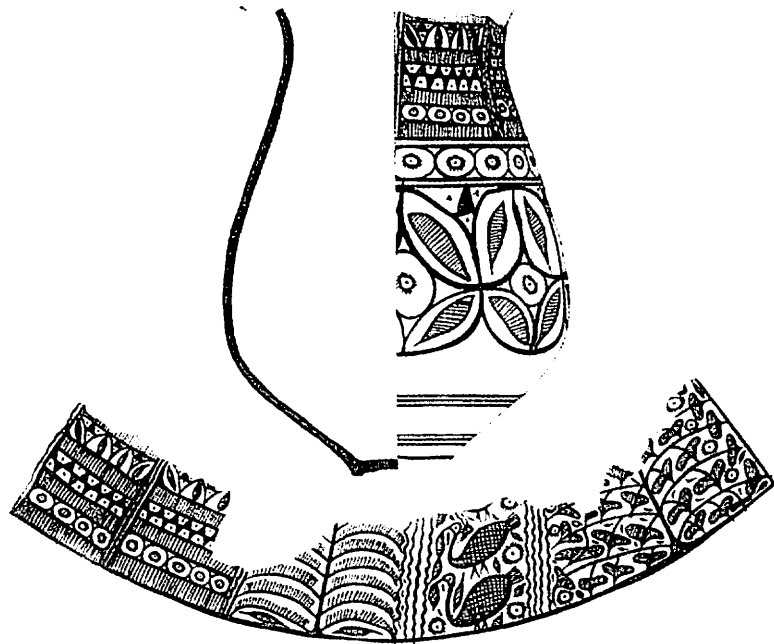


Arts and Crafts of Indus Civilization (Provincial Art)



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Sculpture

India has an unbroken sculptural heritage going back to the period of Indus Civilization, which is considered to be the proto-historic phase of Indian history. The sculptural forms which blossomed then are defined to be the primary sources for studying the major streams of Indian art history. It is true that the artists of Indus Valley did not produce the imposing imagery as in the case of Egyptian monumental sculptures or the bas-reliefs of Sumerian civilization, but the numerous three-dimensional forms found in many excavated sites of Indus Civilization display an advanced technique in the portrayal of animals, in profile, which anticipates the naturalism of later Indian art.

The wide range of excavated figures speaks of the technique and imagery of the art of sculpture in provinces in relation to this art of metropolitan centers. The images found in the area provide a great scope for studying the well-defined human and animal forms, flora, fauna and ritualistic figurines. They also bear the features of cross-cultural affinities as well as direct foreign influence in the case of provinces, for example Gujarat and South Baluchistan.



Fig. 56. Bull – Mohenjo-daro; terracotta, humpless, Metropolitan Style. Realistic and artistically manifested with neck ornaments.

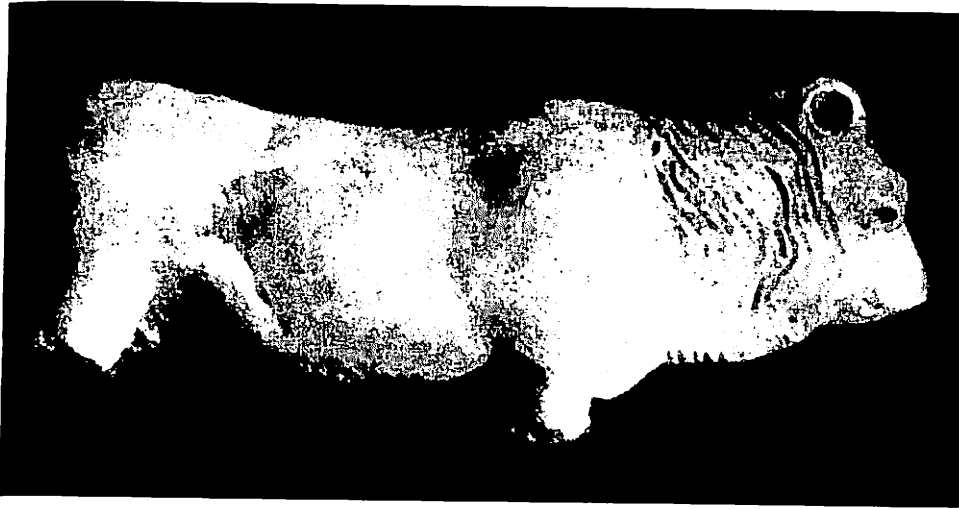


Fig. 57. Bull – Lothal; terracotta, humpless with wavy lines on neck with naturalistic treatment and provision for fixing the horns.

