

Gandhara civilisation in Pakistan

PAKISTAN is endowed with some of the rarest civilisations and cultures spanning over thousands of years. The much-famed Harappan Civilisation that flourished here in the Indus Valley

roughly between mid-third and mid-second millennia BC is termed as unique and stands out among its contemporaneous cultures of the world. With its decay, the localised cultures continued to flourish while



a new type of powerful culture called Gandhara developed in north-eastern Pakistan about the middle of the 1st millennium BC to around 7th century AD, famous for its refined art and Buddhist architecture.

Gandhara is generally taken as the region comprising of most of the areas of what now is North West Frontier Province of Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan. In the past, the area beginning from the junction of the river Kabul and the river Indus, including Taxila, had also been known as 'Charene'. The first mention of Gandhara in the historical literature (in the Bisutun inscription of Darius) shows it as part of the Achaemenian Empire in the times of Cyrus the Great (558-28 BC). It had a major role as the channel of communication with Iran and Central Asia. Gandhara was invaded by Alexander the Great in the winter of 327 BC.

In the early seventh century AD its

mention is found in the account of the Chinese Pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang who visited the Buddhist sites in this region. In the 5th century BC, Gandhara is mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus as one of the wealthiest territories. He further noted that it served as source in providing the forces for the Persian King Xerxes in his battles against the Greeks. In fact Gandhara by then had become a melting pot of Persian and South Asian Vedic traditions, while its capital was at Taxila, which then was also a great seat of higher learning.

In the 3rd century BC the Mauryan king Asoka, a convert to Buddhism, was for a time governor of Gandhara. During his reign the region also converted to Buddhism and, according to some scholars, it could have been here that the Mahayana Buddhism (in contrast to the earlier Theravada Buddhism) began to emerge. The proof of the proclamation of Buddha's Law in Gandhara is

amply clear from the edicts of Asoka on a rock boulder at Shahbazgarhi in the Mardan district in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. The gradual decline of the Mauryan Empire following the death of Asoka in 232 BC again opened the region to foreign aggression.

Gandhara under the Kushans' patronage developed as a centre for Buddhism around 64 AD. Even long afterwards it continued to draw Buddhist pilgrims from all over the South Asian Subcontinent and also China. It is known for not only giving the region a powerful rule but also maintaining contacts with the Roman Empire of Augustus.

The most famous of all the Kushan rulers was Kanishka, who became a convert to Buddhism like Asoka before him. His zeal for the newly adopted religion is evident from the numerous monasteries and stupas, the tomblike structures

containing the relics of the Buddha or of Buddhist saints, built by him throughout the length and breadth of his empire.

It was especially during the period of Kushan that a style of Buddhist art known as Gandharan developed in the region. It was also this period to which are attributed the best pieces of sculptural art. The architectural activities of Gandhara of this period occupy the same prominent position as its fascinating art. 'Blending Hellenistic and Indian influences, the style depicted Buddha in human form for the first time, often with features resembling the Greek god Apollo and a Persian solar disk, or halo'. Although the Buddha himself never visited Gandhara, the texts composed by

Buddhist sages under the Kushans made the region a genuinely holy land of Buddhism.

The Huns swept over Gandhara and the Punjab in the third quarter of the fifth century, which led to the fall of the Buddhist Empire in this region. Thanks to the archaeologists' spade that these sites were retrieved from under the earth in the twentieth century as treasures of the past.

Padmasambhava (717-762)

In the Swat Valley of present-day Pakistan, the legendary Buddhist figure Padmasambhava is said to have incarnated as an 8 year old child appearing in a lotus blossom floating in Lake Dhanakosha. In Bhutan and Tibet he is better

known as Guru Rinpoche ('Precious Master') where followers of the Nyingma school regard him as the second Buddha.

Padmasambhava (Sanskrit for 'born of the lotus flower'), is credited by popular belief with the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet in the mid-8th century. He was a member of the Vijnanavada (Consciousness Vehicle) school of Mahayana Buddhism. He also practiced Tantrism, a sect of Buddhism that emphasizes the use of symbolic models and sacred chants in worship. He is said to have had many books translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan, and buried texts written by him were unearthed in Tibet from the 11th century onwards. He is a highly revered personage both in Tibet and Bhutan.

Textile sector of Pakistan

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Blended yarn in the spinning sector augurs well for the PSF sector. The increased usage of PSF in the textile made ups and improved PSF blending ratio could give further boost to the already growing PSF sector. Pakistan has a range of light to heavy fabrics, all kinds of blending is done with imported yarns. The fabric is used for home textiles and all kinds of apparel.

