WHAT HAS STAGNATED THE GROWTH OF POTTERS OF MULTAN?

By

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Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture
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What Has Stagnated the Growth of Potters of Multan
Blue Pottery

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Abstract

This dissertation is a research based on the pottery that is the blue pottery of Multan. It is a case study of the potters of Multan and the institute of blue pottery Multan. It is carried out to analyze the factors involved in the stagnation of the potters and the ways it has been improved.

These artisans are those who sacrificed everything and stayed committed with their work. Hard work pays you back. A theory that can never be wrong but here in this case, it is questionable. Pottery was once a prosperous industry that people used to look at but it is now however not taken as before. It has lost most of its essence due to various reasons and obligations.

The research begins with an introductory chapter for all the countries which were actively involved in Pottery and their significant achievements following with literature available on pottery which relates to the topic. The next chapter
based on my findings and discussions on the interviews and visit to Multan. A thorough research began with theory and ended up with personal meeting with those who made their blood into sweat for this art. It is followed by conclusion and then appendices.
Introduction

It is a pity that blue pottery, which is an ancient art of Pakistan, is dying because of lack of patronage and encouragement. There is inadequate research done on the subject up till now.

I chose this topic of Blue Pottery of Multan because there is less material available on it. Secondly, modernization has demolished our traditional crafts. Lastly I was interested because I belong to this city and blue pottery has always fascinated me. It always intrigued me that if this craft is so ancient why is there not much being done about it. As Sir George Birdwood said:

“But the sight of wonder is, when travelling over the plains suddenly to come upon an encaustic tiled mosque. It is colored all over in yellow, blue, green and other hues, and as a distant view of it is caught at
sunrise, its stately domes and glittering minarets seem made of the purest gold, like glass, enameled in azure and green, a fairy-like apparition of inexpressible grace and the most enchanting splendor.”

The beautiful glazed blue pottery is being done in Multan since the advent of Mohammad Bin Qasim. In those days, the trade between China and Muslim world was at its peak especially the Persian exported there blue wares and imported Chinese m pottery in this way the Persian pottery was influenced heavily by the Chinese tradition of pottery.

The advent of Muslims in the subcontinent affected the arts and crafts. The Muslims who came from Persia bought with them artisans who taught the local potters the art of Kashi Kari. It spread to Sindh, Hala and Multan in later years. During the reign of Mughal emperors, this art flourished. The Muslim potters or Kashi Kar learned a lot and they started decorating the mosques and shrines with this art.

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Unfortunately when subcontinent fell into the British colonization it lost its heritage. The artisans were stagnated from the main stream to the side line by the industrialization of the subcontinent. The British applied there western art and ideas to the subcontinent by establishing schools of art like JJ School of Art, Calcutta School of Art and Mayo School of Art where they trained artisans initially but after a while they changed the syllabus in such a manner that it became a clear distinction between artist and artisan which still persist in this part of the subcontinent.

This lead to the decline of handicrafts including pottery and now because of no patronage this art of the subcontinent is dying. Since blue pottery has deep links with this ancient city and this art and craft is now dying, my paper is an attempt to make an in depth analysis of the likely causes which has led to the decline of this craft and to make suggestions regarding the revival of this magnificent and historic heritage in this century of contemporary art.

The first chapter is a brief introduction of the origin and background of pottery and how it has changed over
centuries. As the blue pottery of Multan shows distinct marks of the Turku Persian pottery so it was important to explain pottery during the Muslim era and how it evolved. How the blue and white pottery was introduced through Chinese influence and how it came to sub continent.

Since Pakistan is in sub continent and Multan is a city located in it so it was also important to analyze the factors which effected sub continent in different time. It was important to identify the factors involved in the decline of craft.

The second chapter explains my research methodology, which is field research based on interviews of potters of Multan and how I conducted it and in which manner. The next chapter explains my case study and the factors involving the decline of pottery and some steps in the form of institute of blue pottery taken by the government.
Literature review

“To a pottery I went by chance
Two thousand pots I saw in a glance
Cried out a pot awakened from trance
"whither potter, vendor and buyer prance?”\(^3\)

Pottery has been a major art form, experienced since the earliest of times till date by all mankind and one of the foremost responses to his quotidian needs; for diverse reasons; for cooking, funerals, pouring wine or water, performing rituals, fertility rites and even to make religious figures. Pottery throughout the years depicted not only different cultures but their own peculiar values.

As Emmanuel Cooper said that the discovery that clay is plastic malleable and ductile, It could be shaped modeled, dried and fired and transformed, was made

many thousands of years ago. The type of pottery made depends highly on the availability of the materials, the atmosphere of the region and the kind of society where it is produced\(^4\). This can be seen from the fact that we human beings are created by clay.

