The discovery of fine cloth at Mohenjo Daro and a similar piece in Iraq confirmed that spinning and weaving were among the popular crafts.



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The sixth century B.C saw the rise of Gandhara civilization in northern Pakistan. Its main cities were Peshawar, Charsadda and Taxila. Among others, the local Greek rulers of Gandhara were enthusiastic promoters of arts and craft. Great pieces of art and craftsmanship were produced during this period. The surviving stone and metal works suggest that during this period conditions were stable enough to attract craftsmen from Iran, Bactria and Central Asia, whose work provided a strong impetus to local carpenters, sculptors, pottery makers, jewelers and architects.

Between the eighth and the twelfth centuries A.D., Pakistan came under the influence of Islam. The province of Sindh was annexed to the Arab Caliphate in 712 A.C. In the following centuries, Central Asian Muslims appeared on the northern borders of Pakistan. As a result of their incessant campaigns, northern and central Pakistan became part of Turkic Sultanate which had ambitions to penetrate deep into the heart of South Asia. The rise of Muslim power in South Asia made a qualitative change in the patterns of people's living, their social mores and aesthetic values. For the next six centuries, irrespective of whether the entire region was governed by a single powerful emperor or local tribal chiefs, many arts and crafts including calligraphy, miniature painting, book binding, tile making, furniture making, ornamentation, illumination and construction of beautiful architecture saw immense development.

Synthesizing the ancient and modern Muslim crafts, the artisans touched the peaks of glory during the Mughal period when they produced some of the finest specimens of workmanship. The fame of indigenous carpet-makers, weavers, tile-makers, copper-smiths and architects spread across countries. Peshawar, Lahore, Multan and Thatta were the main centers of arts and crafts. Miniature paintings executed during this period rank as the finest in the world's treasury of art.

During colonial era, the very nature of colonial exploitation damaged the growth of many indigenous arts and crafts. However, following Pakistan's independence, traditional arts and crafts have seen unprecedented revival. Miniature art, wood work and textiles, for instance, have emerged as important expression of creativity. The tradition is carried forward by proud heirs of a glorious culture.

Pakistan can be rightfully proud of its rich and diverse cultural heritage. Perhaps our most significant legacy is the tradition of tolerance, respect for difference, and acceptance of plurality, which even today is the bedrock of the true Pakistani ethos. In the same spirit, fundamental teachings of the great sages and saints who lived and died in the lands that constitute modern Pakistan were centred on the concept of not just peaceful, but also respectful, coexistence.

Pakistan Pavilion in MuslimFest is a sincere effort to promote awareness about our true cultural and philosophical heritage, which is as much regional and multicultural as it is Pakistani.

Thanks for visiting,

Consulate General of Pakistan,
Toronto