In Indus-Sarasvati Civilization, the provincial artists and craftsmen created sculpture in a wide range of materials. Generally, stone, limestone, metal and terracotta were used for making sculptural forms. Terracotta figures find their place in both metropolitan and provincial centers. It would be interesting to study the degree of variations in the imagery that are associated with the provinces. Through the animal figures and human forms the Harappan art manifests in a naturalistic treatment but when it comes to the depiction of imagery on the seals the figures are conceived with specific mystic and ritualistic treatment. Apart from the artifacts of functional nature, the whole range of excavated sculptural images can be categorised as anthropomorphic figurines and animal figures.

Animal figures are numerous but the human figures are very limited in number. To produce animal forms, the craftsmen adopted terracotta medium which in some respect is superior to bronze-casting. Through portrayal of strength and vigour in animal figures the terracotta craftsmen exhibited their mastery over the technique. The animal figures include those of bull, dog, horse, ram, pig and rhinoceros. The images of dog, horse and bull are provided with a flat base.

BULL

Of all the animals depicted in terracotta, faience, steatite, stone or seals, the bull has been often rendered faithfully and artistically. From the specimens unearthed at Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Chanhudaro, Rangpur, Lothal and Kalibangan (Fig. 58), it can be said that the two main species of the short-horned humpless and the long-horned, humped bulls existed in the whole of North-West and Western India, from Baluchistan to Saurashtra. The craftsman seems to have carefully observed the anatomy and studied animal behaviour. This is evident from the moods and expressions captured by him in some of the examples.



Fig. 58. Bull – Kalibangan; bronze, short-horned humpless bull displaying plasticity in metal art.



Fig. 67. Rhinoceros – Lothal; a well-baked terracotta head of rhino sturdy with a short horn on thick snout, slit mouth, deep pierced eyes and outstretched tongue indicated by clay pellet; carefully modelled with realistic treatment.

the neck suggests that the head had to be manipulated with a string. The prick-ears and snout are characteristic of the horse. This specimen is burnished and thus better treated than others. Dr. Bolanath has identified a few horse bones from Lothal and J.P. Joshi has reported some from Surkotada. A terracotta figure of horse found at Rangpur has a mane indicated by an indented line over the neck. The examination of the animal bones from Rangpur by Bolanath has revealed that a domesticated variety of the ass was also known to the Harappans. It may be added that a wild variety of horse, namely, the *onigar*, still exists in Kutch.

RHINOCEROS

That the artist of Metropolitan as well as Provincial Styles made a close study of the animals before executing them is evident from the portrayal of the figures of rhinoceros. The figure of a rhinoceros from Lothal (Fig. 67) has the beady eyes and folds of the hide. A pellet in the mouth represents the tongue and a single horn is attached. The short ears, which were possibly done in multiple-piece method, have fallen off. A complete but a smaller model of rhinoceros from Lothal has a sturdy body, thick short legs and short prick-ears. The mouth is indicated by a nail-punch. The terracotta figurines discovered from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro have wavy lines on the neck and other features and techniques of terracotta animals suggesting the Provincial Style. But the images on the seals of Metropolitan Style have finer features artistically carved in relief. It is also interesting to see a toy rhinoceros with wheels from Daimabad made of bronze (Fig. 68).

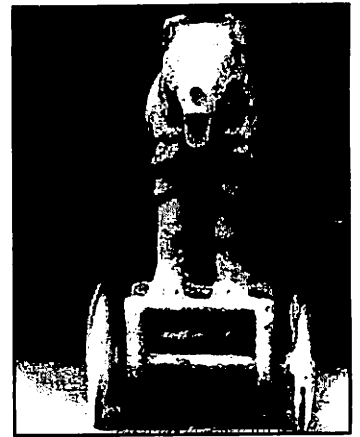


Fig. 68. Rhinoceros – Daimabad; bronze, wheeled, the modelling of the body has been brought out with great details.

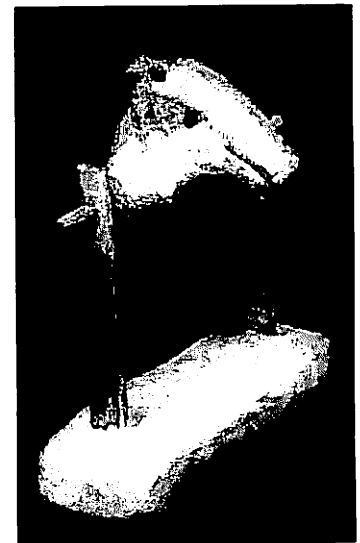


Fig. 69. Bear – Lothal; terracotta, well-baked, long snout; incised nostrils and eyes.