“The reproduction of mankind is a great marvel and mystery. Had God consulted me in the matter, I should have advised him to continue the generation of the species by fashioning them out of clay.”\(^5\)

*Martin Luther King*

Pottery was a unification of many values and hidden beliefs prevalent in the times when it was made, and it can only be figured out once we dig deep into those cultures.

**Chinese History**

China is believed to be the home of the earliest pottery found so far. The cave of *Yuchanyan*; the earliest site where pottery has been made. Initially used for cooling and storing purposes, later these vessels became symbols of

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\(^5\) Martin Luther Quotes Famous Quotes, Great Quotes. Web.
power and status. The vessels found date back to as much as 18,000 years. The previous oldest sample discovered was found in Japan was dated as 16,000 or 17,000 years old. Therefore it is believed that pottery was made simultaneously in East Asia. From Russia to Japan and to North and South China.  

Potters working in China invented different and new style wares because they had accessibility to a different range of materials. The other factor was the influence of religion as they consider art part of religion.

**Egypt Greek, Romans History**

*Turn, turn my wheel!*

*Turn, round and round*

*Without a pause, without a sound*

*“So spin the flying world aw*

*This clay, well mixed with marl and sound,*

*Follows the motion of my hand,*

---

For some must follow, and some must command,

Though all are made of clay!”

Ancient Egyptians began using potter’s wheel around 2,500 BC and came up with more symmetrical objects. It is said that Egypt and Near East were the first which developed the art of ceramics; colored pottery was being introduced as early as the fifth millennium B.C. In those days potters wheel was discovered which gave rise to new forms of vessels and utensils.

And then came the Greeks, whose pottery dates back to 1,000 BC. Their creation was the “Krater” a vessel with wider mouth and two handles to blend wine and water and the “Hydra” with three handles to transport water, also the “Pyxis”; a cylinder with a lid.

The Romans adapted the Greek style. They differentiated the terms, coarse ware and fine ware. The former used for

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7 "Pottery Quotations Collected by GIGA (Page 1)." GIGA Home Page. Web.
cooking purposes and the latter for dining; eating and
drinking and which were, as the term suggests a lot finer,
elegant and polished.

**Islamic History**

Islam appeared on the world map in the seventh century.
They established their territory through extensive
conquests from India to Spain and North Africa. During
the ninth and thirteenth century’s pottery was at its peak
as it was closely related to the changing caliphates.

11 Potters during the twelfth and thirteenth century
produced large number of monochrome - glazed and luster
– painted mihrab tiles. They were used either in a mosque,
tomb or a palace.

The Islamic potters were highly impressed by the Chinese
white.12


As a result Islamic potters were highly impressed by the Chinese white tin wares and started imitating them but it did not produce the desired results, then, they added tin oxide to the clear glaze, following the Egyptian technique. The opaque glaze was smooth and successful.

Later when the Chinese were defeated by the Arabs at the Battle of Talas, the imprisoned Chinese potters taught the Muslims the art of pottery. This Chinese pottery was used as presents in Islamic lands.

Islamic potters also came up with a lot of innovations. The most significant of which was the use of lead glaze. The products were made out of read clay and covered with lead glaze.

Another technique discovered was that of *luster ware*. It is a technique in which fired pots are decorated with a lustrous metallic glaze. It was extensively used in the ninth century. It involves the preparation of a pigment which includes the mixing of sulphates of gold, silver or copper with red or yellow ochre to serve as a medium. The pigment is then painted on the pot and fired. It is then reduced to metal during the process of firing and it
suspends to form a dull metallic film. As Abu l Qasim says’ it reflects like gold and shines like the light of the sun “. This technique consists mostly of floral and geometric motifs.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Sgraffito} was not a new technique in the Islamic world, it existed earlier in Egypt. But Islamic potters combined it with splashed pottery. It is a technique in which the decorative designs are carved into the body and then coated with a colored or colorless lead glaze. This technique flourished under the category of earthenware’s during the Fatimid’s.\textsuperscript{14}

In the tenth century Iraqi lusterwares were exported to Iran, Egypt and Spain. In the same century Cairo became the centre of luster ware. The potters at Cairo were very innovative.\textsuperscript{15}

Kashan, a city in Iran and Iznik in Turkey were the two most significant pottery production centers in the Islamic world.


Iranian potteries reached to its height during the Abbasid period. Abbasids were great patrons of art and crafts. They invited potters from China and Europe to work at their workshops. This was a great learning experience as the potters learned from each other and impacted the working techniques as well. In this way it had more influence of the Chinese porcelain. Iranian potters from the eighth to the tenth century had a great knowledge of decorating pottery which was rich in pattern and color scheme.

