The ceramic is an important technology that supplies many useful objects in man’s life. As the broken ceramic has a great survival value, so it is an important tool in the kit of an archaeologist to understand many facets of bygone cultures. It is treated as a remnant of human activity, reflecting cultural phenomenon. Many hypotheses on the basis of the ceramic traditions are developed. They include their steady and changing elements such as their spread, change in materials, import, export etc. Pottery, being one of the most ancient and wide-spread crafts which still continues more or less in the traditional form and pattern in our country, it provides an important link between the present and the past. So, it is one of the most important factor for the interpretation and understanding of the older civilizations. However, the interpretative value of this traditional craft depends very much on the understanding of the form, the pattern and the technique of manufacture, and its value as a cultural trait in tracing the spread of the
material as well as human activities of trade, commerce, migrations, local features, etc.

Along with pottery, potters are one of the most important and oldest artisan groups. Evidences of their craft in India are available right from the Microlithic, neolithic Chaleolithic period. Pot-sherds discovered from various excavations give evidence of their intelligence in making use of the available materials with full understanding of their potentialities. In course of time this craft became a hereditary occupation for some people in the society, and this group of people came to be known generally as potters or 'Kumbhar'. Having practised this occupation generation after generation this group of people, i.e. 'Kumbhars' have developed a form of social organisation and certain traditions and customs which have an important bearing on their craft and its products. Hence a study of the traditional potters in their geographical, socio-cultural and economic perspective would provide essential clues towards the re-appraisal of many of the hypotheses about socio-cultural change in our country. To undertake such a study has been the first aim of the present work, so geographical and regional background, socio-cultural tradition and economic
conditions of the traditional potters in Baroda, Broach and the Panchmahals districts of Gujarat State have been studied in depth.

Another important aspect of this work has been to study, in depth, the various products of this craft, manufactured and used in modern times. As it was also intended to give temporal depth to the products of modern ateliers, these products have been compared with the ceramics discovered from the archaeological excavations of the area under study as well as of other parts of Gujarat. Such a study is intended to reveal the phenomenon of continuity or change in the varieties of the products, techniques of their manufacture and the patterns of their decoration, and thus reflect upon the phenomenon of continuity and change in the culture of the people through the ages. As this is a subject with a very wide scope particularly in the context of Indian tradition, geographical limit of this study was restricted to Panchmahals, Baroda and Broach districts of Gujarat.

The archaeological remains from these districts help us to get some idea about the various cultures that existed in these districts. Right from the prehistoric period upto
mediaeval period this area was occupied by people of different cultures, and still we get different types of people having different cultural patterns in these districts. Thus these districts provide a link between the old and the new pattern of life, which is very helpful in understanding the pattern of culture.

METHOD OF STUDY

The aim of the present study is two-fold: first to study the socio-economic culture and craft techniques of the present day potters of this area, and secondly to correlate the present day pottery with the pottery found from archaeological excavations in the concerned area as well as other parts of Gujarat. The method of work therefore, was a combination of anthropological and archaeological techniques. It consisted of the following stages:

(i) Acquaintance with the potters and their craft by participant-observation technique. This required the visit of the residential and working area of the potters with a view to investigate the society and culture of the potters and the techniques of their craft.
(ii) Analysis of the data.
(iii) Comparing and tracing the shapes and the patterns of decorations of the pots, with the help of the ceramics found from excavated sites in Gujarat.

In the first phase of exploration between January 1974 to April 1974 a general survey of these districts was undertaken in order to collect basic information about the potters and their products. Initially the 'purohit' of the potters was contacted and proper rapport with the community was established. Then field work was undertaken. The visit of one village in Baroda district led to the growth of information about the community and its villages and different communities of potters came to view. Following this, information almost all the villages occupied by the potters in this area were visited and necessary data were collected by dialogue, participation in their ceremonials and observation of their practices.

After collecting the basic data from these places, some villages and towns were selected for collecting further data according to schedule. While selecting the villages and towns for collecting detailed information, following factors were taken into consideration.
i) Population of the potters

ii) Social groups of the potters

iii) Quality of the pots

iv) Quantity of production

v) Varieties of pots.

Care was also taken to see that every taluka of the three districts was represented.

For this purpose a questionnaire was prepared. As its early trials revealed, that people were shy to fill up the questionnaire; and hence it was thought advisable to put oral questions to collect the data as planned in the questionnaire.

This schedule was divided into four parts:

1) Sociological,

2) Religious,

3) Economic,

4) Technological.

