

A Walkthrough of Traditional Process of Kashikari In Sindh: A Case Study of Nasarpur

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Abstract: Culture is a sign for development of any region. Sindh, Pakistan is a land of culture having thousands of years of historical background especially in terms of handicrafts unfortunately none of step had been taken in past for its preservation. Like other cultural source of income, Kashikari, an indigenous handicraft is one of such badly overlooked and ignored cultural elements that are suffering from the extreme downfall. This study focused on the documentation of one of important handicraft of Sindh namely, Kashikari. Nasarpur and Hala Kashikari is selected for the purpose of study. The primary data was collected in the form of questionnaires, interviews form Kashigars (practitioners of Kashikari handicraft) and local area public. Beside this visit to the cottage industries of the selected areas have also helped to achieve required data. This research firstly documents the traditional art of Kashikari from Sindh and secondly attempts to compensate literature scarcity on this very field. The ultimate documentation of the art will help for the revival and burgeoning of the declining art of Kashikari in Pakistan in general and Sindh in specific.

Keywords: Culture, Kashi, Kashikari, Nasarpur, Hala, Revival.

1. Introduction

Glazed tiles have been used throughout the history of building ornamentation as a building surface rendering material, these tiles provide both shiny and washable surfaces [1]. Pakistan is full of both tangible and intangible culture (i.e. from historical buildings, written literature, tradition and norm of various communities in the region and a huge number of traditional handicrafts respectively) [2]. The handicraft of glazed tile is also one of those intangible heritages which are reaching their complete disappearing, one of major cause for the downfall of this handicraft is the lack of patronage [3]*. When it comes to the field of Kashikari handicraft a huge research gap can be witnessed as glazed tiles are rarely researched [4]. This research has investigated the history of Kashikari and has presented a preliminary study of the traditional methods for the production of Kashi tiles and also tries to somehow compensate literature scarcity on this topic. For a better understanding of the manufacturing process Previous studies on tile work and several other published papers together with the data obtained by our own analyses and visits to the cottage industries along with the interviews from Kashigars, the skilled labors helped to set a platform where the traditional process of kashi tiles has an existence which will help for the revival of the Kashi handicraft. further on the basis of data analysis the traditional process of Kashikari is documented.

2. Problem statement

Kashi tiles the important Islamic architectural element have remained a main surface rendering material throughout the history. But in present time Kashi tiles have lost their pervious prestige and fame. Kashi tiles are struggling to make their place in contemporary architecture and their demand is very minimum. Thus, the lack of demand of the material causes its limited production. Ultimately skilled labors are switching to other sources of income. And the number of workshops is decreasing day by day. Consequently, a highly important building craft is being lost.

3. Aim & Objectives

The aim of the research is to document the traditional art of Kashikari including the traditional manufacturing process and list of basic raw materials.

Objectives of the research are;

- To investigate the roots of Kashikari and
- To document the Kashikari art.

4. Research areas

Nasarpur (located in district Tandoallahyar) and Hala (located in district Matiari) are selected as research area. Throughout history it is observed that the art of Kashikari acts like a trademark for these two selected cities. Further these two cities have some functional workshops where Kashikari art is still being practiced with same indigenous

and traditional methods which can fulfill the core aim of documentation of Kashikari art.