The twelfth century was one of the most innovative periods in the Islamic world. They succeeded in making the glaze more stable by combining it with small quantities of white clay. Various new techniques were discovered like **Lakabi** in the 12th century. The white clay body was carved with thin lines to prevent the pigment from mixing. As a
result, it produced a design visually pleasing. They increased their color palette by adding more glazes.\textsuperscript{16}

Another technique was that of \textbf{Minai} decoration which combined under glaze cobalt blue with enamel colors. Blue and white pottery flourished in Kashan during the Safavid Dynasty. During this time the imported celadon Chinese wares were very popular. It was exported to India and Europe where it became significant in the seventeenth century. This blue and white ware came to subcontinent with the Moguls and thus made its centre in Multan. It is known as \textbf{Kashikari} as the blue tile work.\textsuperscript{17}

The history of pottery shows that Muslim potters were innovative ambitious and were trying to discover new things in ceramic tiles and pottery which gave rise to blue pottery. This art of Blue Pottery came from Persian influence, and before that we know, that Egypt and Mesopotamia possessed the blue tiles.

The tradition of pottery in Pakistan is comprised of two eras namely the pre Islamic and Islamic era. The pre

\textsuperscript{16} Haider, Sajjad. "Tilework in Pakistan." Google Books. Web
\textsuperscript{17} Haider, Sajjad. "Tilework in Pakistan." Google Books. Web
Islamic would begin around 5000 B.C.\textsuperscript{18} The discovery of Mohenjo-Daro and the Harappa civilization of Indus valley are of great importance because it indicates that the art of pottery reached to the highest level in 2500 B.C.\textsuperscript{19}

**Multan, Pakistan**

In Multan, the craft started with the Arab influence, by their conquest and settlement in the city. The pottery dates back to the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, and has Persian influence, and since Persians were also influenced by Chinese, a few historians, believe that kasha work originally came from China.\textsuperscript{20}

In Multan, this art has survived since ages and is to date passed on from generation to generation. The pottery is made in white and red clay both. The patterns represent foliage, fruits and flowers. During the Mughal Raj, it became one of the largest provinces of the Mughal Empire, and extended to the boundaries of Persia. For two hundred years, the commerce of the city flourished and thrived, and so did its potters and it become a marketplace for Pottery and trade. The art reached its zenith in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{18} Haider, Sajjad. "Tilework in Pakistan." Google Books. Web
\textsuperscript{19} Haider, Sajjad. "Tilework in Pakistan." Google Books. Web
Century Mughal Empire. Moguls were great patrons of art and craft.  

But what happened that stagnated the growth of potters in sub continent specifically Multan. For this it is important to have an account of what happened when the British colonization happened in the sub continent. Even before that there was havoc that devastated the city after the end of the Mughal reign brought upon by the Sikhs who plundered the riches of the city. Later the city directly came into British territory after a most bloody struggle. As quoted by Latif:  

"Terrible had been the carnage during the siege and frightful the effect of the British Ordnance. The battered town of Multan presented the appearance of a vessel wrecked and broken by a tremendous storm which had driven it to an inhospitable shore"  

Multan lost its unique and important situation, after the British Raj, as the rest of the sub-continent began to

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develop and advance. No progress was made, and till about the time of Independence, the city was as good as forgotten, and so were its arts and crafts and heritage.

**Orientalism and art institutions in India**

When the British came to India and settled here for trade purposes they started observing the local people, and their craft, their skill, way of living eating habit etc. They considered themselves superior to the East in every respect and came up with the idea of the Orient (East) and Occident (West). As Edward quotes in his book that the British considered the Indians inferior and thought they needed their help and could not be represented\(^\text{23}\).

E.B Havell says and I quote:

"**By putting Indian fine art on a lower intellectual plane than that of Europe you lower the whole intellectual vitality of India, for nothing is more intellectually depressing than the feeling of a constitutional inferiority.**" \(^\text{24}\)

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The aim of this approach was to make the Indians feel inferior intellectually and to become submissive and puppets in the hands of the British. This led to the establishment of art schools in India by the British raj in order to equip the craftsmen with the basic training of the western art.

