

TU BAHUT KHOOB HAI

WORKSHOP ON DESIGN FOR FILM AND TV, 1998



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INTRODUCTION

The making of a film is not very unlike the mechanism of a clock. Working away furiously, secretly, the various little grooves and parts make the clock tick incessantly.

Such is production, one of the most vital aspects of film making. The course introduced us to the various nuances of production, planning, management, scheduling and actually handling the shoot with actors, sets, costumes and props. What was initially a video project became interdisciplinary with the roping in of the apparel students who handled the costumes and the general look of the film.

Days of scheduling and rescheduling, evenings spent arguing over scripts, sleepless nights spent making accessories, fashioning terra-cotta toys, making sets...over ruffled feathers, bruised egos, numerous cups of chai and a whole lot of new friends...

This course has made us all sit up, notice and appreciate any endeavour at making a film before dismissing it as bad.

THE STORY

The central theme of the story ,we unanimously decided would talk about being an Indian and the plethora of contradictions, confusions, convictions and emotions that come with it.

The story is about seeking the Indian identity , symbolized by a woman. A search through the ages for a woman who is surrounded by an aura of mystery, yet plainly visible, common...a seductress, enchanting yet distant, unattainable...a source of inspiration.

The three time periods depicted in the story are the Harappan civilization, the Khilji dynasty and the National movement. In each of the periods, the central characters take on different roles. The film starts with two journalists who seek shelter in a *kabaadi khaana* to escape curfew. With every discovery of an object they are transported to another time period...

A craftsman in the Harappan age inspired by the woman as he slips bangles on to her hands. As she admires herself, the craftsman struck by her beauty, creates the figurine of the dancing girl.

The same character takes on the role of Amir Khusro in the Khilji period ,who chances upon a *rangrezan* who accidentally spills color on his robe. His white robe is splashed with color, the man is fascinated by the woman and is inspired to write poetry.

A young freedom fighter in the National movement is almost caught by the British as he distributes anti-British material, only to be saved in the nick of time by a young girl. She takes the package from him and cradles it to her bosom rocking it as if it were her baby...the police pass them by taking them to be a couple.

The scene then returns to present day and ends with students performing *Garba* together on the NID lawns.



Journalist



Journalist

HARAPPA

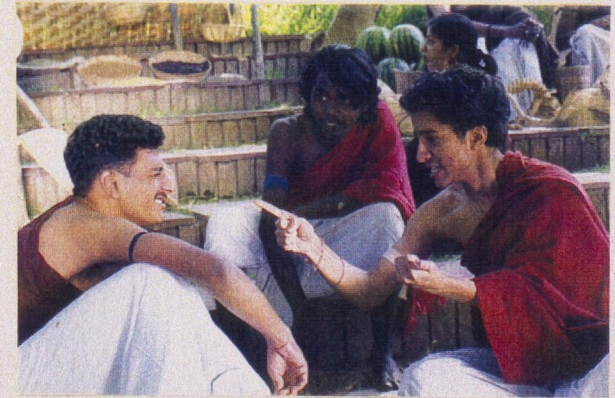
Indus valley civilization was the first civilization of South Asia that emerged about 2600 BC , It was the greatest of the Bronze age civilizations. This ancient civilization flourished between 2500 and 1800 BC on the banks of the river Indus. The two cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro had a population of 40,000 or more. They traded metals, semi precious stones, timber etc. with Mesopotamia. The streets of Harappa boasted of impressive mudbrick walls, like a citadel with public buildings and granaries, efficient drainage and sewerage systems . Houses were built to standard plan and different social classes and occupations were assigned different quarters of the city. The people were literate , but the pictographic script has not been deciphered yet.

LOCATION FOR THE SHOOT

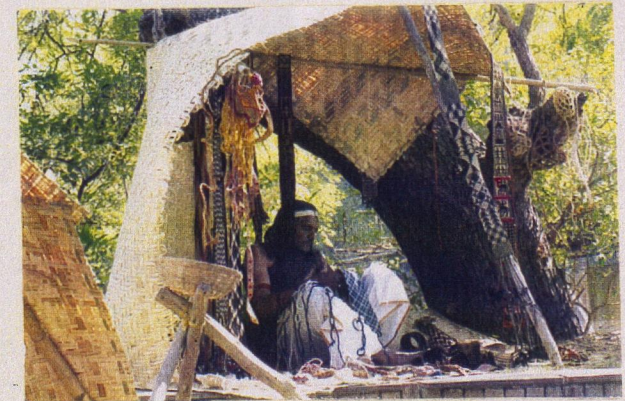
During our recess we found a somewhat ideal location at Patan, but we were faced with a lot of practical problems of production, such as setting up of sets, transportation of actors, props, structures etc. which made us chose NID as the place to recreate a similar ambience. We chose the amphitheater steps to symbolize the main feature of the architecture of Harappa.

