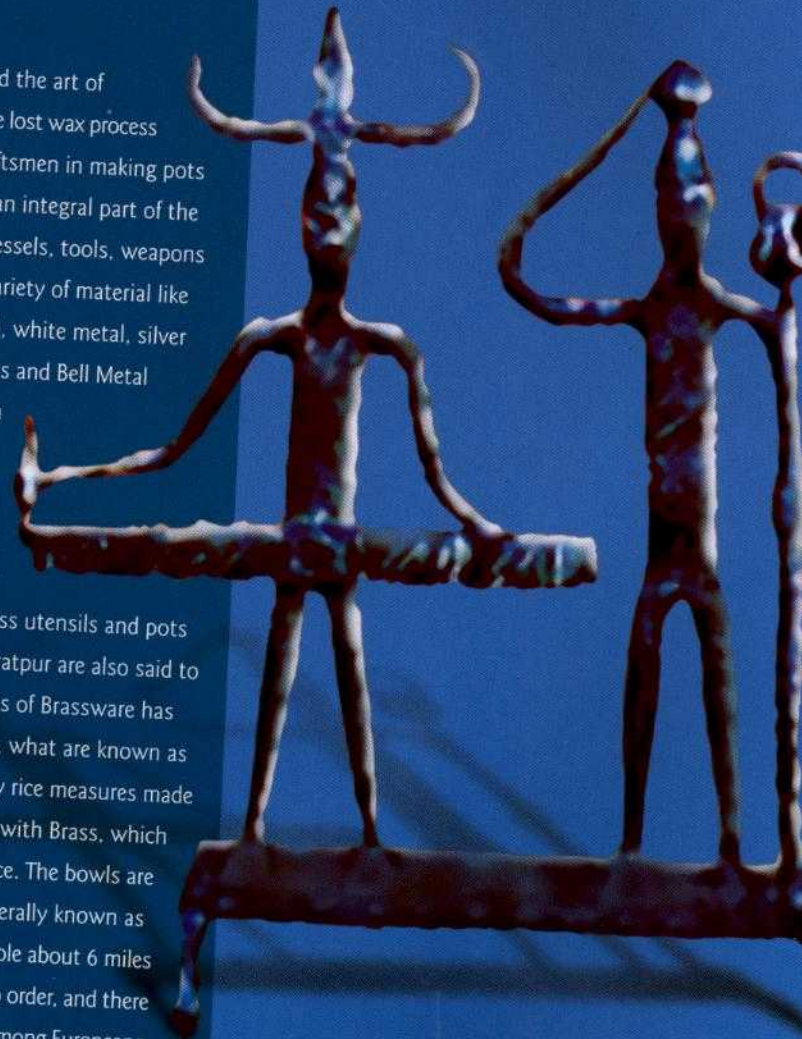


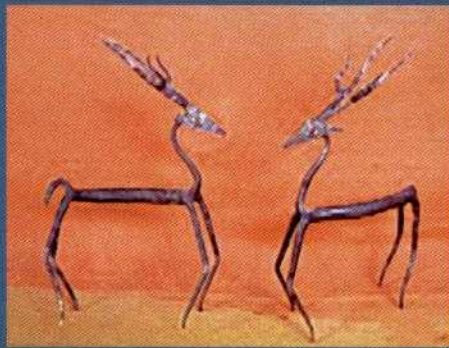
Metal Works

History

Indian craftsmen had mastered the art of metallurgy 5000 years back. The lost wax process was known to the ancient craftsmen in making pots and sculptures. Metal craft is an integral part of the Indian ethos: pots, utensils, vessels, tools, weapons etc have been made out of a variety of material like iron, copper, bronze, bell metal, white metal, silver etc. Brass & Bell Metal ---- Brass and Bell Metal wares of an ordinary description are made in many villages, but the braziers of Dubrajpur and Nalhati turn out articles of a better finish, which find a ready sale outside the district. The Brass utensils and pots of Ilambazar Tikarbetha and Hazratpur are also said to be of a superior quality. One class of Brassware has more than a local reputation, viz, what are known as Pais or Suri bowls. These are really rice measures made of wood, bound and ornamented with Brass, which gives them a handsome appearance. The bowls are manufactured at Lakshnipur (generally known as Lokpur), a village in Thana Khoyrasole about 6 miles south of Rajnagar. They are made to order, and there is a considerable demand for them among Europeans, but as there is only one man who makes them, they are not readily obtainable. They are of various sizes, from 10 seers down to 1 chhatack, and are made in sets. A set of 8 bowls from 10seers to 1 chhatack costs Rs. 46; a set of 7 bowls from 5 seers to 1 chhatack costs Rs. 31; a set from 2.5 seers downwards (6 bowls) costs Rs. 19; and a set from 1 seer downwards (5 bowls) costs Rs. 11. The general public use bowls of 1 seer and less for domestic purposes.

[Ref. Birbhumi Birbhum Editor- Barun Roy, DM, Birbhum Vol-2, 2004]





Tikarbata : The main products is 'Ghara' or Pitcher. The pitchers are of different kinds grade as per the specification of production, viz, 'Sarbasundari', 'Golghara', Simulia Ghara' etc. 'Sarba sundari ghara' is the indigenous product of Tikarbata. At present around 70-80 houses are engaged in this craft.

Patharkuchi : This village has the oldest history of Brass & Bell metal work. The artisans are innovators of 'Rajrajeswari' and 'Helenchi' types of bell metal plate (thala). Now 60-70 families are engaged in this craft.

Hazaratpur : This village excels in preparing bell metal bowls without using machines. The products are known as 'Namuna bati', 'Kankha bati', 'Patla bati' etc. 50-60houses are now engaged in this craft.