They ruled India from its cities and most changes happened in these cities. After the mutiny the British soldiers who settled in India had to keep themselves according to the fashion. It was difficult for them to transport goods from England so they were forced to patronize the small European businesses in important cities. The local craftsmen manufactured goods according to the need of the British and they were pleased by the craftsmen work. The industrialization that took place in Britain made them export more goods from India thus making its Britain’s largest market especially regarding textiles.\(^{25}\)

The urge to bring in European progress led to art intervention in colonies. They wanted to guide the taste of
the Orient. These changes were not only cultural the art schools changed the concept of Indian art. English art teaching was different then the local culture of master apprenticeship. The goal of the administration according to Thomas Macaulay’s famous 1835 “Minute on Education” was to convert the intellectuals into a class of people who were Indian in blood and color but English in taste and opinions”26. All The arts schools which opened were influenced by this and planned to respond to the death of craft and its revival which led to create a confused mind set of artists and artisans.

The fear that industrialization is destroying the craftsmen led to the establishment of a school for training workers so that they can produce work for the exhibitions that were held in England.

This system replaced the artisans with the individuals. The first art school was the Calcutta Mechanics Institute and School of Arts founded by Fredrick Corbyn. The other school was opened in Madras in 1850 by Dr. Alexander hunter whose objective was to improve the taste of the

locals by improving the fine arts. These institutions were then taken over by the government and used for imparting western taste.27 A crisis in art education arose by the industrial revolution because there was a rift between the emerging literate artists and a team of confused artisans. The textiles of India were blown down and the artisans could not cope up with the economic crises (which still prevails in craft, blue pottery). So in 1853 the raj thought of blessing them with practical art. Arts schools were run as semi commercial enterprise to promote the industrial arts of India. As hunter in Madras was closely linked to local industries he mass produces tiles, bricks and terracotta ornaments. He also established a pottery department where he taught English manufacturing techniques. Another aspect of colonial art was the violation of oriental art by just classifying it as decorative where as it arose more than that. They made the students more aware of the European art. They were asked to imitate more than imagine. Indian artist were labeled as cunning because of their low cerebral skills as compared to British because they were considered artisans. As Sir George Birdwood said that Indian

collections were becoming stagnant as they were becoming overcrowded by the influences of English society. This is true as it still prevails in crafts\textsuperscript{28}.

This is crucial for my dissertation because it proves that the colonial system through its concept of oriental art and institutions in India handicapped the locals from their imagination and skills and thus made them in equipped with the machines and new technology which stagnated them for years even after partition.

The defeat in the First War of Indian Independence of 1857 and the total subjugation of India by colonial masters was a traumatic experience without parallel in Indian history. The British invasion, unlike invasions in past Indian history, shattered the entire socio-economic basis of Indian life.

In an article by M.A Qureshi writes the reasons for the deterioration of crafts and craftsmen in India which happened due to the impact of British on India which stagnated the artisan and edged him to the low social

He devises a system according to which they did an upgradation of the potter’s of villages of India who were keen to learn new techniques to improve their craft. This is important because in the light of this study I can explain the factors involved in the stunted growth of potters of Multan blue pottery.

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Methodology:

This dissertation focuses on the factors involved for the stagnation of potters of Multan. Since it is a question for which I had to visit Multan in order to find the answer. My research is qualitative research. I chose my research to be a case study of potters of Multan. I chose Multan as a focal point since it is known for this craft of blue pottery and when ever I visit I hear people saying that there are different problems because of which this century old craft is vanishing.

I wanted to inquire about the reasons why it’s happening and what has the government done and what are the future prospects of the potters of Multan .(blue pottery)

When I visited Multan I had to find potters whom I could interview and ask questions. People told me that the oldest potter in the city is Ustad Wajid who’s working since years and his ancestors were also involved in this craft. I visited his workshop daily for a week and observed and asked questions. Then he told me about some other potters which I also visited.
He told me about AHAN project for the revival of blue pottery for which I met Faiza Saleem, ceramicist who informed me about the project and what was it aimed for.

I visited the market and bazaars in Multan to see blue pottery and its demand. I also visited ahan office and asked about their experience during the project.

I also visited the institute of blue pottery which is a factory for the mass production of blue pottery and interviewed the director of the institute.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

The aim of this research was:

1. To identify the problems of local potters
2. The technical issues of the potters
3. Existing skill of the potters.
4. What is the cause of low quality product?
5. Firing techniques

For this I conducted market research. During that process I met one senior craftsmen ustad wajid and Mr. Ghafoor the
director at the institute of Blue Pottery to see the current trends and techniques, typologies to identify the problems of the potters and the pottery industry of Multan. This all cleared a lot of concerns and was helpful in my case study.
FINDINGS

(A CASE STUDY OF THE MULTANI BLUE POTTERY)

MULTAN:

Multan is the fifth largest city of Pakistan located in the Central East of Pakistan and south of Punjab. It is an important industrial and agricultural sector known for its textiles and handicrafts especially blue pottery and camel skin work.

One of the oldest cities of the sub – continent Multan derives its name from an idol in the temple of the Sun God, a shrine of pre-Islamic period.