THE SETS

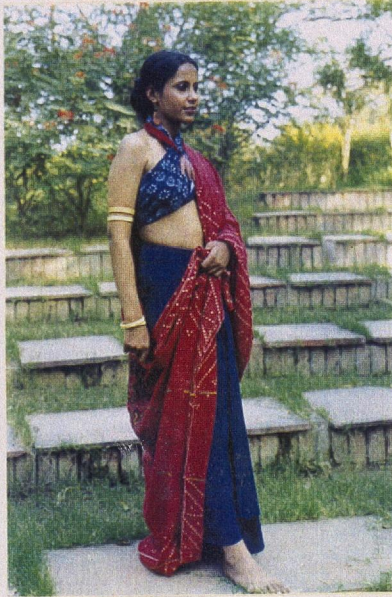
We wished to create the ambience of a *mela*. Simple structures were constructed to resemble makeshift shops. Bamboo poles, hay, mats were used as the basic building materials. The basic forms of the shops were triangular, square or a simple semi circular roof made from a mat. We hired watermelons, pulses and cereals, vegetables and collected other odds and ends to make the other shops. There was a textiles shop, a camel belt shop, baskets and a terra-cotta goods snop. We used the steps to advantage with various shops at different levels.



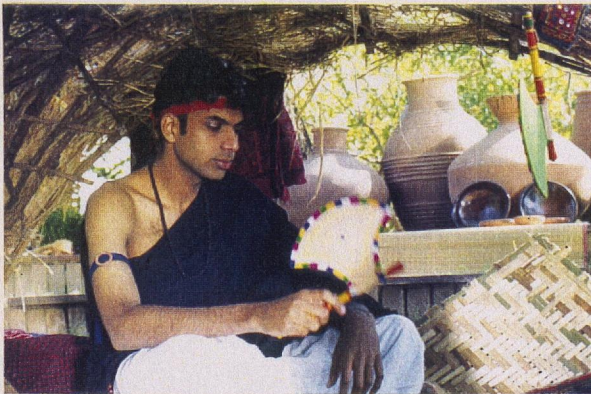
A bazaar scene



Camel belt shop



The dancing girl



The craftsman

COSTUMES AND ACCESSORIES

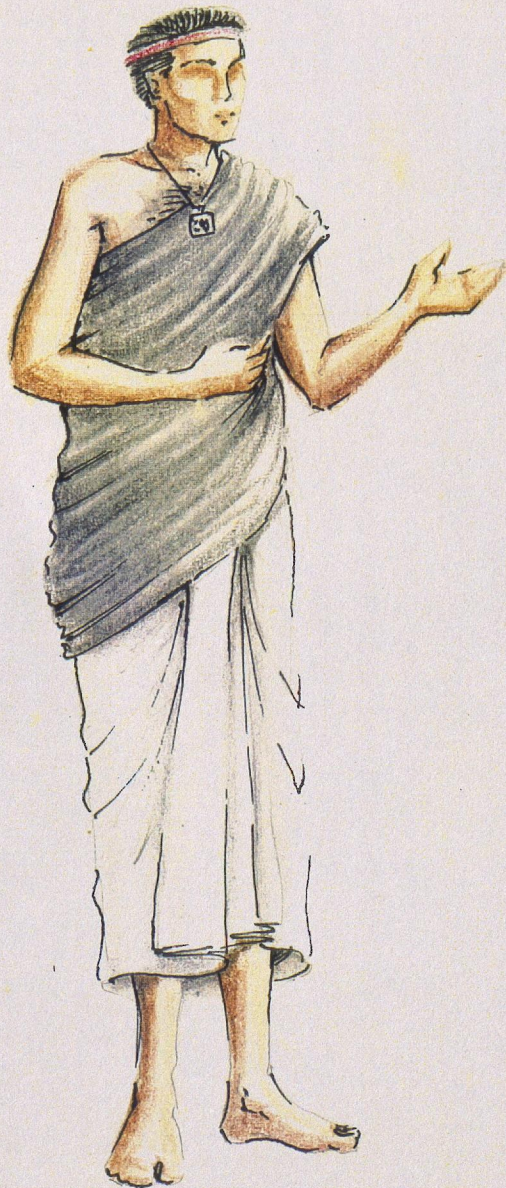
In the Harappan period evidence of woven fabric, especially cotton being used as numerous spindle whorls and few cotton scraps is found. Most of the figurines which we took as our basic reference are nude but few of them are represented to be wearing a long shawl drawn over the left shoulder. With the exception of the jewellery women figures are nude to the waist. The skirt or sari terminates well above the knees and appears to be considerably shorter in the front than behind.