Figure.1. Locational Map of Nasarpur

Source: Google Earth Pro

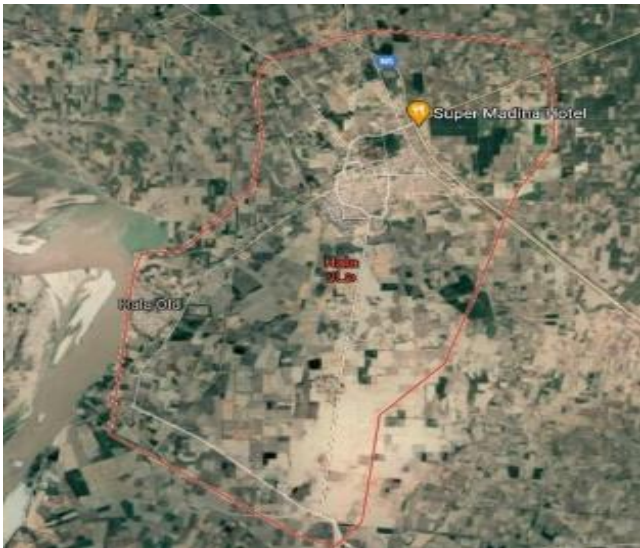


Figure.2. Locational Map of Hala

Source: Google Earth Pro

5. Related Work

The trend of ornamenting building surfaces with glazed tiles goes back to the late Bronze age i.e. Egypt and Mesopotamia, where the temples of pharaohs were adorned with the glazed fancies [5]. Those glazed tiles have brilliant blue and turquoise/ pale greenish tone and are painted with variety of motifs from animals to floral patterns [6]. There is an ample difference between the glazed fancies from Egypt and Mesopotamia and from Indus as the manufacturing technique was quite different in both kinds of artifacts, the ones from Indus valley were made with partially melted quartz that was reground into a fine paste before second firing, which fused the glassy powder to the

core of the object [7]. The history available on this subject matter reveals that glazed tile is the advanced form of bricks, so it can be evaluate that the areas where bricks either sun-dried or burnt bricks were used for building construction can be taken as the origin of these unique glazed tiles [6]. Introduction of glazed tiles into Islamic world is attributed to the triumph of Changaiz Khan in 1212 over China, this event made to known the art of glazing earthenware to the rest of Asia and Europe too [8]. Shakirullah dictates in his research that glazed fancies were used for ornamentation of interior surfaces by Egyptians and on external surfaces of the building by Sumerians, Assyrians and Persians. Mesopotamia and Persia were the cradle of the craft making exterior wall tiles, carved or molded with bright monochrome glazes [9]. More perfection and delicacy in the glazed tiles were brought by Persians, the art holds a good place in Ottoman architectural decoration and in the history of Islamic art. Glazed tiles were used to embellish mosques, madrasas (theological schools), tombs and palaces, kiosks, fountains, internal and external parts of similar buildings and Seljuk mosques, madrasas, tombs and palaces were decorated with exquisite tiles. Due to the Turks preference to embellish their buildings with tiles from very old times, the places of worships are adorned by tiles too [10]. In sub-continent the art of glazed tile decoration traveled during early Christians era but was only limited to Sindh (Pakistan) and Bengal (India) [6]. And when Mughal got Indian subcontinent as their supreme regime (1526-1857 A.D.) the art of tile decoration got a brand-new introduction in this region [2]. And glazed tile has become a significant element of Mughal architectural style, Mughals incorporated this material in a great variety of forms and colors to ornament the large area of buildings' surfaces. In 17th century the art was also begun to be seen in the South Asia now Pakistan where Punjab and Sindh being its main centers [11]. Parallel to this period the style in neighboring Safavid Iran looks coinciding with it which was owing popularity due to use of more quicker-to-use and economical cured seca tiles , it is more possible that artisans migrated here seeking for the patronage in Mughal courts can explain why in this period the glazed mosaic ornamentation is done on a large number of buildings [4]. In Pakistan glazed tiles are commonly known as the Kashi tiles, that refer to the manufacturing of indigenous ceramic tiles historically used as the building surfaces' ornamentation material, while the tradition of Kashikari is specific only to a geographic region of the lower Punjab (Multan in central Pakistan being the main center here) and Sindh (Nasarpur, Hala and Thatta, in Sout East Pakistan being known centers here) [5]. Ibn Battuta has called glazed tiles as 'Kashani' which took its name from the glazed pottery work of Kashan in Persia, the etymology of word Kashi also shows its attribution to the graphical location of Kashan in Persia which was a famous center for ceramic wares' production [12]. Abdul Fatah Daudpoto has defined kashikari as a