Multan has been known by different names in different times. The famous Chinese traveller 'Huen Tsang' visited Multan in 641AD. He calls it 'Mulasthanpura', From which the name Multan might have been derived.

Though Multan is considered to be a pre historic city, but it didn't come into prominence until the period of the invasion of Muhammad Bin Qasim in 714 A.D.\(^\text{30}\)

\(^{30}\)http://multan.imraan.com/html/history.html
The city was conquered (c.326 BC) by Alexander the Great, visited (AD 641) by the Chinese Buddhist Scholar Hsuan-tsang, taken (8thcent.) by the Arabs, and captured by Muslim Turkish conqueror Mahmud of Ghaznain 1005 and by Timurin 1398. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Multan enjoyed peace under the early Mughal emperors.31

Economic development has followed political freedom everywhere in the world. As such all developing countries after achieving their freedom are focusing on planned industrial development to attain socio-economic and cultural stability. One such industry is the pottery industry. With the changing patterns of life in the economic and social scenarios of the world and Pakistan specifically it has affected almost everyone in every walk of life. One such section of the society is the craftsmen specifically potters of Multan.

Multan is known for different kinds of handicrafts but the most significant of all is the blue pottery and tile work known as Kashi kari by the local potters. According to the potters this name kasha is derived from the city of Iran
known as Kashan. As it has been explained in first chapter that kashan was one of the important Islamic pottery production centers during the twelfth and sixteenth century. It was here that the craft of blue pottery was discovered and evolved and bought to sub-continent with the Moghuls.

Blue glaze pottery often adorns the domes of the Persian speaking part of the Islamic world, including Persia, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia and Turkey. However it is sometimes used all over a building, especially since Timur’s time, two famous examples being Mazar e Sharif in Afghanistan and Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s tomb in Pakistan.

It was the various shades of blue, from turquoise to lapis, which became the most popular all over the Muslim world.

Such is the magic of this stunning craft that is blue pottery which is still known internationally because of its floral geometric patterns and its craftsmanship.
To quote Percy Brown:

“The fertility of design and the diversity of color in the scheme are amazing, and although in its present state a somewhat vivid yellow is inclined to predominate, each panel, spandrel and border is in itself a work of art, rivaling in the brilliance of its hues, the sheen of the blue jays and green parrots which flit above its walls. There could be no finer illustration of that ardent desire for a display of exuberant color innate in East then these glazed tile buildings of the Punjab.”32

If the blue pottery of Multan is so popular and known worldwide then why is it that there has been no or little progress in its growth?

The elated status and prestige enjoyed by Multan came to a sudden halt after the Sikhs took over the Mogul empire and plundered it greatest provinces and carried out carnage on a grand scale. As the Moguls lost power, status of the artisan, craftsmen declined too. There was a time when craftsmen were given status in courts and were like organisms that

used to innovate and create. They had special areas
assigned to them to dwell during the Moghal especially
Islamic era. There is no denying of the fact that the potters
of Multan were once supported by the Nawabs of the area
as they used to do work in thin the tombs and shrines. But
in the nineteenth century the fall of Moghal empire led to
the lost of the status of potters, loss of patronage and then
they had to look for other places to earn bread and butter.
On the other hand the establishment of art institutions made
a clear divide between artist and artisan. There purpose was
to teach western art and degenerate the decorative arts.
Along with this, the mechanization further stagnated the
growth and the craftsmen were made to survive on the
traditional means rather then working with machines. After
partition, this craft was neglected until 1971. When Bhutto
came in power, he was a great patron of arts and culture, so
he appointed Faiz Ahmed Faiz as the head of Lok Virsa
which established its centers in almost all major cities of
the country.³³ It provides a platform for the local craftsmen
to show their talent.

LEGACY OF BLUE POTTERY IN MULTAN:

Hereditary profession:

In an interview with one of the old and famous kashigar of Multan namely Ustad Wajid said that most of the kumhars in this craft are the ones who had learnt this craft from their ancestors and it had travelled so on to the existing generations. They practice what was told to them by their elders in exactly the same manner without changing anything; even they use the same technique.

Division of labor:

Men: This work is done by mostly males as the father teaches his son his techniques and designs because they have this concept that males are going to carry there legacy and tradition. So the males do the work of kneading clay, beating, molding and cutting of clay. Throwing and hand building is also done by the males.

Women: they mostly do the household and help them in painting and decorating vessels but mostly their duty
comprises of taking care of the house and providing the male with all the comfort and necessities to do work.