A fan shaped head dress was worn by both the men and the women which were often ornamented but it is not known what kind of material was used to make them. Though the people of the Indus seem to have been curiously backward in the working of metal, several gold beads have been found. Several sites of beads and shell and terra-cotta bangle factories have been discovered.

Based on this research various costumes were developed. Cotton was used as the material. Since the Harappans had knowledge of dyeing techniques and used rich colors we incorporated this into the garments. Cloth with simple block prints were also used. Simple clay jewelry and bead necklaces were made to enhance the look. The women of those times were bare chested, we dressed the characters in bustiers and draped cloth. They also wore amulets and bangles made of clay. After studying the motifs and seals, little toys and knick and knacks were made.

Cowrie shells and beads were used as jewelry.

The men wore dhotis and cloth loosely draped over their shoulders. Simple head bands made of strips of cloth and terra-cotta buckles were also worn by them.



Harappan man (main)



Harappan woman (main)



Harappan priest



Harappan man



Harappan woman

AMIR KHUSRO (1253-1325 AD)

The synthesis between Islam and Hinduism in India is one of the most remarkable developments of South Asia.

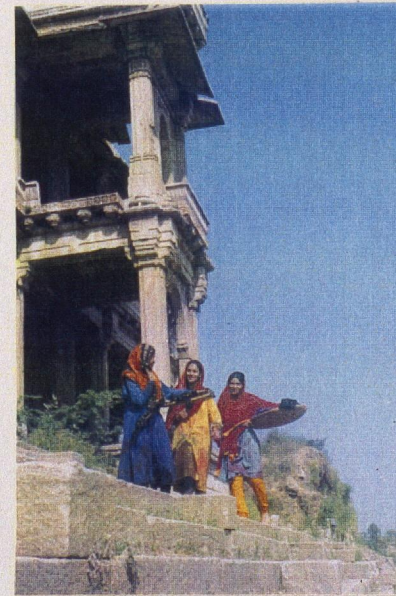
It added to the richness of both cultures producing early on such attractive figures as Amir Khusro, the Indo Persian poet with whom also began the synthesis of Muslim and Indian music. Khusro whose actual name was Yamin-ud-din-Mohamed Hasan was born in 1253 AD at Patiala. He entered the service of Allaudin Khilji as a court poet, but later in his life became the disciple of Shaikh-ud-din-Auliya, abandoned the court and worldly ambitions, and lived in religious retirement, but still wrote poetry. He was a most prolific writer and the estimated number of couplets written by him are around more than 4,00,000.

LOCATION FOR THE SHOOT

We were looking for Islamic architecture, preferably near a water body for which the tomb at Sarkhej seemed ideal. The tomb was built by Shaikh Ahmed Khattu known as Ganj Baksh. Essentially a domed central chamber surrounded by four ranges of pillared corridors, it is the largest of its kind. It was also an ideal location since it has few or no traces of modern interventions.

THE SETS

Though we did not have to create a set here, it took us quite a while to clear the area of any traces of modern influences such as graffiti, paper and polythene bags that were strewn around. The natural ambience of the place proved to be a beautiful backdrop.