Under sociological part the data were collected on the following aspects:

i) Potters and their social groups
ii) Origin and spread of the groups
iii) 'Nat' and 'goda' system.
iv) Organisation and spread of the 'godas'.
v) 'Goda Panchayat' and its functions.
vi) House pattern and living
vii) Dresses and customs
viii) Food and drinks.

Under religious part, the data on the following aspects were collected:

i) Religion
ii) Cult and Deity
iii) Rituals and Ceremonies.

Under economic part, the data on the following aspects were collected:

i) Occupational categories and specialization
ii) Production process and factors affecting production, i.e., demand, availability of raw-material, manpower and division of labour, market accessibility etc.
iii) Transportations
iv) Method of sales
v) Subsidiary occupations, i.e., farming, rearing of animals, etc.

vi) Living conditions.

Under technological part data on the following aspects were collected:

i) Raw materials

ii) Traditional implements of potters' craft

iii) Method of building the pots

iv) Method of decorating the pots

v) Technique of firing the pots

vi) Present typology of the pots and its functional uses.

The data according to above mentioned schedule were collected between January and May of the years 1975 and 1976 respectively.

After collecting the data, the shapes and fabrics of the pots were compared with the shapes and fabrics found from the archaeological excavations from the districts of Baroda, Broach and Panchmahals and others parts of Gujarat to give time-depth to these traditions and establish other cultural correlates.
SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For knowing the history of potters' craft we have two
types of sources :

(1) Archaeological

(2) (a) Literary
     (b) Epigraphic and Palaeographic.

Archaeological sources are the most useful ones for
knowing the history of the potters' craft. In India, the
pottery forms and shapes were found in the earliest layers
in the excavation from late stone age and chalcolithic
sites and from the neolithic levels. These discoveries
indicate the long standing ceramic traditions in India.

In Gujarat, however, the evidence of pottery making is
found right from the microlithic-chalcolithic period. The
pottery of this period especially on site like Langhnaj is
called microlithic pottery.¹ From different excavated sites
the ceramics of different periods were obtained. The
excavation reports were used as primary sources for the
comparative work. The original sherds were also studied for
this work.

¹ Sankalia, H.D.: Excavation at Langhnaj. Deccan College,
1965, p.50.
Besides the excavated evidences of potters' craft we also find evidences in literary works of ancient India. The literature of this period contains numerous references to potters in incidental ways. Because this literature either is purely religious or pertains to different branches of secular learning like polity and grammar. Some of the Brahmanana works and the Aranyak works, the early Buddhist literature, the Astadhyayi of Panini, the Kautilya Arthashastra etc. are very helpful.2

Panini refers to 'Kulal' and 'Kaulalika' which means potters and the earthenware respectively.3 Patanjali4 gives more details regarding the potters. He mentions that the people went to the potters for giving orders for earthenwares of their own likings. Besides the ordinary potters, who were throwing small vessels, there were skilled potters

2 Brajdeo Prasad Roy: "Literary References to Pottery", in Potters in Ancient India, ed. by B.P. Sinha, Patna University, Patna, 1969, pp.26-269.
3 Astadhyayi of Panini, 4,3, 168; quoted by Brajdeo Prasad Roy, ibid.
known as the 'Mahakumbhakaras' to mould big jars and other types of big earthen ware. In Prabandhachintamani of Merutung, two words have been mentioned for the potters. Here also the first word is 'Kulal', meaning potters as mentioned in Astadhyayi of Panini. But the second word is 'purakumbhakara' meaning 'potters of the city'. It indicates that potters were divided into two guilds i.e., as city potters and common potters. The general term for a potters in the Jain literature is 'Bhandara'. Jain monks often stayed with potters and observed many things regarding their craft. The potters workshop was known as 'Karmasala'. 'Kumbhapaka' was the place where the earthenware were baked. Fuels were stored in 'indhanhala', burnt earthenwares were stored in 'Bhandsala' and 'panyasala' was the shop in which pots were kept for sale.