**Master Apprentice Relation:**

One of the most significant observations I had was the relation of master and apprentice locally called us tad and shagird which is one of the backbones of learning arts and craft in subcontinent since centuries. Ustad is a person whose skill is polished and at a higher level than shagird who’s in a learning process under the supervision of us tad. The master takes the shagird under his supervision to make him learn all the techniques of the craft and make him a master too. He guides him like a parent. Usually at the workshop the apprentice helps the master in all the nitty gritty of his work, he makes the vessels, kneads the clay and the master checks him and makes the glazes and places them on the pots. This relation was badly effected by the British colonial institutions of art in which they encouraged artisans to learn western craft. As the British became the masters so this relation went through a bad phase but it still survives in these old craftsmen workshops.

**Trends in recent years in kinship:**
According to the potters people are discouraging their children to adopt this craft of their ancestors nowadays because of less income involved for their survival. The reasons for this decline is the fact that due to the growing demands of the modern world the potters are not equipped to meet the needs of the market. The major factor involved is the inflation and on the other hand it has become really difficult for these low class craftsmen to earn their bread and butter through this profession.

They say that it’s better to take this craft as a part time profession rather a full time profession because it involves a lot of hard work and they don’t earn according to the sweat they shed so it’s better to do a job in a government office and earn then to burn you for this craft.

According to Ustad Wajid, it is a matter of pure passion for this craft that only then you can work otherwise it’s really difficult to earn. He says that he’s also working despite that he has no support from the government he still running his house through this craft. While I was sitting at his workshop I observed that a person comes in the afternoon and does naqashi work on tiles and then leaves. On inquiring I came to know that he was Mr. Wajids cousin
who had learnt this craft but due to economic issues and survival reasons he works at a government office in morning.

**Technical Issues Regarding the Skill:**

Living in a post modern industrial society, the craftsmen of Multan still stick to old fashioned means and methods of pottery. They lack innovation and technical equipment to enable them to compete with the artisans of the world and earn the repute they celebrated earlier. Despite these disadvantages, there are certain craftsmen who stick to old traditions and refuse technology, even if offered obstinately, claiming that they would loose their originality and the machine would drift them away from their tradition and unique art, they practiced manually.

According to the local potters their in equipment with the machines dates back to the British colonization. As they came here for trade, during the nineteenth century industrial revolution happened and India was Britain’s largest market. The introduction of machines which could produce one vessel in seconds which the craftsmen took days to make broke the potters craft and demand. Ustad
Wajid says that I make equally good things as made by machines but what can I do that it takes time like days to make a pot or architectural pieces. They use old techniques of pottery like throwing, cutting and kneading clay. It is located at place near the tomb of Hafiz Jamal Shah which is a few kilometers away from Daulat Gate. There is a miner who mines clay and sells it to the potters for free. Other then that they access the clay from the river bed of Chenab. They call it chikni mitti. The clay needs to be fine without impurities.

The clay is prepared by two methods, one directly obtained from the deposits and the other from the waste clay of pottery. The waste clay is the one left from trimming of pots, those pieces that are dried too much to be used and those that are used for intermediate processes like chucks. All this clay is collected and thrown into a whole on the side. The lumps are broken with a stick and then water is sprinkled according to the requirement of the potter.

The potter’s wheel used in Multan is a pit wheel. A pit is dug in which an elongated wooden shaft is placed on top of
which a wooden plank is placed. The shaft is thick at the bottom and thin at the top so it is easy to rotate it. They also make tiles by the method of hand building. Another way of making pots is in sections. In this technique, the potters take lumps of clay and throw each pile separately creating the foot, centre body and the neck of the pot. Each part is made separately and then placed aside to become leather hard dry. The traditional colors of Multan are cobalt blue (lajvard), turquoise (sabzi) and white (citta). Potters now also use other colors like yellow, red etc. All this work is done manually which can be done with the help of machines but because they are not trained that way so they cannot use it and they do not want to use it too. They do wood firing. The motifs and patterns they use are all floral, old Islamic patterns even the colors are the same old ones there is no intervention in the design and form of the pots as well.
These are some of the techniques which are used by the potters but they are old and economical for them. There are no new machines, techniques which are taught them and if they are taught they don’t want to apply. The reason is that it’s always a communication and correspondence gap. The patrons cannot understand the potter’s problem and if they do then the potters are willing to give in themselves to learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements Used in Pottery</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glaze</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour Glue</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobalt oxide</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glaze</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour Glue</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper oxide</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuprous oxide</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UPGRADTION OF THE TECHNICAL SKILLS OF POTTERS OF MULTAN:

A project was conducted by AHAN a government organization established for the revival of arts and crafts in Multan. As it was discussed in the Multan Chamber of Commerce that the craft of blue pottery is known throughout the world so some thing needs to be done to help the potters come at the same level as international level. For this purpose they conducted a six month workshop at Ustad Wajids workshop to help them overcome quality and production issues.

