Socio-cultures groups of various potters are generally known under a single nomenclature, i.e., 'Kumbhar', which is a common name for the nine groups of potters that have been found in the three districts under study. Eight of these groups are the followers of Hindu religion and one group follows Muslim religion. The origin of various group names can be traced to mythical traditions prevalent among the potters as well as to certain historical records. According to the mythical tradition, the potters trace their origin from Brahma, the Lord of creation. Most of the potters' groups are named after one or the other names appearing in the 'mythical geneology'. However, on the basis of historical evidences, it appears to be more probable that the 'mythical geneology' was framed after the group names were well established. Some of the group names are also
mentioned in historical records. Particularly the word Gurjar is very common in Indian history.

Migration has been a common feature for most of the groups of potters. Historical records as well as oral traditions prevalent among the potters would lead one to conclude that most of the groups of potters are known by the name of the place to which they originally belonged, and from where they migrated over a long distance and on a larger scale. Local and frequent migrations on a smaller scale have not led to the establishment of a separate identity for the migrants as independent 'Nat'. Another striking feature which emerges from this study is that distant migration appears to have taken place generally from the side of the north and particularly from Rajasthan to Gujarat. However, in the case of Ahir potters migration from Maharashtra is recorded. This phenomenon could be traced in other social groups also.

The word 'Nat' is used to specify a particular social group of potters. The members of the 'Nat' are supposed to have the same mythical ancestor. The 'Nat' is subdivided territorially, and this territorial subgroup is known as
'Goda'. 'Goda' is the most important social institution for the potters. It organises and influences their lives in many ways. 'Goda' is an endogamous group. At the time of marriage and death all the 'Goda' members are informed, and they are supposed to attend the ceremony. 'Goda' is regulated by an elected body known as 'Goda Panchayat'. This 'Panchayat' is with the functions of preservation of social and cultural traditions, promotion of economic and social welfare. The Panchayat has the authority to penalize the members for various offences, and even to excommunicate a member for a major offence.

The Hindu potters of these districts are the followers of various Hindu sects. The following of a particular sect depends mainly on the choice of the family or individual and not on the place or 'Nat' or 'Goda' to which that family belongs. The rules of the sects are not very strict. Even in one family, husband and wife may follow different sects. In comparison to the sect the 'Goda' has a more dominating influence on various aspects of potters' life, so the membership of a 'Goda' establishes much stronger ties among the potters than their following of a sect.
In their religious practices, rituals and ceremonies, potters are not very different from the other groups of people in their locality or region. For example, a Hindu potter would generally pay respect to all the deities of Hindu pantheon, would pay particular homage to the deity or the religious 'Guru' of his own sect, and more particularly he would worship the family deity, i.e., the 'Kuladevi'. Similarly the 'samskaras', the birth and the marriage ceremonies are also the same as for other groups of that religion, of that economic status and of that area. However, one outstanding feature among the potters' groups is the rule of endogamy, i.e., the rule of marriage inside the 'Goda'. For purposes of marriage, belonging to a 'Goda' is more important than belonging to a sect. The rule of endogamy is observed with strictness not only among the Hindu potters but among the Muslim potters as well. This system prevails in other social group also.

There are certain ceremonies and taboos which are related to their pot-making occupation. Among these are the worship of the potters wheel, the worship of the place where the pots are thrown and the worship of the kiln. Touching the wheel by feet is tabooed among all the groups
of potters. Throwing of pots by women is also tabooed among all the groups except the Momana (Muslim) group. There are certain festive as well as inauspicious days for pot-making work, when they do not work.

As far as their living pattern is concerned, potters generally live as a group in a separate part of a village or town known as 'Kumbharwada' usually situated on the fringe of the village or town. They generally have small houses, and a portion of the house is used as a workshop. Their houses are scantily furnished and their possessions are few. Most of the potters keep donkeys as draught animal. Their dresses and costumes and their food and drink habits are similar to those of other people of the same economic status in that area.

**ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

Productive activities of potters mainly consist of production of clay objects. However, in order to supplement their income, often they take up subsidiary occupations like farming, rearing of animals and petty trading.

On the basis of their specialized field of production
of clay objects, they divide themselves into two main occupational categories: 'Vasanwala' (pot-makers) and 'Intowala' (manufacturers of bricks). Majority belongs to the 'Vasanwala' category.