Besides the vessels and pots, the mother goddess, human and animal figurines are also found as terracotta objects from the ancient period. The purpose of these terracotta objects are manifold. It was for various ceremonies that

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5 Prabandha Chintamani of Merutung, edited by Jinavijaya Muni, p.77. Quoted from Brajdeo Prasad Roy, Ibid.
terracotta objects were specially used, though their interest was more among juvenile folk. Preparation and use of the toys for such purposes is graphically described by Bana in the context of the marriage of princess Rajyasri in the Harshcharita. "Auspicious pictures were being painted by a band of clever artists. Terracotta figurines of fish, tortoise, crocodile, coconut and areca palms and plantain trees were being prepared by host of modellers." This picturesque description of terracottas figurines prepared and coloured is also supported by a passage from the Sakuntala. In this connection it may be remembered that the popularity of the terracotta work is understood by such instances, as Salyahan who is called Ghitrasva in the Mahabharat had a passion for preparing clay figurines of horses, and Sativahana, the rival of Vikramaditya prepared a whole army of clay horses and elephants.

Besides the literary books, there are also epigraphic and palaeographic evidences which throw light on the potters and their craft. In the inscription of Mauryan time, there is one passage which casts valuable sidelight on the

7 Harshcharita IV, p.142, quoted from Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No.73, p.96.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
flourishing state of the ceramic industry. 10

In the Mathura inscription of the time of Huvuiska his feudatory is said to have set up a 'punyasala' (charity house) where a hundred Brahmins were to be fed everymonth, and where a certain measure of powdered grains, sauces and earthen water jars and drinking cups (goblets) were to be kept daily at the gate for feeding the orphans and the needy. 11

A potters guild is referred to in the Kaman inscription. 12 The Nasik inscription of Madhariputra Isvarsena also refers to a 'sreni' (guild) of 'kularikas' (potters) functioning in the district. 13 While the Kuruspal inscription of Somesvara refers to a potters' colony 'Kumbharvad'. 14 The Maller inscription of King Jayalladdeva-II presents a very beautiful picture of a 'mangala kumbha' set up on the eve of god's worship. 15 Siva's head has been described as the auspicious jar, the matted locks of his hair as the mango leaves placed upon the jar, the third eye burning on

11 Epigraphia Indica (E), Vol.XXI, p.60 ft.
12 Ibid, No.1137.
13 Ibid, XXIV, p.329 ft.
14 Epigraphica Indica, X, No.4, 1.27
15 Ibid, Vol.XXI.
his forehead as the lighted flame of a lamp fixed on a stand, and the streams of the Ganges river on his head as the water covering the jar. The Tirumakkudal inscription of Veera Rajendra Subrahmanya (11th cent. A.D.) speaks of having fixed one hundred and eight 'Kalasa' of clay, draped with clothes, before a goddess on the occasion of the King's birthday.

Such practice of placing Kalasa covered with pieces of red cloth before the image of Durga is still followed and is known as 'Kumbha Sthapana'. A verse in the Deopara inscription of King Vijayasena, a ruler of Sena dynasty of Bengal, describes as to how a poet became impressed by the beauty of the goddess Kalasa 'Kumbha', fixed on the 'Shikhara' of the Pradyamnesvar temple. It also presents a nice picture of a Bengal potter, some nine hundred years ago, sitting at his wheel, turning and placing a lump of clay at its centre, fashioning pots of various forms by the application of his hands. The Chebrolu inscription of Jaya mentions a potter having been assigned certain measure of land for supplying earthen vessels for local temple. All these evidences suggest that the tradition of potters' craft continues from a very long period.

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
PREVIOUS WORK

It may be stated that no particular work has been done in this field, which throws light on this aspect of potters and their craft. However, related type of works have been done in India and abroad to study the ethnographic parallels available in the regions concerned and their correlation with the archaeological data. In the natural sciences it is a recognised practice to understand the past with the help of present. In archaeology itself the utility of this approach has been understood in the West ever since the earliest days of archaeological research in the last century.19 This approach was, perhaps, first utilised on an ambitious scale by W.J. Sollas in his study of the stone age culture.20

In the present century the comparative methods have been further developed by European and British archaeologists. The possibilities of this type of research was first hinted by Prof. Haimendorf in 1948, when on the basis of his own first hand study of Hill Reddis of Andhra Pradesh,


Gonds of Madhya Pradesh etc., he showed, how the tribes in this group preserved their culture and the life of the prehistoric food gathering and early food producing countries. Further this approach has been utilised by Allchin in his study of the neolithic ash mounds of the Deccan. Recently this method has been utilized by Malti Nagar in her research work on Ahar Culture. She has tried to reconstruct the culture of Ahar on the basis of cultural and ethnographic study of the present-day indigenous people of Mewar in Rajasthan.

As for the potters and their craft are concerned, we do not have any detailed work. However, in this field, some work has been done by Anthropological Survey of India, to collect a broadway data about potters' craft. This work is very general in character, because all India data has been collected. Besides this work, some work has been done by Eberhard Fisher and Hakku Shah in a village in Saurashtra.