Rangrezans at the ghat

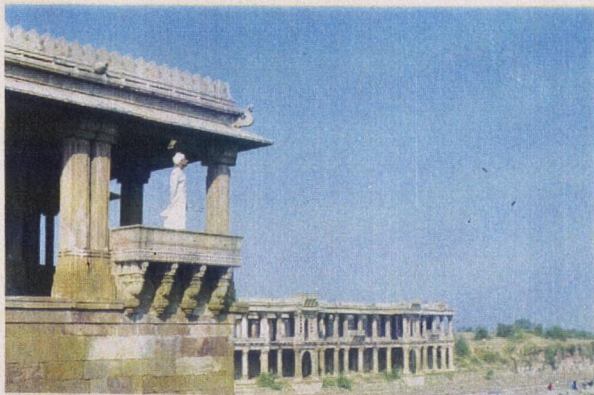


Rangrezans at work

COSTUMES AND ACCESSORIES



Taking a break

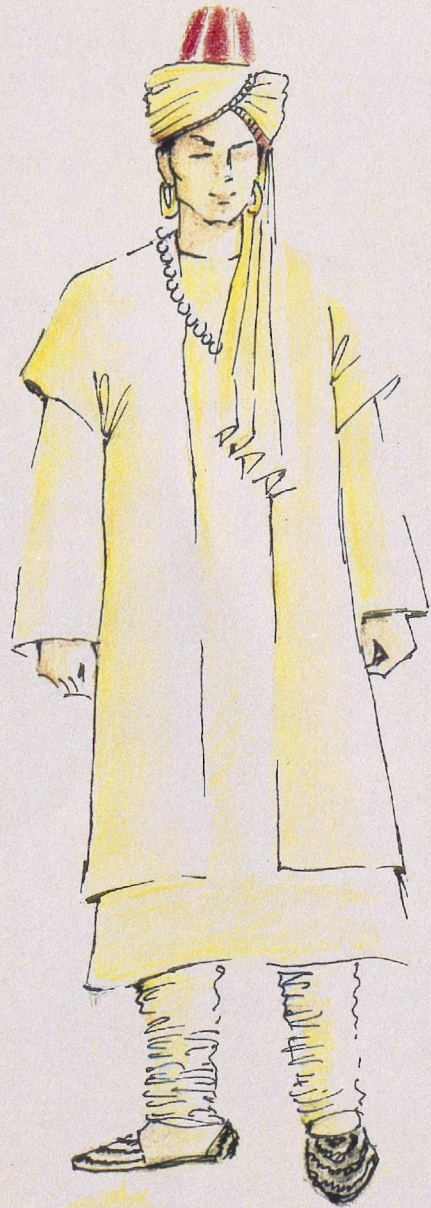


Melancholy Khusro

Research showed that the textile industry in the country then was well developed. A large variety of silk like *zarbaft*, *khazz*, *harir* were imported. The courtesians then wore long coats usually called *jama* which was long enough to descend to the calves. It had long tapering sleeves which had bracelet like gathers. The coat was double breasted with the upper flap coming from the left hand side to the right where it was tied with the strings. The legs were clothed in what was later known as *churidar pyjama*.

The head covering was a four cornered cap called *kulah char turki*. Women wore very tight drawers which were sometimes visible. Over them a high waisted frock like long coat having long tapering and close fitting sleeves were worn. The graceful third item of the ensemble was the scarf or the *dupatta* which used to cover their heads.

With this background information we put together the costumes which consisted of a double breasted *angarakha*, sleeveless robe, *churidar pyjama* and a turban made of muslin for Amir Khusro. The *rangrezans* were dressed in long *kurtas* with panels, *churidar pyjama* and *dupattas* in contrasting colours keeping in mind the existing dyes in that period. A touch of *kajal* to their eyes and accessories like the *tabeez* added to the look.



Amir Khusro



Rangrezan (main)



Rangrezan

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The Indian national movement was undoubtedly one of the biggest mass movements modern society has ever seen. It was a movement which galvanized millions of people of all classes and ideologies into political action. The movement spans the period from 1857 to 1947. The momentum of the freedom struggle became furious with the launch of the Satyagraha and Civil disobedience movement headed by Gandhiji. In the year 1930 alone over 60,000 people were arrested.

LOCATION FOR THE SHOOT

Gandhigram station

A station which has retained its quaint charm from the British times. The benches, the waiting room, the signalling system are ghosts of the past that linger even today. Less crowded with fewer trains halting there, it was an ideal location for us.

THE SETS

The location set the stage by itself. We had to remove any modern looking posters etc. on the walls. Since we shot through the night we weren't too disturbed by people. Occasionally a train would roll in which we incorporated into the script. Initially the shoot was to take place inside a train but for ease of production and various red tape we had the shoot restricted to the platform.