The production is organised on household basis. Every family member participates in the productive process. The quality and the quantity of clay objects that they produce depends mainly on the factors like demand and market accessibility, availability of raw materials and the manpower and division of labour.

The potters produce their objects for local consumption and trade over larger territories. Most of the potters produce their objects only for local consumption and hence sell their pots at their own residences. Some potters carry the pots on donkeys, bullock cart or camel cart and sell them from village to village in a radius of about 10 kms. When the potters produce on a large scale in a few centres, they sell their products through contractors. Contractors usually come from urban areas and belong to one of the potters' groups, mostly Gurjars. They place their orders in advance. They use trucks to transport the vessels to urban
Contractors also advance money to the potters during their lean season. However, the contractors drive a hard bargain in fixing the prices, which, the potters feel, are on the lower side, and the contractors are interested only in certain varieties of pots of a high quality. In this case the pots move over a distance of more than 50 Kms.

The two adopted and subsidiary occupations are farming and rearing of animals. Those potters who manage to acquire reasonably good size of land-holding give up their traditional profession of pot-making. The economic condition of those potters who have adopted agriculture as their main occupation is generally better than those whose main occupation is pot making.

Potters generally belong to a very low hierarchy of economic classes in villages and towns. Their economic status and living conditions may be only a little better than those of the poorest section of the society who do not have a definite occupation. Major part of the demand for clay pots itself originates in the relatively poorer section of the society, and hence there is little scope of making much advance in this profession which is laborious.
This is the reason why whenever a potter has sufficient land to cultivate or gets some other opportunity of service or business, he gives up his traditional occupation.

Among the potters, the economic condition of 'Intowala' potters is better as their products, i.e., bricks, have an expanding and prosperous market in recent times.

POTTERS' CRAFT

In Gujarat, the evidence of potters' craft is found right from the microlithic - chalcolithic period. The tradition of this craft in the districts under study can be assumed to be existing right from the Harappan period. The tradition still continues with little changes in the techniques, shapes and decorations. So far as the fabrics are concerned though their broad features are similar, due to minor changes, it is possible to classify them on the site.

The nature and the quality of this craft depends very much on the quality and the quantity of raw-materials available and the tools used in the production process. This has led to highly identical craft over long period of time.
The most important raw-material is the clay. There are two main types of clay available in these districts, i.e., porous clay and the black or sticky clay. Porous clay requires less of tempering. But the black clay is a finer variety though it requires more of tempering with fibrous materials, sand or ashes. Chalk and ochre are used as colouring materials and mica is sometimes used to give a silvery lustre to the pots. Most of these raw materials are collected from natural sources, available in the vicinity. Only a few ingredients are brought from longer distances.

Water is also an important requirement, and it is for this reason that potters' habitations are usually located near a tank, pond or a river. Fuel for baking the pots is another essential requirement. Chaff, cowdung goat-droppings, wood and coal are used as fuel.

The process of preparing the clay into plastic form is a lengthy operation, and various techniques are employed. The best technique is that of washing and silting the clay through a chain of vats dug on a slope. This technique existed in Palestine, in the first millennium B.C. Gurjar potters of Baroda and Momana potters of Surat use this method for getting refined clay. Other potters use very simple processes.
The tools or implements such as wheel, anvil, bat etc. used by the potters are quite simple and for the most part, very traditional. The 'potters wheel' is the most important implement, and ranks among the earliest mechanical contrivances. The potters believe it to be a divine gift from Shanker or Siva. It is for this reason that the wheel has an important place in their ceremonials.

Evidences of the use of wheel in the manufacture of pots are found right from the late stone-age at Langhnaj in Gujarat.

In the process of manufacturing the pots, the function of the wheel is to supply centrifugal force to a lump of plastic clay accurately thrown out of the centre. The wheel is usually made of wood, though at some places wheels made of concrete or stone are also used.

One of the three methods, i.e., hand modelling, moulding and wheel-turning, is used to produce the clay objects. Hand-modelling is not very common in this region. Moulding process is used for producing terracotta objects and bricks. Wheel turning is the most common method of making the pots.
After the pot is thrown by wheel and dried leather hard, potters employ the beating process to expand the pots. Shaping of the pot depends to a large extent on the quality of the clay.