For the reference for this study, the above mentioned books have been referred to. Besides these works, a number

of published books, Excavation Reports, India Archaeological, a Review, Ancient India, Census of India Reports, old and new Gazetteers and many journals in English and Gujarati have been used in addition to data collected from the field. In general, many works of other Indian and foreign scholars and institutions on archaeology, sociology and cultural anthropology have been referred to in all the chapters.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

One does not have any detailed data about the potters and their craft from the area under study. However, some scattered data about potters and their craft are available which throw light on their existence. But one does not know about their, socio-economic condition and their craft technology.

The study of the socio-economic conditions of the present day potters groups, their craft, technology and production and its comparison with the pot-sherds found from various excavated sites of Gujarat, has revealed very interesting data.

This study shows that potters are one of the oldest
craftsmen in this region. These potters have divided themselves in nine social groups, and all the groups in general are known as 'Kumbhar'. Most of the potters' groups have a mythical traditions which relates their origin to 'Brahma' the creator of the world. Potters are the followers of Hindu and Muslim religions. Among Hindu potters, ten sects have been noticed, but they are not very rigid about their sects.

All the groups of potters, have marital relations among their own group which is known as 'nat'. It has a territorial division for the purposes of marriage, known as 'goda'. It is an endogamous group. One cannot marry outside the 'goda'. For observance of the rules and regulations of 'godas' they have a body known as 'Goda Panchayat'. The work of 'Goda Panchayat' is to solve the problems and disputes among the members of 'goda' and look after their interest.

Their rituals and ceremonies do not differ much from other local people. Their house pattern and way of living is like an ordinary village person.

Migration among the potters, is very common. They never hesitate to migrate anywhere, if they get good opportunities. Among all the groups of potters distance of migration among
'Gurjar' potters is more and among Varia potters it is comparatively less. Among Gurjar group of potters, there is one sub-group of potter known as 'Champaneri potters'. They claim their migration from Champaner. Some of their pots have closed affinities with the pots discovered from Champaner, which supports their tradition of migration.

All the groups of potters have divided themselves into two occupational categories, (a) Vasanwala, those who manufacture pots and (b) Intowala - those who manufacture bricks. Among the Vasanwala occupational category different groups of potters specialize in manufacturing of different types of pots. Expertise in a particular type of pots by a particular group of potters, helps to identify the potters group which might have produced the pot. The production of the pots depends on the availability of raw-material and manpower in the household. In their craft, division of labour at various levels plays an important role.

Tradition of potters craft in this region has been traced right from the Chalcolithic period. Tools of the potters are traditional and for manufacturing the pots they use traditional wheel, though handmade pots are also prepared by women. For firing the pots they mostly use
open kiln. Both techniques of oxidation and reduction are used by the potters for manufacturing the pots.

Shapes of the pots are mostly designed according to function of the pot. Most of these pots are traditional in shape, but a few new varieties are also found. Various types of designs have been found on the present day pots. Tradition of some of the designs have been traced right from the Chalcolithic period. Depiction of faunal motif on the pots are rare, though few types of faunal motifs have been traced, i.e. insects, birds, fish and human figures. Such type of highly decorated pots are generally found in the tribal villages, as these people have a preference for such types of pots. But in higher economic groups, people prefer plain pots. Colour of the pots, shapes of the pots and designs on the pots indicate the tastes of the people of that area and their way of living.

At present this traditional craft is not very much profitable for modern living and therefore new generation of potters do not like the craft. Due to advent of new ceramic industries and metal vessels, most of the people do not like such traditional clay pots. Except water vessels,
almost all pots are used by poor people of the villages. It is also one of the reasons why potters are among the poorer lot. These above mentioned reasons do not encourage the potters to continue their work, and thus this craft is declining.

It is interesting to note that there is much movement of the potters, but that does not get reflected with fine details in their craft so that a detailed investigation of the producer is possible. Archaeology that reflects the products helps in understanding many aspects of culture and ceramic change, but when it comes to the understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the producers tales remain untold.

Many types of information presented by the living generation, when investigated by field-methods, indicate that it is not possible to trace them in archaeology on the interpretative side, as similar objects are used for many ideas and practices.

However archaeological data present many types of ceramics that are either unknown or forgotten along with the known are brought to light and it helps one to clearly understand the steady and changing patterns of cultural cheroseuro.