



CLAY CULTURE - BLUE KASHI TILES

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The effect created on building facades and the interiors of Holy spaces using complicated painted ceramic tiles made in the *Kashi* traditional Technique, in the city of *Nasarpur*, Sindh Pakistan.

The production of *Kashi* tiles is one of the oldest handicraft in province of Sindh Pakistan. The word *Kashi* means painting, and the traditional tile that carries of this traditional art. The artisans who made these tiles in the Sindh region are known as “*Kashigars*”.

Nasarpur and *Hala* are two main major cities doing handicraft in the field of *Kashikari* (*Kashi* work) in the province of *Sindh*, Pakistan.



Fine Red Clay is found from the nearest river basins which are available in the local areas of **Nasarpur** and **Hala**. Throughout Sindh's history of the two cities, **Nasarpur** is the major city making handmade **Kashi** tiles, having more history and expertise in this form of tile making.

Almost 10 different **Kashi** centers are doing work in the present time in Nasarpur, only this **Kashikari** is still alive in Sindh.





It is a fact that the modern manufactured ceramics tiles are more durable and perfect, but **Kashi** tiles have more luster and a greater variety of designs and patterns. When looked at from a distance the handmade **Kashi** tiles are more impressive and very beautiful.

Shamokat Ali

The process of traditional *Kashi* tile-making involves preparing and wedging the clay, making mosaic tiles, screen tiles, floral pattern design tiles, mural tiles for wall like relief embossed carving work, and Islamic calligraphy work in painting and carving forms, then painting glazing and firing the ceramics tiles in both gas kiln and wood fire kilns.

Our traditional wood-fire kiln which we design as a ceramic's vase shape in our traditional style kiln.





The whole process of making traditional **Kashi** tiles takes almost 15 days for a local tile-maker using only minimal tools.

The basic materials used for making the tiles are local clay and water. **Kashi** tiles in *Sindh* are made of the best kind of clay that can be sourced from an old river basin. Two kinds of clay we are using red and white clay for making traditional tiles in different categories.



Both kinds of clay are mixed in equal amounts, however the red clay is harder than white clay. The local people bring clay from a nearby village on donkey carts, charging around *5000 rupees (USD 22)* of a cart load of clay.



THE PROCESS



First, firmly hit the clay with a piece of wood in order to make the clay even and break it in small pieces.



Then we pass the clay in the basin. The basin which we are using for clay is called ***“Mitti Jo Chaloo”***

After the clay is in liquid form, we sieve it screen it called ***“Chhana”***



**View of our
courtyard area used
for preparing clay
and the drying
process.**



**After the next day
when clay becomes a
little bit harder than we
let it rest on mud floor.**



Clay wedging process,
clay is thrown rapidly
on floor for removing
air bubbles from clay.



**Making large
sized slab**

**size of frame is
2 x 2 square feet**



**Clay is pressed
by hand into
large sized slabs.**



**Cutting in order
of different
sizes during the
slab making
process.**



**The next morning, tiles
slabs are leather-hard
and ready for the final
pressing.**



**The dry pieces
are separated
with a knife.**



Placed on mud floor in a line and applying sand to the top surface.



Pressing with a
“Thaapni” - a
terracotta hand
presser.



**Tiles in
leather-hard
form are ready
for cutting
into different
sizes.**



Tiles are cut with different wood-frame stencils which are called “**Kaarab**”, before cutting method we press them again to make an even surface.