After the pots are thrown, expanded, shaped and dried they are subjected to various types of decorations. This process involves polishing and burnishing, painting and engraving. Burnishing is done with the help of a chain of beads of stone. Painting is done only by women in this region. After the pots have been given an ochre slip, a chalk or lime solution is used to paint various motifs on the pots. Sometimes the colour scheme is reversed. Ceremonial pots are painted after firing.

Firing is the last but essential process for giving durability to the pots. Method of firing differs from place to place and it also depends on the types of pots. There are various types of kilns. Both, oxidation method and reduction method of firing are employed in these districts. Reduction method is used to produce black pots.
There are different types of earthenware manufactured in these three districts. Some of these wares are very common in shapes which are universally round and their tradition can be traced to ancient periods.

Among the carinated cooking vessels are 'handlis', variously known as 'paimi', 'onhali' or 'boreli'. Their tradition can be dated right from the chalcolithic period in Gujarat. The old tradition has continued till date with some variations in size and shape. Other cooking vessels are 'tavadi' and 'kathrot', i.e., dough plates and basins. They too have very old tradition in this region.

Among eating and drinking vessels are : 'dish', 'dhaknu', 'payalo' etc. (i.e., dishes and bowls), 'Vadhi' and 'jhari' (spouted vessels), and 'loca' and 'glass' (for drinking water). All these objects have been found in Harappan, historic and mediaeval periods.

Among the globular water vessels are 'matla', 'ghada', 'degado' and 'dhochaki'. Water vessels are amongst the most commonly used earthen vessels. They are demanded in
urban as well as in rural areas. Evidence of globular pots in Gujarat is found right from the late stone age. Bulbous or globular pots have been found from cholcolithic sites as well. Similarly, from Harappan sites and historic sites, highly decorated globular pots have been discovered. Mediaeval site of Champaner has also yielded similar pots.

'Kothi' is a big earthen jar (hand-modelled) which is used for storing water and sometimes grains as well. These too seem to have a very old tradition. It may however, be pointed out that though general affinity of the typology and fabrics over long period is clearly observed, it is possible to distinguish the old from the new for an experienced observer. The potters were clearly able to distinguish the fabrics when they were asked to do so in the field.

Cooking hearths ('sagari' and 'chulha') are hand-made unbaked objects. Traces of these from the excavated sites in Gujarat are rare.

There are other household objects like 'kunda', 'phulado', 'tharu', 'galla' and 'paperweight'. 'Galla', and 'paperweight' seem to be the modern innovations.
Potters in this region, also manufacture smoking objects like 'hukka', 'cheelam' and 'chungi'. History of these objects is related to the history of tobacco in India. 'Tobacco' in India seems to be of mediaeval origin. Hukka and cheelam were also introduced in the mediaeval period, and the style of 'hukka' and 'Cheelam' seems to have been influenced by the Moghal court.

A number of ceremonial objects are also prepared by the potters in this region. 'Gujra', 'gotraj', 'bujaro' and 'kumkavati' are related to marriage ceremonies. 'Garoi', 'agardani' and 'dhupiya' are related to festivals and worship. Tribal people in this area use specially made terracotta figurines of their deities and a few other objects for worship. Some terracotta toys are also made in this region.

Among the objects used for industrial purposes are, pots for extracting and storing 'liquor' and 'tadi', and pots for milk and milk products. Further there are pots for keeping pickles and a pot used for measurement which is known as 'mapio'. Almost all these vessels belong to the more general category of globular pots, which have a long standing historical tradition.
Bricks and roof tiles are the important building materials made in this region. Bricks are made by Dalwadi group of potters in these districts. Bricks are made by moulding process. Tradition of brick making can be traced to the Harappan period. In older periods very large size baked and unbaked bricks in a variety of shapes were in use. Mediaeval period shows a preference for very small-size bricks. Now-a-days the bricks are manufactured in medium and a size introduced under British impact.

Roof tiles, in this region, are made mostly by Varia potters. Roof tiles are thrown on wheel as a tapering cylindrical object which is later cut vertically into two parts. Evidence suggest that roof tiles were not much in use during Harappan period. Their use started in historical period and has continued through the mediaeval period till the modern times.