Quality:

The quality of the products produced by them was of inferior quality as they used no binding agent in terracotta clay to hold it together and prevent it from cracks and creases. This is a common practice that they knead the clay with water make it of good consistency without adding anything and as a result when the pot starts to dry it starts cracking and they fill the crack with more and more clay.
and cover it with slurry but the crack do not vanish. Even the glazes they use for ingobing are made of crushed mirror. As a result when it is fired it starts cracking and falling of from the pot.

**PRODUCTION:**

Over here the basic concept of demand and supply comes in. First the market for blue pottery was identified and they came across the fact that its demand is huge especially in table ware products throughout the world. But the market is very niche. So Multan Chamber of Commerce decided in 2009 to identify the problems faced by local potters and upgrade their technical problems and skill level.

Apart from the slow down, people in this industry cite that this art will never fade away. Many professionals having vast knowledge of this art are still committed with their work and doing various projects to run the show. Here is one that I would like to put the spotlight on.
AHAN PROJECT:

Faiza Saleem a ceramicist, a graduate from National College of Arts was part of the project as a ceramic designer. She informed that the aim of this project was the revival of this craft based on following objectives:

1.Introduction of new techniques

2. Induction of new materials in clay to increase its strength

3. Mass Production of pottery and tiles

4. Technical training of the artisan for enabling them to adopt the technology

PROCESS:

According to Faiza, it was important to train the kashigars in mould making and slip casting which would help them to produce more pots in short time frame.\(^{34}\) For this purpose ahan hired a molder from Gujarat for six months to train the potters on the hands on technique of casting and molding.

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\(^{34}\) Saleem, Faiza, Personal Interview, 26 March, 2011
Slip casting is a modern technique of producing multiples of one vessel or object with exactly the same proportions in less time by using molding and casting. In this first a clay vessel is created and then it is casted in plaster to make molds one piece. Two piece or four piece molds.

In this workshop the potters were explained how to make one piece, two, three and four piece moulds.

Awareness was increased regarding the use of material that is what kind of plaster should be used how it should be cleaned and made free of lumps. How the quality of the plaster should be checked. There were taught how to make mould of pots, jars, teapots, and new table wares which were in demand in market. They were introduced with placing rubber stoppers and making holes between the moulds.

They were given a bolemin and a gas firing kiln to enhance the production of their products. They were taught how to use the bolemin and make slip of red clay by adding the correct amount of water while sodium silicate was introduced as a binding and catalytic agent. This was done to increase the quality of slip. Then they were taught how
to pour slip and for how much time. How they should clean the moulds and dry them. A gas firing kiln was installed to improve the firing of the pots. Before that they were doing wood firing which took a lot of time and fuel in terms of waste and a lot cracks and breakage was happening as they could not control the temperature of firing for this purpose the gas kiln was installed so they could fire the terracotta at 800 centigrade.

The result was that the potters produced hundred blue tiles in a few days and pots according to the demand of AHAN as they had to place them in the display centers. But this project had a lot of draw backs as well. There was no technical assistance by a ceramic engineer in terms of testing the slip, clay. What they knew they applied it. A positive aspect reported by Faiza was that the artisans were keen to learn new techniques and their application. They were motivated a lot by this project.35

Another thing which was important was the fact that after the project ended the potters shifted back to their old techniques of wood firing and vessel making because they said that they did not had enough revenue to pay for the gas

35 Saleem, Faiza, Personal Interview, 26March,2011
firing and buy plaster. This shows that the part of the society from which they belong to cannot afford bread and butter so how are they expected to work with technology unless they don’t have some patronage.

To quote Jim Rohm “Humans have the remarkable ability to get exactly what they must have. But there is a difference between a "must" and "want."

The draw back was that the government should have realized this defect and worked out some solution with these potters. But on the other hand in my observation they don’t have any motivation in life to improve or accept changes. They have this idea in their minds about being perfect at this craft because its ancestral but they fail to add innovation into it. As compared to the artisans of the Islamic era particularly of Iran and Turkey who invented this craft of blue and white ware they were ambitious in applying new techniques. Learning through their mistakes and discovering every time new processes whether it is tin glaze, luster ware etc. There was so much happening in the Islamic world, they were constantly getting inspired, trying to imitate but they also made it their own by introducing new elements to it.
This lacks in the present day potters as was explained by Mr. Ghafoor the in charge of (TEVTA) Institute Of Blue Pottery, Multan.\textsuperscript{36}

This institute was established in 1985 to support the local potters of Multan in terms of providing them with raw materials and machines. It was also a step to meet the increasing demands of blue pottery tableware in the modern world.