Midnight shoot



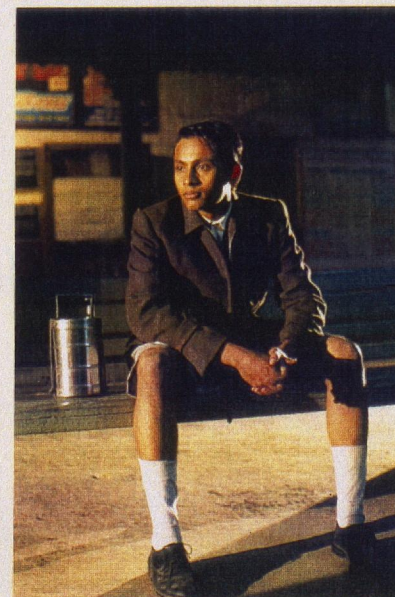
Time to eat

COSTUMES AND ACCESSORIES

During the 1930's Gandhi, Nehru and Jinha became household names. The costumes during these times were very much influenced by Gandhi and his *Khadi* movement, though traces of European dress existed in the aristocratic families. Young men who participated in the freedom struggle wore light colored *kurtas* or long shirts reaching the knees with or without a vest. Cotton dhoti or loose pyjamas were worn as the lower garment. White cotton Gandhi cap was worn on the head by some of them.

The costume of the women of the aristocratic families were very much influenced by European dress. Married women and girls started wearing puffed and short sleeved blouses with lace, frills and flounces. Young girls wore light colored plain or checked *khadi* saris with solid borders or *salwaar kameez* with a dupatta draped over both the shoulders.

The Inspector wore a structured full sleeved khaki suit with a leather belt over khadi Jodhpuri trousers with cotton bands and leather boots. A pith helmet was worn as headgear. Indians wore a *khadi* shirt tucked in *khaki* shorts. A *pagdi* was draped around the head. The *coolies* wore a red shirt over a cotton *dhoti* with a railway license number plate tied on the arm.