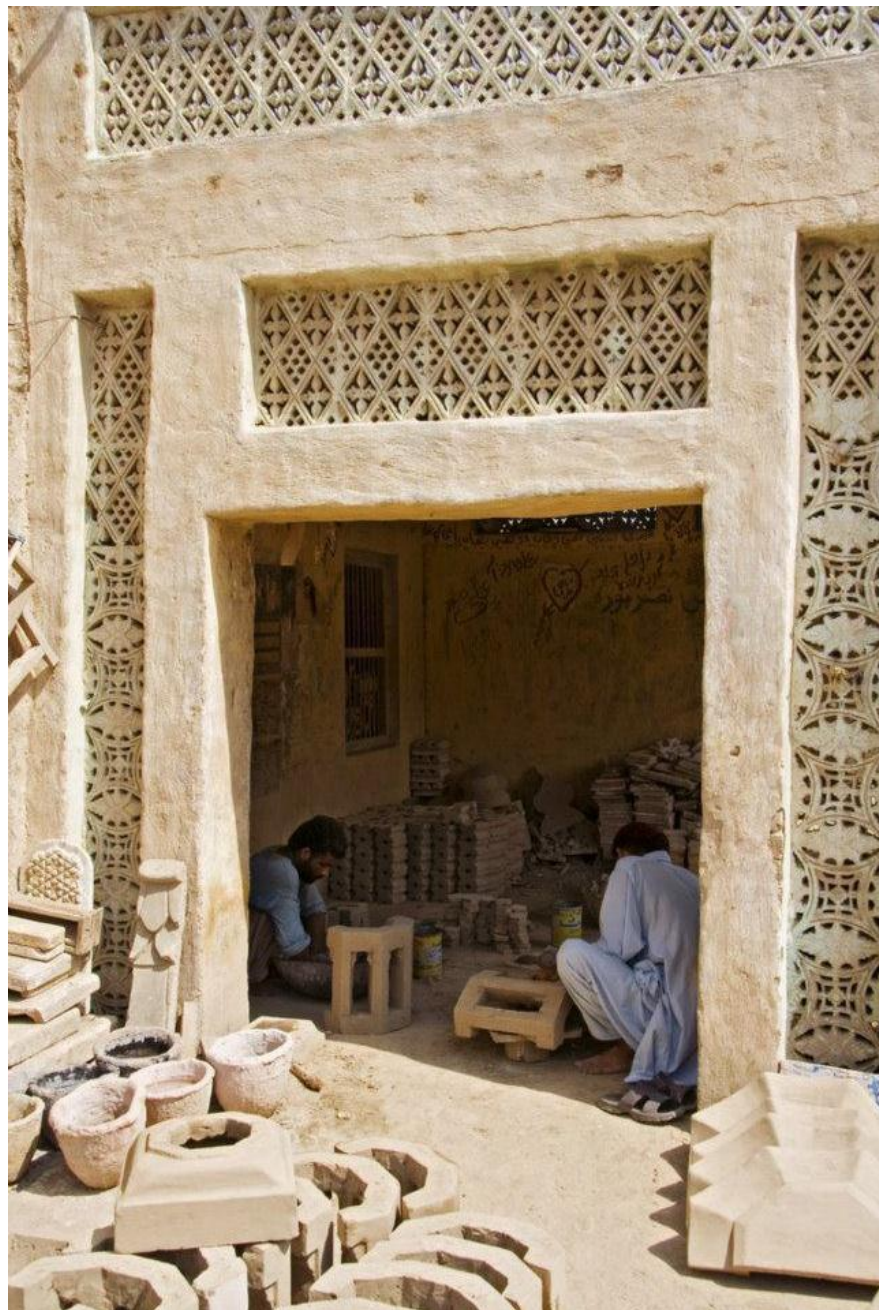
A wooden frame is put on top of hard tile then we start to cut the four edges with a knife.



**Tiles are placed on a flat, even floor
after 24 hours these tiles are harder
when completely dry.**



‘Bone-dry’ process in our courtyard area, it is called “*Khudoo*” in our Sindhi Language.



After 'bone-drying' tiles we then shift these tiles for finishing the method.



Removal of unwanted dots and sand on front and back area of tile.

Tools use for finishing which are called ***“Jharo, kup”***



The tiles are sanded on a cement block to make the surface even and prepare for the decorative finish.



Finishing process of filling edges with clay paste (paste for filling which we made with clay and sand) it is called “***Khhaar***”.

Kashigars use different materials and painting techniques on the tile to create decorative motifs related to *Sindhi* culture.

Raw materials include:

White-coating *Engobe* (***Astar***) for covering red clay base, we make "***Astar***" in white limestone, flour paste use as a binder it's called "***Leeti***" and for whiteness we are using white clay is called "***Achi Khari***" which we obtain from *Sehwan Shareef* city in Sindh.





Kashigars mixed these things for preparing ***White Engobe Astar*** for apply on red clay piece tiles surface and other things. After coating the designer create designs on white surface of tile.

After purifying this ***White Engobe*** by straining it through a thin cloth and finely grinding and sieve it with 50 mesh screen and mixing it in water and binder paste ***Leeti*** , it is applied directly to unfired red pastel and white slip are then fired on.

Shankar Ali



After dry *Engobe* we start to trace different designs on tracing paper template and then pin-hole the outlines with the help of needle, the template which we are calling in our language it's "***Khaako***".



Tracing paper is placed on tile surface edge-to-edge and we apply charcoal powder on the tracing paper for transfer of design on tile surfaces.



There are two types of painting tiles we are making:

one is **multicolored tiles** which are made using different stains and oxide colors and the other is thick, **white-slip painting red tile**.

The multicolored style tile have two kinds: **“kacha rang”** and **“pakka rang”**.