“Trans-boundary work of art; which became part of architecture, especially sacred or religious architecture [13]. In Sindh Glazed tiles or Kashi tiles in Pakistan is of two type the tiles found from Lahore city and its environs in the northern Punjab are different than tiles of Sindh-Multan type which are characterized by dominance of Blue and White colors scheme, where the use of extensive multi-colored tile-mosaics is the highlighting feature of former type of tile work [5]. The ceramic mosaics are defined as tiny regular tiles used to make any geometrical pattern of varying complexity [14]. According to S. H. Vandal et al. The blue glazed tiles or Sindh-Multan type Kashi were traditionally made on a base of Ajri (terracotta) using clay. Tiles of desired shape and size are then prepared and sun-dried. A white under coat is applied on those sun-dried tiles on which design and motifs are developed. Various coloring pigments are used to paint those tiles. The painted tiles are then coated with glaze and burnt in the kiln [15]. Kashikari from Sindh has Two types as asserted by Ghulam Hyder Daudpoto, Blue Kashi and Transparent glazed Kashi (Kashigars named it Murdasung Kashi), the difference in both type of Kashi sis of the coat of glazed applied on the tiles, the later comes in the scheme of White and blue while Green, Red, Off-White and Yellow colors are attributed to the former type of Kashi [16].

6. Methodology

Documentation of Kashikari art (including traditional manufacturing process, basic raw materials and structure of kiln) is the scope of this research. This study applied descriptive approaches, for which goals were set to collect data on surviving patterns with the aid of extensive photography. Other methods included referring to published documents and conducting informal interviews and filling questionnaires from artisan known as Kashigars both the ones in practice and out of practice.

7. Results and Discussion

Traditional manufacturing process of Kashikari

On the basis of collected data manufacturing process of Kashikari is mainly divided into five stages;

1st stage of Kashikari: The process sets out by transporting loam clay at workshop collected and cured mostly from river bed, raw clay is crushed and passed through fine sieve and soaked in the water filled in an agitator or tank (Challow) having at least 30% to 35% of water. The clay is then used for molding tiles of various shapes and forms as per requirements. Tiles of various shapes are than left in the sun and open air so the moisture can be extracted from tiles. When the ware is hardened and all the moisture is extracted their surfaces are levelled and Finished. This process is locally known as “Kache-Jo- Kam”.



Figure.3. Molding



Figure.4. Pressing



Figure.5. Cutting



Figure.6. Cutting



Figure.7. Levelling



Figure.8 Finishing

Source: Researcher

2nd stage of Kashikari: To provide a surface where various designs are generated the finished wares are coated with a white undercoat locally known as “Aster” or engobe, (a layer of finely ground powder of locally available limestone achieved by the process of calcination as defined by Ghulam Haider) (Daudpoto, 2008). This white coat is basically a composite of Limestone, Silica and flour paste used as binding additive. The paste is applied in viscous liquid form and hardened under sunlight.



Figure.9. Preparation of Lime stone



Figure.10. Grinding of Lime stone



Figure.11. Application of engobe

Source: Researcher

3rd stage of Kashikari: Development of design motifs with various coloring pigments is the third stage of traditional Kashikari, where Sindh-Multan type Kashikari is endorsed

with two kind of painting differ in painting technique wares with opaque glaze scheme (traditionally called Murdasang glaze) are painted on finished objects with a special type of clay brought somewhere from Sehwan (known as Khari or Sehwan mitti) while under white coat is exempted from these wares. Where wares with Blue scheme glaze are first outlined with Cobalt Oxide and then painted with various coloring pigments. In both cases stencils of design motifs perforated with pin-holes are used to trace motif onto wares, to achieve the purpose finely grounded coal powder is used.



Figure.12. Tracing of design templates

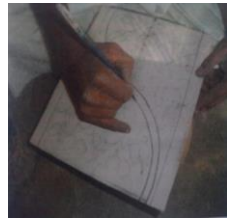


Figure.13. 1st Writing



Figure.14. 2nd Writing



Figure.15. 3rd Writing

Source: Researcher

4th stage of Kashikari: After development of design motifs wares are glazed, two way t (i) Glazing on the wares having white under coat (ii) Glazing on sun-dried surfaces, former glaze is known as “Acho rung” or “Rangeen rung” (i.e. Transparent or opaque glazes), while later is known as “Murdasang jo rung”, these glazed are the traditional glazes which are prepared by the skilled artisan themselves. The colors are applied in the form of thick liquid paste on the painted wares.