Just the look



Uniformed villains



Freedom fighter



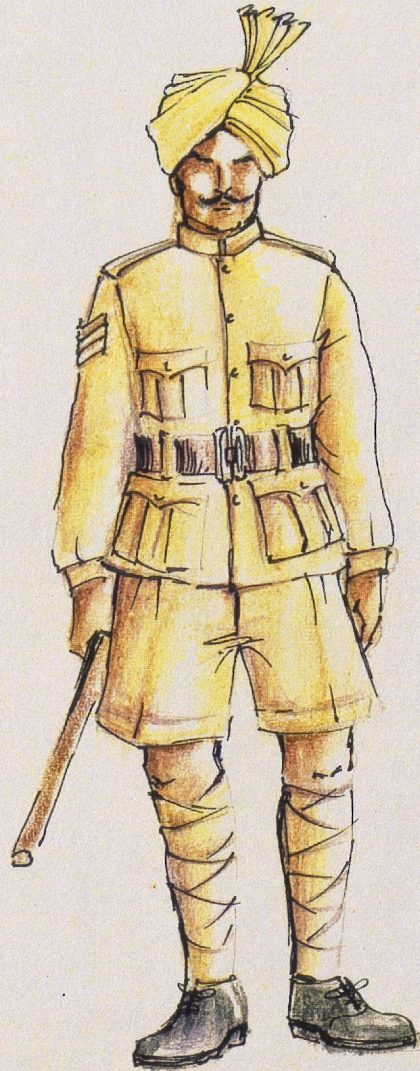
Young lady



Brother



Inspector



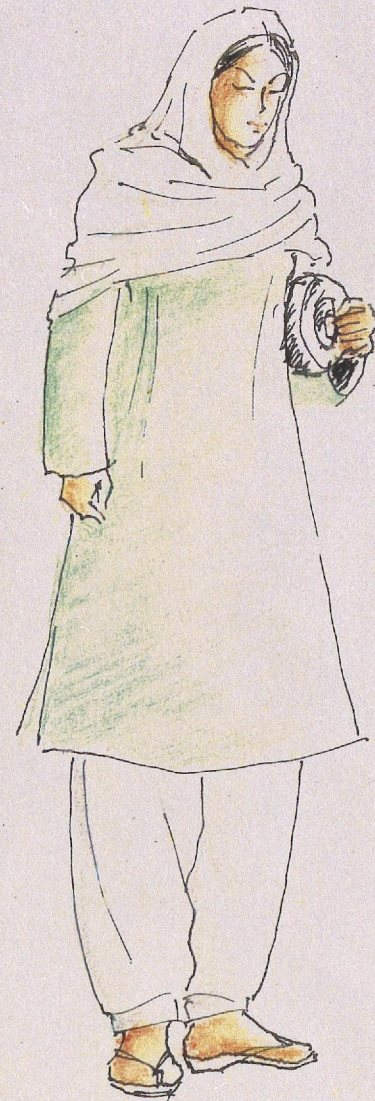
Havaladar



Coolie

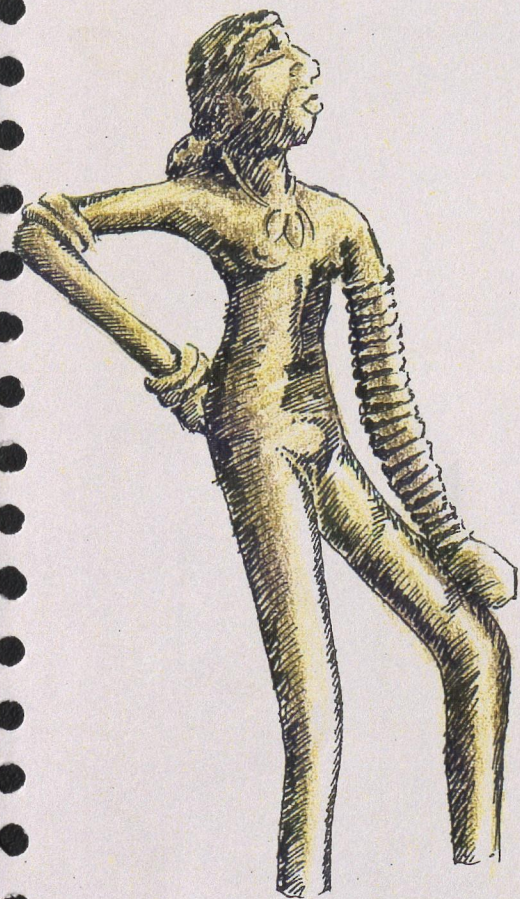


Muslim boy

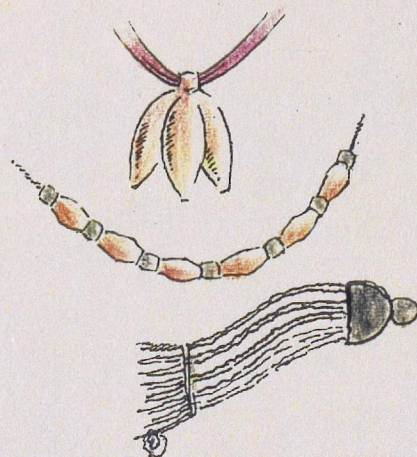


Married woman

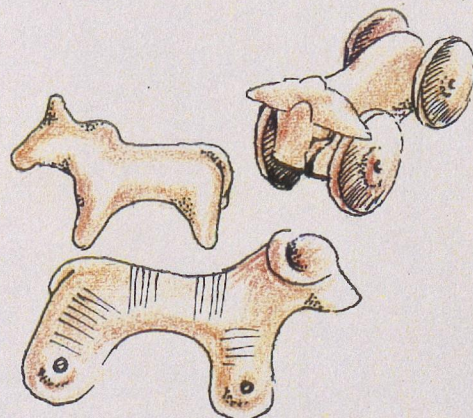
ACCESSORIES



Dancing girl



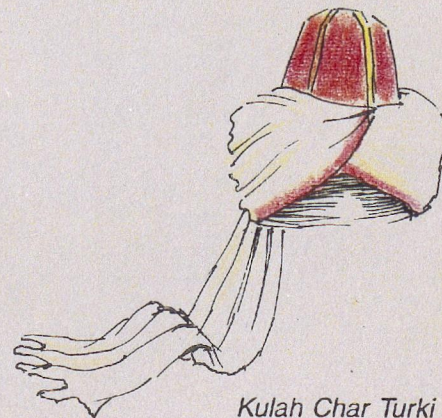
Necklace



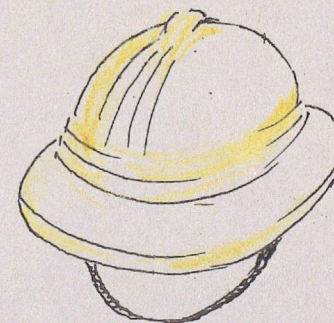
Terra-cotta toys



Amulet



Kulah Char Turki



Pith helmet



Crochet cap

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