Kacha Rang tile includes color applied to the tile after it is fired in the kiln. This color is not permanent or waterproof. The tile painted with this technique are just for decoration.



Pakka Rang is permanent decoration, and usually consists of blue and white painting, with color outlining in cobalt blue oxide. The painting is then coated with glaze and fired. No over decoration is done on these tiles; this is something the **Kashi** makers are very particular about.



Process of *outlining method* on tile surface.
For outlining, we are using Cobalt Oxide color, which is the main color for *Kashi* tiles.



Brushes

The raw material for the paint brushes used by *Kashigars* to outline decorative elements on the tiles includes goat hair, thin round sticks thread and cotton. They tie the goat hair or cotton onto the end of the stick and secure it with the thread. Brushes for the other parts of the process are purchased from market, including various round brushes with soft hair.





**Outlining hand
made brush from
goat-hair and
cotton.**



**Soft round-shaped
brushes purchased
from market.**



They are different colors **neon green, neon pink, neon yellow, cobalt blue oxide, copper oxide** and **black** (*usually primary and secondary colors are used. The **blue** color is used for outlining*).

The main colors pigments are brought from *Karachi , Hyderabad* and *Lahore* these three major cities are a hub for chemical materials.

The different pigments we are using ,with the low temperature pigments colors are used only for red clay body in **800** to **1000 C** heat.

Process of Painting Tiles

After outlining method, we start to fill different colors on tile surfaces



RAW MATERIALS FOR GLAZING

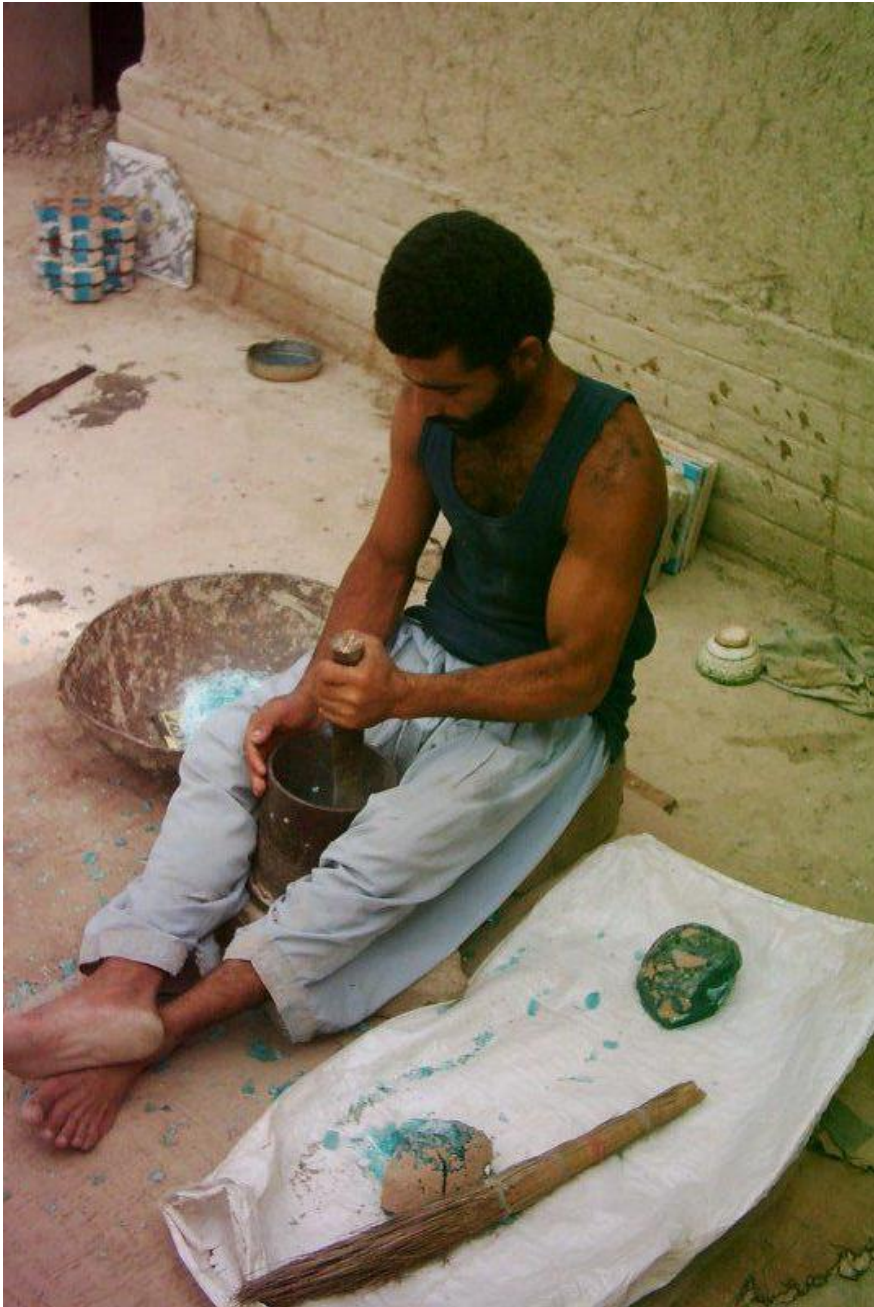
Glazing the ceramic tiles not only given them a shiny surface, but also seals the clay to prevent water from permeating the tile. Traditional tiles are made using different kinds of glaze, including lead glaze used for low temperature process (850 C), and other transparent glaze for tile to be fired to higher temperature up to a maximum 1000 to 1020 C.