For most of the clay objects produced these days, evidences from the chalcolithic period are generally more than the evidences from historical and mediaeval periods. Main reason for this seems to be the concentration on chalcolithic sites and comparatively less attention is paid to the sites of other periods.
MOTIFS OF DECORATION

Pots are generally decorated by various types of motifs painted or engraved upon them. Decorations depend on the functional uses of the pots, and the tastes of the people who buy them. Generally the cooking vessels and the pots for industrial uses are not decorated at all or scantily decorated. Black pots used for eating and drinking purposes are generally decorated with incised designs. Pots which are manufactured in red ware are generally painted with various types of motifs. Highly decorated pots are made for ceremonial purposes. Also the pots which are used by tribal people, generally known as 'bhilwadia vasan' are highly decorated. Urban people have a preference for scantily decorated or plain pots.

The common motifs of decoration in this region are: linear motifs (including loops and circular designs), floral motifs, faunal motifs, astronomical and miscellaneous motifs.

Lines and bands are the most common among these. Tradition of lines and bands is also very old, and has continued through all the periods of history. Similarly the loop design has also been found from almost all the chalcolithic, historical and mediaeval sites of Gujarat.
A design made by thumb and finger impression (lentoids) is also one of the common motifs in this region. This motif seems to have been continued from a very long period. But this motif has not been reported from the mediaeval sites.

The tradition of concentric motif does not appear to have been very common in Gujarat. Its use in earlier periods has been rare, though it is used quite often now.

Many types of floral patterns are depicted on the present day pottery in this region. Ovate flowers, round flowers, flowers with petals and stalks and flowers with joint petals are common among them. It seems that floral motif was in use right from the pre-Harappan period, and later it was used in chalcolithic period. But after early historical period, this motif was rarely used. Again, this practice seems to have revived in the mediaeval period when it was used on glazed and other wares.

Leaf and tree motif is also common in the interior villages, and this too is an old tradition, continuing through various periods of history. A motif with some similarity with banana is also found.
The faunal motifs prevalent in these districts variously describe insects, fishes and birds. Sometimes a very crude forms of human figure is also painted. But faunal motifs are not very common on the present day pottery. It may be due to religious traditions as well as due to economic reasons. Faunal motifs are more difficult to draw and they take more time and labour. If we compare the faunal motifs on early and mediaeval pottery with those on the present day pottery, we find that these motifs in the earlier periods, were painted in more artistic fashion. Now-a-days they are represented only in crude form.

Among the astronomical motifs, 'moon and star' pattern is the most common. The Sun motif was very common during Harappan period. After Harappan period this motif is seldom noticed on Gujarat pottery. The motif of 'moon and star' seems to be a new tradition in this region.

On some of the pots in this region a composite motif is depicted, which is a combination of lines, loops, circles, dots, leaves and flowers. Sometimes this composite motif represents a border design and sometimes it has no identifiable shape. But it is very popular for 'bhilwadia vasan'.


Thus, the tradition of decorating the pots with various motifs is very old, going back to pre-Harappan period. This tradition is declining with growing urbanization. Highly decorated pots are popular only in interior villages and tribal areas. Even the skill and care with which various designs and patterns are painted on the pots has a declining tendency.

The study of the present day potters and their craft indicate many socio-religious practices that do not distinguish the potters from other groups. These features do not reflect identifiable traces in archaeology. The pottery which is essentially locally made indicate long established practices of utilitarian craft. The shapes, fabrics and other aspects especially of the products of the Gurjars help to identify them as the potters of long standing here, and seem to support their tradition of migration from Champaner. It is also interesting to note the similarity of the products from different groups. It has been observed that some potters have the capacity to identify their products, by the 'feel'. But it is such a highly developed skill, that it does not get reflected clearly in the shape of the pots.
The similarity of products indicate locally established preferences of the people and the more permanent features of the requirements. However, in archaeological record ceramics tradition of short life also is discovered. It provides a diagnostic features for isolating temporal and other cultural aspects which go on changing.

On the whole this study indicates that on a longer perspective, the record of the producers of ceramics become hazy on its socio-religious side. Moreover, the variety of functions to which one shape is put is often not realised; though under special conditions it could be retrieved by an archaeologist, but it remains fairly clear in many aspects of the typology, techniques etc. and help in discerning both the steady and changing patterns of the long Indian tradition.