Figure.16. Preparation of glaze



Figure.17. Application of glaze

Source: Researcher

5th stage of Kashikari: When wares are glazed, they are ready to be baked in a furnace which is fueled by wood and manually operated, (locally it is known as Bathi or Aawi). These kilns are constructed with sun-dried bricks and are coated with mud plaster. Baking of Kashi revetments

require 900⁰c to 1000⁰c while it takes 8 to 12 hours to reach on the required temperature.

Whereas, the stage # 05 consists of following four steps:

(i) Loading of kiln: This is very technical and sensitive process. Glazed objects are loaded in the kiln by experienced Kashigar himself with the help of his coolies. He arranges the objects in the form of various stories known as “dour”. Pieces of Terracotta tiles known as “Chaparyoon” are fixed on the top of each story with wet clay, they provide support to story and base to the upcoming story. After loading wares in kiln, the kiln is made air-tight so no heat can evolve from the closed container.

(ii) Firing of kiln: Kiln is then gradually fired till the color of fire is changed from to reddish white then an experienced Kashigar examines the temperature and with his vast experience estimates whether the glaze and body of the objects are matured when all is set the kiln is sealed.

(iii) Leaving to the environment: After firing the kiln is left untouched in open air for almost 3-4 days so the temperature of kiln can come down up to the handling temperature. In order to avoid any sort of crazing on the glaze the kiln is gradually unpacked.

(iv) Unloading kiln: When the kiln becomes cold enough so the further operation can easily be done it is unloaded with great care, first temporary supports are removed and then Kashi revetments are taken out of the Kiln. Now a smooth, shiny, water proof and beautiful Kashi wares are ready for their installation.



Figure.18. Kiln Loading

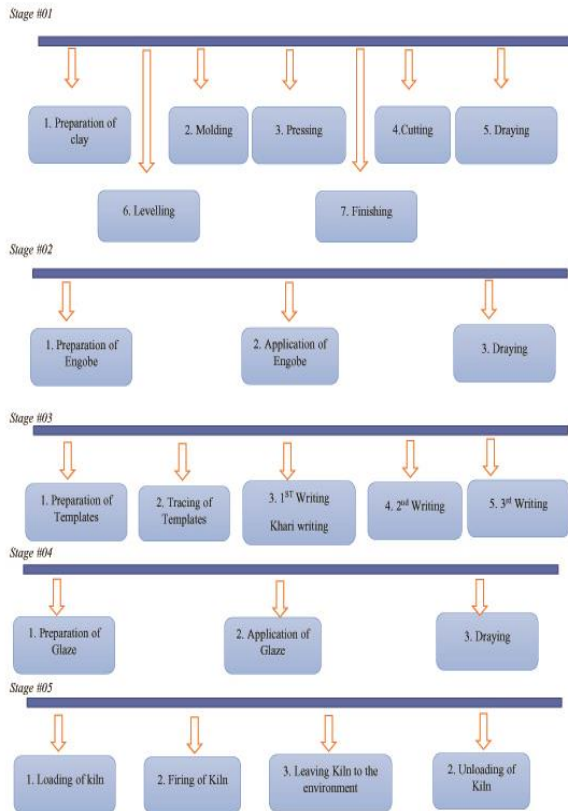


Figure.19. Kiln Firing



Figure.20. Kiln unloading

Source: Researcher



- White Sand
- Silica Sand
- White Clay (Achhi Khari)
- Yellow Clay (Zardi Khari)
- Coloring Oxides
- Cobalt Oxides
- Cobalt Carbonate
- Copper Oxide
- Pevri (Lime chrome, copper oxide, red lead)

Colouring pigments of Kashikari

- Copper oxide
- Cobalt oxide
- Cobalt carbonate
- All the stain colors i.e. red, green, yellow, pink, brown, etc