The glaze which *Kashigars* make themselves uses material which of transparent soda, borax, silica sand, *Chanio*, *Suhaga*, *Murda Sangi* and little bit red lead. We mix these all material in a powder and then place it in round shape bowls and loading it in kiln to make frit of transparent glaze.

The lead glaze which we are making for low temperature purpose which called **Red Lead glaze**, **Green Lead glaze** in our local language we called "*Gaaro Murdasangi*" and "*Sahoo Murdasangi*", in lead glaze we are using just 65% red lead and 35% silica sand which found in the city of *Sehwan Sharif*.

**Both glazes are
mixed in powder
form than baked in
kiln to make frit.**





After baking process when we got from the kiln we then crush this glaze with the help of a hammer crusher and then grind it in “*Jhaand*”, a kind of crusher machine.



After glaze was ready in powder form we sieve it with **100 mesh** screen than apply in liquid form on painted tiles and plain tiles.



Different glazes applied on tiles and other products in liquid form, we prepared the glaze and mixed the binder and some lead powder for shine.



After the glazing process we process to loading material we load the kiln which called **“Bhatti”**. The kilns user are roughly 10-12 feet high and we loading almost 300 tiles at one time. Each baking process takes **14 hours** and lead glaze takes **10 hours**. 2000 kg of wood which called **Kari** wood a dry hard black wood, followed by cooling for **48 hours** prior to opening and unloading the kiln.