Lokepur : This area has the unique production of measuring bowls known as 'Seer'. At present 10-12 families are continuing in this work. The speciality of the measure bowls is excellent brass work over wooden pot/ seer, these are worth looking and exquisite.

Simulia : It has an old history and gharana in brass work. The pots are of round shape and hand made, no use of machine. The name of main product has been given in the name of the village i.e. 'Simule Ghara'. 15-16 families are engaged in this work.

Nalhati : 'Khagrai bogi' and bowls are prepared here. This craft is drowning into oblivion. Only 6 families are continuing this traditional craft.

Apart from these places this craft exists in a scattered fashion in Dubrajpur, Jaydeb, Nanoor, Laubere etc. that are sold in local market and in Bolpur and Guskara..

(Source: Extracts from --- Bengal District gazetteers – LSS O'Malley.)

Dhokra Metal Casting

The Dhokra Kamar tribes are the traditional metalsmiths of West Bengal. They follow a technique of metal casting known as Dhokra, named after the tribe. A look at these artefacts makes you believe that they have been made out of a single piece of wire wound around a piece of clay. But that is not the case. The object is cast in metal, using what is known as the lost- wax technique. The artefacts are ritual objects and their themes are mostly animals, jewellery, and icons of gods and goddesses. The Dhokras make many varieties of diyas (lamps) that are both single and multiple. Some of the lamps are mounted on elephant back.

Amongst the trinkets made by these artisans, payeri (anklets), hansuli (necklace), earrings and bangles are most abundant. Besides these, some of the knickknacks are also made by these artisans. The Dhokra Kamar tribes are part of the same family, which includes the Malhars of Jharkhand and Sithrias of Orissa (metal craftsmen). The West Bengal metal workers, known as the Dhokras and the Dheppons inhabit the districts of Bankura, Midnapore, Purulia, Birbhum and Burdwan.

The Dhokra metal casting is perhaps the only living tradition of metal image making in Eastern India. The technique has managed to survive many centuries and change of dynasties owing to its modesty of application in everyday lives of ordinary people. Today, with the modernization setting in and the lifestyle of the tribal changing with time, the Dhokra metal craft is slowly fading away.

Product range

ornament set, necklace, special necklace, earring, locket and decorative items

Price range

Ornaments	20-100(in Rs.)
Decorative items	200-2500(in Rs.)