Glaze ingredients of Kashikari

- Red Lead
- Borax
- Soda Ash
- Murda Sung

Comparison of Kashikari from Nasarpur and Hala

In the light of reviewed literature, questionnaires and ethnographic or photographic surveys made by the researcher to the functional workshops of Nasarpur and Hala, it is analyzed that the techniques, manufacturing process of traditional Kashikari and the basic raw materials are completely identical while tools required for the manufacturing of goods are almost same in both the cities. Where there is addition of throwing wheel in the workshops of Hala which is absent in Nasarpur because Hala also produces pottery or crockery that's why throwing or potter's wheel is seen there. Further one more major difference which assessed during the research between both selected cities was of the structure of Kiln or furnace which is used to bake the kashi wares. It was analyzed that the reason behind the change in the architecture and structure of the kiln was the addition of pottery or crockery in Hala where it is not produced in the workshops of Nasarpur.



Figure.22. Kiln from Nasarpur



Figure.23. Kiln from Hala

Source: Researcher

Analysis of collected data from Kashigars

To collect primary data Quota sampling technique was adopted and a sample size of 30 questionnaires was designed to achieve the objective. The targeted respondents of the research were the custodians and stakeholders affiliated with the handicraft of Kashikari belonging from both of the study areas i.e. Nasarpur and Hala. The analyzed data is discussed in below given tables. Figure.24 shows the age of respondents in years ranging from 18 years to 38 years and above. While figure.25 shows the statistics regarding the status of Kashikari handicraft in running times, out of 30 people 12 have left the practice of Kashikari which is something very alarming while majority of the respondents were of the idea that the manufacturing technique, basic raw materials, chemistry of glazes and so on are more or less totally same as they were in pervious ages further they also agrees and second the idea of documentation of Khashikari handicraft including the

manufacturing process and basic raw material. so an important cultural ingredient can be preserved and revived.

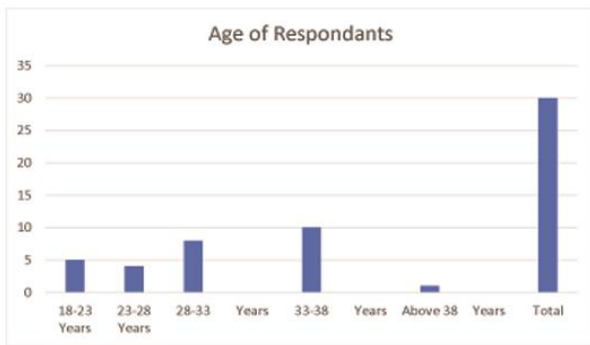


Figure.24. Showing age of respondents



Figure.25. Showing responses of respondents

8. Conclusion

Pakistan is one of those countries in the world which holds a wide range of culture, out of the wide context Kashikari or the art of producing glazed tiles possesses an important place and prestige. Two various schools of glazed tiles i.e. Lahori and Sindh-Multan type both can be witnessed in the country. Sindh-Multan type Kashikari is the core subject of this research, data has revealed that like many Pakistani handicrafts Kashikari is also disappearing with quick pace. This paper is an approach to conserve the handicraft by documenting the traditional manufacturing process of Kashi tiles, to achieve the aim data was collected in the form of published literature, interviews, questionnaires and surveys of functional cottage industries in the selected area. While on the basis of obtained data the process of traditional Kashi tiles making has been divided into five stages like;

1st Stage of Kashikari deals with preparation of clay for tiles, molding or cutting, drying and finishing of tiles. While 2nd stage of Kashikari includes preparation and application of engobe, the white background on finished tiles where designing is opted. The 3rd stage of Kashikari includes preparation of design templates which are traced on tiles and painted accordingly. The upcoming 4th stage of Kashikari is all about glaze application on painted tiles and

making them ready for cooking. In the 5th and final stage of Kashikari loading firing and unloading of kiln is done.

This paper also provides a list of basic raw materials which are being used for the production of Kashi tiles throughout the course of time. It was also researched that from the data collected from both of the study areas everything is almost same including the manufacturing process and raw materials but, the cooking unit is not identical in Nasarpur and Hala that was because of the production of crockery. Where in Hala crockery is also being produced which is not in Nasarpur.

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