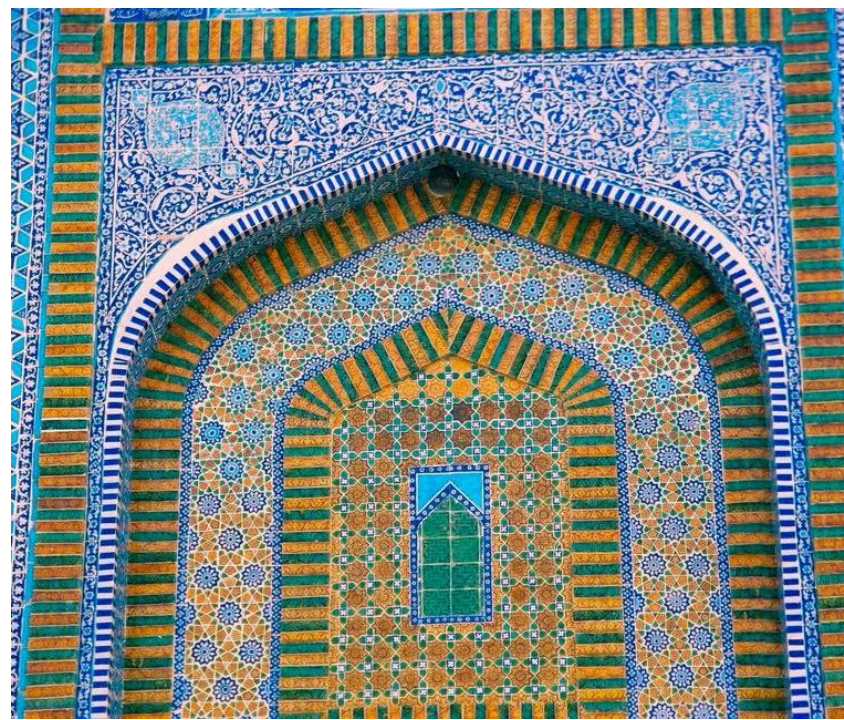
Usage of *Kashi* Tiles

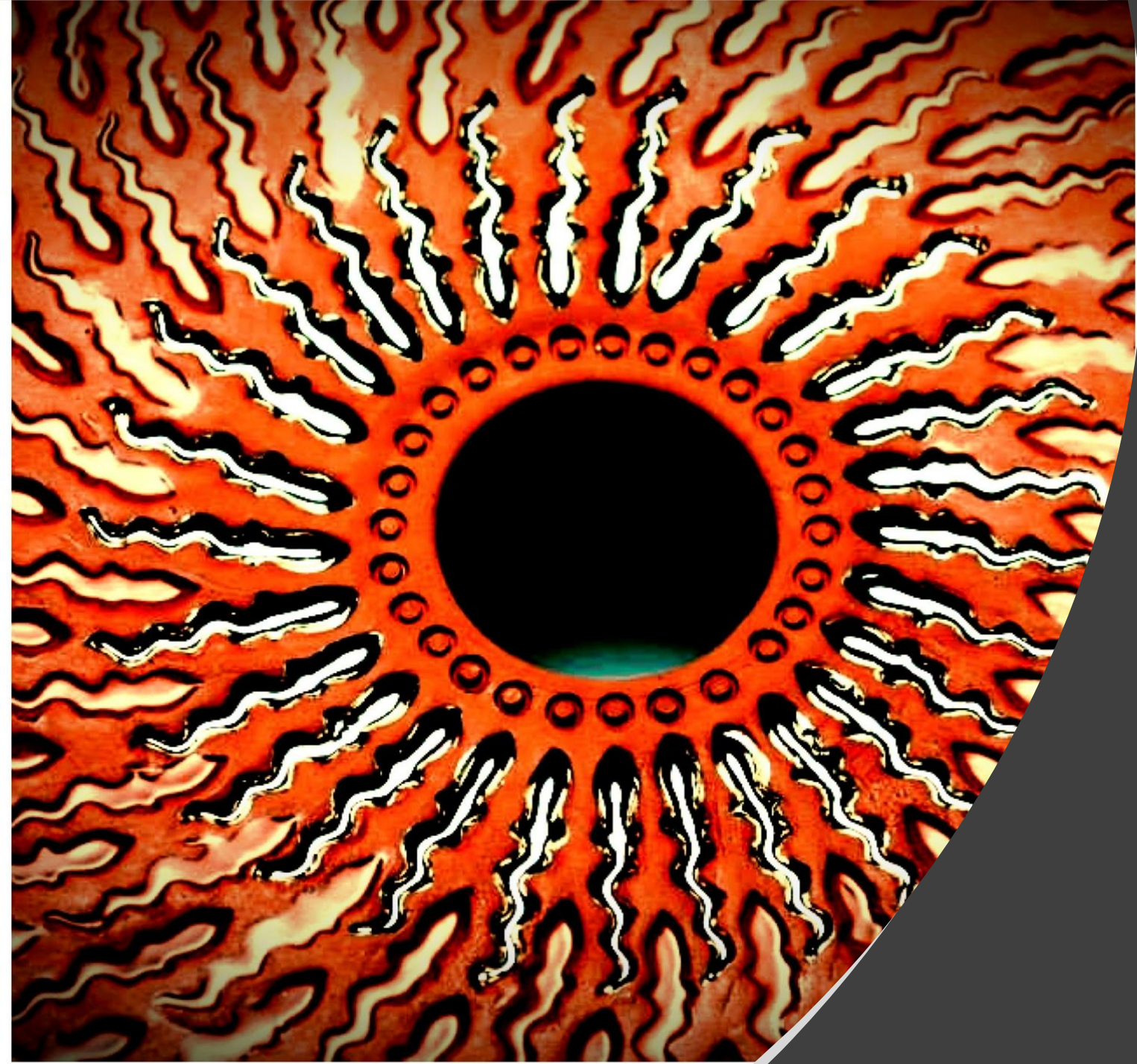
In Pakistan people usually use both red and white clay *Kashi* tiles for decorative purpose in public buildings, on the front elevation or facades and interior walls.

The tile used in shrines for decoration include traditional floral patterns, Islamic calligraphy and those with carved relief. Additional uses include covering the walls of houses, offices and mosques for decoration.

Rural people used these decorative tiles for roof coverings. There is also as international interest, with decorative tiles being exported for display in exhibitions as well as traditional uses.







THANK YOU

References

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- <https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipNQYTogIBuEbQ7b6wEFZrAmqib5zH61DucgHGsn6ubxsYUg9mvYCMVXHi5YLRLIw?key=NW4wSU3YUU5bFZuSjNfdnJNazJ4dj3Q2pza1h3>
- https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOEUTEExTB6n_Ab5D2yhlZiGhoivejFVNfUnQCKg_srPaM2rAws_2imRzwRyHhROPw?key=QU1fdFZJQV9WV2FIOHNhazl1M3FxFmMtTmPNSDRR