Fabric Industry: In the early years, the integrated units having their own ginning as well as spinning facilities dominated the export of fabric from Pakistan. With the changes in the tax structures, labour laws and also economies of scale, the integrated units lost their viability leading to the development of independent power loom weaving sector. The share of independent weaving units in the total exports increased over time. More than 25% of the textile and clothing exports from Pakistan comprise of woven fabrics which includes both the pure cotton and the blended fabrics.

In order to analyse the product mix of Pakistan exports, the exports are classified into five different fabric types depending upon the extent of processing involved. Only the denim category represents a different fabric type, which is also assumed to be exported after processing.

In the unbleached fabric sector, Pakistan is present in almost all the product segments, based on the processing of fabric. About 40% of the fabric is exported from Pakistan without any processing (unbleached). Comparing it with the global exports, the market segment of the unbleached fabric is 22% of the total exports. In Bleached Fabric sector, the share is 15% of Pakistan exports.

Pakistan's Dyed Fabric segment has a 14% share in the total exports. In the global fabric market, dyed fabric is one of the biggest categories with total export. The average growth of dyed fabric exports from Pakistan has been 27% over a period

of five years. This phenomenon of growth can be associated with the BMR of the existing dyeing facilities in the country and establishment of a couple of large size dyeing units during the same time which facilitated the growth of exports through value addition. The dyed fabric market being the biggest in all fabric types makes it easier for Pakistan to penetrate further. Whereas, for other segments such as unbleached, bleached and printed fabrics, Pakistan already has a decent share which will be difficult to increase if the existing product mix pattern is followed.

Similarly Denim Fabric is an equal shareholder as that of dyed fabric in the global fabric trade is the denim and calendered fabric category. Coarse cotton yarn is used in denim fabric manufacturing and Pakistan has a competitive advantage in the coarse counts as most of the spinning units are optimised on 20-count manufacturing.

Ready-made Garments and Hosiery: Pakistan's thriving textile manufacturing industry has spawned a burgeoning garment industry. As such it enjoys strong support from the government which is keen to foster the sector's growth. The government's Textile Vision 2005 study provided much of the thinking behind future development. The aim is to make Pakistan one of Asia's top five textiles and clothing exporting nations. At present there are 700 knitwear units with 15,000 knitting machines, and 4,000 garment units with 160,000 industrial and 450,000 domestic sewing machines.

Ready-made garments in a wide variety of styles, sizes and colours are produced and exported to many parts of the world. Local designers have a keen eye on the international market in producing garments with a variety of influences, classic, modern, eastern, western or a combination of eastern/western traditions. Cotton knits and hosiery are available in fine quality, excel-

lent fit and style for maximum comfort. Standard international sizes and specifications are generally in use in garment manufacturers but the industry shows a remarkable degree of adaptability in meeting the specific requirements of foreign buyers. The export of knitwear as a ready-made garment category has been very remarkable and has gone up from US\$75 million in 1980-81, to US\$3,061 million in 2005-06. However, garments also include the knitwear dresses which are 90% of the total knitwear export. The share of the garment export is thus 16.9% in the total export and 25.1% in the textile export. The 25.1% share appears to be an impressive improvement in a few years.

Pakistan's share in the total world export is about 2%. Considering the rising population and job creating potential of the garment industry, investment in the garment sector is increasing. Pakistan is a key cotton grower and has a strong textile industry. These facts open a lot of opportunities to gain a greater share in the world market. One important and yet inexpensive element for achievement of this goal is the training of the technical and management personnel at all levels to attain better quality, higher productivity and machine efficiency and attracting attention of planners and scientists. Thus many textile institutes and universities have been opened to cater to the growing demands of skilled labour in the industry. Realizing the imperative need of apparel specific technical training, Export Promotion Bureau, Government of Pakistan (EPB) and Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA), i.e. the Garment Industry itself established Pakistan Readymade Garments Technical Training Institute (PRGTI) in 1995. The Institute is contributing towards the apparel industry in the form of Trained and Skilled manpower established and

high placement ratio of their trained students in the industry. The trained and skilled man and women are presently working in almost all the leading Woven and Knitwear Garment Industries. The salaries being drawn by the trained men and women are comparatively higher than the fresh people inducted directly with no specific training. The Textile University, Textile Institute and Fashion Design Institutes are also providing trained personnel to the industry. In 2006, the export value of the readymade garment sector increased by 2.5% from the previous year (period Jul-Dec.)

Bed-wear and Bed Linen: Bed-wear is an important value-added sub-sector of textile sector. The products include bed sheets, pillow covers, quilts etc. amongst all the made ups, bed-wear is the largest sector in terms of production and exports. Pakistan is an important exporter of bed-wear in the world. Main driver for the development of this industry in Pakistan is the existence of locally manufactured power looms sector. This factor led to developing a competitive edge for the bed-wear industry and the industry grew at a rapid pace.