There was a need to establish this institute because the local craftsmen were not earning a lot to make a living. Secondly, this craft was dying it was important to take some measure for its revival and in terms of making the local potters equipped with modern methods and technology.

It had to cater to the problem of quality, quantity production and innovation in designs and colors. It is a success at a small scale because they have been able to achieve good quality products which can be mass produced.

\textsuperscript{36}Ghafoor, Muhammad, Personal Interview, 23 March 2011.
It has tried to finish the stereotype of this craft being ancestral as it offers courses to everyone or anyone who wants to learn this craft as a survival or is passionate about it. They have produced people like Usman and Nomi who run their own workshops after learning from the institute and are earning well.

The institute offers short courses of three, and six months and a year and a half course of training in all departments. They have separate departments for moulding, casting, slip casting, kashi work, and design departments. They train people in each department.

They use the technique of slip casting because it is a convenient way of mass producing an object. Mass Production is the modern concept in which individual manual labor is often replaced by mechanized mass production and craftsmen are replaced by assembly lines. It is a process which we need to understand and should be able to compete with.
According to Adlin Sinclair:

“You are the embodiment of the information you choose to accept and act upon. To change your circumstances you need to change your thinking and subsequent actions."  

This is what they need to change their thinking accept new ideas, innovation and take themselves forward with new ideas, thoughts, techniques.

37 http://thinkexist.com/quotation/you-are-the-embodiment-of-the-information-you/763324.html
Conclusion

In my understanding, pottery was once known as a thriving industry, but not anymore. The art of pottery is not completely dying though it has faded away but this downfall is not just associated with this particular art, in fact this is the case with an entire art and cultural industry.

Having such circumstances, there has been a production slowdown due to the overall global crisis especially in Pakistan; it is no less than a turmoil that we are dealing with. The buying power goes down and so as the businesses stop making profits. Workers on daily wages suffer the most as they get no other option than changing their skill set or opting any other profession which can help them earn the bread and butter.

However, the art of poetry is still practiced by a few men in every village and city. These are the same people whose old generations made their blood in to sweat for this art. I see a biggest change arising because youngsters have opted modern and prestigious occupations than only having
pottery skills. The education is slightly on the rise and there are better job opportunities for those who carry a decent education background, thus this art in this place seems destined to become a historical memory.

If we take a look around, we don’t now use pots which are made of clay and mud at home to store drinking water, which was a very common practice before and now considered an old age traditional. Usage of disposable bottles and cups are more in practice now than pots even the flower pots are now being replaced by light weighted and unbreakable plastic pots. Pottery has now become more of a seasonal business which is limited to the fair and festivals.

If we accept this art as noble then there should be a noble way of promoting it and giving it a new breath. The Government of Pakistan and Media should play an extensive role that can help promoting the art nation wide and around the globe. If we use the term “The Art is Dying” then it is just because, being a country, we do not promote it any more, we do not bring our artists to the limelight and we do not believe in exchanging talent with
other countries. Hence, this art is fading away and losing all its essence and importance.

The government should invest in this industry to promote it well if not they should find a foreign investors and have our artists work for them. Display galleries should be announced for the work that is being done in our country. It is always considered a good marketing stunt to display the art through galleries and exhibitions to encourage the industry and their workers. Our country has been fascinated with the media for years. In other words, it is the age of independent media in Pakistan. A powerful media can turn problems into opportunities and we are blessed to have media which is influence free. We can use it a tool to promote the dying art and culture of our country.

Still, we see hope with having credible and professional leaders of this industry who are keen to initiate new projects. They practice, they strive and they keep hitting the hammer to keep this art alive.
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APPENDICES

Q. What is your name?

Ans: Ustad Wajid Ullah.

Q: When did you learn this art?
Ans: Since I was ten years old from my father.

**Q:** How old is this profession?

Ans: Our great grand fathers learnt this and then it was carried by generations.

**Q:** Why is it called kasha kari and how did this craft originated?

Ans: This craft is called kashi kari because it originated in the city of Kashan located in Iran.

**Q:** Where did your ancestors come from and with home?

Ans: They came from Arabia with Mohammad bin Qasim and settled here.

**Q:** How do you prepare clay?

Ans: We bring clay from the shrine and knead it with feet and then hand until its mixed properly. This is the same way our ancestors used to do it.

**Q:** Why is this craft declining?
Ans: This craft is declining because when the British came they bought in machines and their own art because of which we could not learn it and the patronage also died. The government does not take responsibility of improving this craft by introducing new projects and platforms for us.