The Asian continent claims a major share in the bed-wear trade, Pakistan ranking second in the world in exports of Bed Linen. 80% of the total Asian exports were accounted by just China and Pakistan. Pakistan has captured very decent market shares in two major categories. The tilt of the Pakistani industry is towards cotton-based products, with cotton non-knit and knit bed linen. However, with a very healthy growth rate of 18% in non-cotton category, it can be predicted that Pakistan will be getting its due share in exports of non-cotton Bed Linen products also.

Towels: Pakistan holds second position in the global exports of towels with 8% market share. Pakistan Towel Industry is presently contributing a substantial share to the export exchange. Standard sizes are being produced but manufacturers are ever willing to accommodate the specific requirements of international buyers. Bed linen of the finest quality is available for the export market. Colour texture and design are sophisticated and contemporary. Major export market for Pakistan's towel products are the USA, UK, Germany, UAE and Sweden.

Handloom: The handloom weaves of Pakistan have been spinning their magic for generations. Cotton and silk fabrics produced today carry on centuries old tradition in design and craftsmanship incorporating modern quality and design techniques. The weavers are not only expert craftsmen, but artists who capture the spirit of the past in the unique traditional designs through bold use of colours and textures. There is also an enthusiasm for experimentation with new ideas and styles which is evident in the variety of designs and fabrics produced by the handloom industry.

The wonders of handloom include: sussi, striped and checked material in silk and cotton; tie and dye and block printed fabrics, khais, used in bedcovers or wraps; ajrak a wonderful piece of art made of vegetable dyes, brocade and kumkhuab a fine handspun creation of silk interwoven with gold or silver thread in a rainbow of colours and designs.

Carpets and Rugs: Carpets are also categorized in the textiles sector. Carpet weaving is in the genes of thousands of Pakistani families who have been engaged in the craft for last several generations. The rich heritage in the art has remained intact for more than a millennium but its history goes far beyond that. The carpet industry in Pakistan got a new lease of life in 1947, when emigrant weavers, dyers, designers, clippers, settled here in their thousands. They flourished in Pakistan and produced one masterpiece after another. Today Pakistani carpets are considered the best in colour and the quality of wool.

Pakistani designs, are made of high quality woolen yarn varying knotting densities, endless varieties of new designs and colours and natural dyes. These carpets can have a knotting density of 300,000 plus knots to a piece. Pakistani carpets have acquired a world-wide reputation for excellence in colour and finish. Chobi Pakistani, a much sought-after make, relies for its colours on natural dyes. Handspun Ghazni wool, varied surface textures

and new washing techniques are some of the plus points of this genre of carpets.

Because of traditional skills, the Pakistani craftsmen today can manufacture any type of carpet with usual motifs—flowers, medallions, paisleys, tracers, and patterns in thousands of variations. Although floral and geometric designs are more common, yet pictorial carpets too are not uncommon such as the ones with Omar Khayyam of the Thakht-e-Sulaiman themes.

The washing process also calls for the use of a high degree of skill for during the washing the true hues and shades of the colours come out. Since Pakistan hand-knotted carpets have their users abroad, designs in which the sensibilities of the users are kept in mind are not uncommon. In recent years buying of rugs as gift materials has picked up.

Carpet weaving is a flourishing industry in Lahore and Karachi with 95% of the output going into the export market. Centuries old tradition is reflected into many varieties of carpets which takes their name from areas of their origin, Afgan, Bakhtar, Heart, Isphahan, Kazak, Khorassan, Samarkand and Siraz carpets.

Most of the new products of hand knotted carpets being made in Pakistan use an organic base, which not only gives added value but also addresses the growing worldwide concern for conservation of nature. Most of the manufacturers have switched over from chemical to natural or organic dyes to address the environmental concerns for the average consumer. As a result, the art of vegetable dying has seen a revival in Pakistan. With the vegetable dyes, skillfully thinned and wisely mixed, manufacturers obtain all shades, not counting the natural white of the wool, or the browns, if camel-hair is being used.

Use of high quality materials and dyes ensure guaranteed durability and quality. In carpets, the precision in design relies on the tightness of the knots and a short pile cut. The number of knots per square inches a useful indicator of its fineness and durability. Each knot is tied by hand. In the finest pieces as may be anything between 500 to 1000 knots per square inch.

Rugs are produced in attractive design and colour combinations making them popular choices for homes as well as for public areas. Contemporary geometrical designs are a particular consumer preference, but rugs of pure wool, cotton and silk blends are also favourites.

Tents and canvas: Another product included in the category of textiles is Tents & Canvas. With a country where sun shines for more than 300 days and where the climate favours a considerable outdoor activity, it is more than likely for it to have a bustling tents and canvases manufacturing activity. Tents are produced from cotton canvas and duck cotton which are waterproof, flame proof, rot proof, dyed, starched, grey natural, and loom state in all widths weights and specifications. Prices are currently competitive in the export market.

Pakistan has gained a good standing in the field of tents manufacturing, whereby getting substantial export orders from the central Asian and Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iran, U. A. E, Oman, Kenya, Jordan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Rep. of Yemen.

Pakistan has also mastered the exquisite tents for the game and hunting purposes and is now increasing its exports towards the western countries like Belgium, Switzerland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Irish Republic, Denmark, Germany & U. S. A.

Textile Machinery Manufacturing: The Pakistan's textile engineering sector is also developing fast on the manufacturing side. The major engineering developments in the past years have been concentrated into Spinning Frames, Conventional Weaving Looms, and Conventional Wet Processing Machines. The sector currently caters for spares, components for modernization and parts for machines used in cottage or small-scale enterprises. The sector has an investment of Rs. 18-20 billion. (Abridged)



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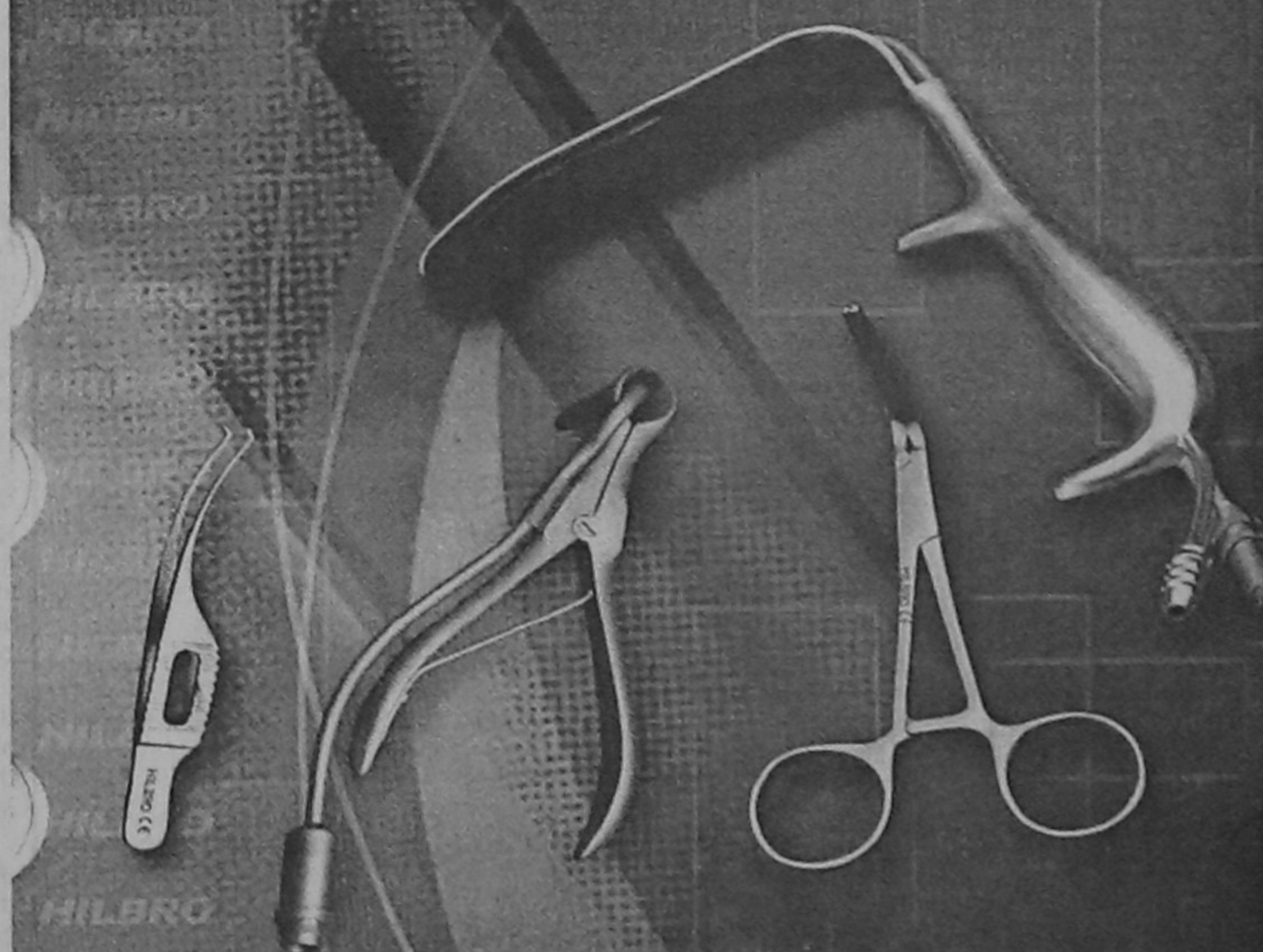
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