

KASHIKARI ART: A TRADITION OF SURFACE DECORATION OF MONUMENTS IN SINDH

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is concerned with relationship of history, arts, crafts, design and architecture. The research is designed to understand the visual construction of surface decoration of monuments through Kashikari art in Sindh. The study is based on the historical perspective of works and contribution of the artisans in relationship of culture and concepts of surface decoration. The aim of research is to trace uniqueness of the Kashikari art of Sindh with reference to other important monuments built in the sub-continent.

Key words: The key words are as follows; *Kashikari*, art, aesthetics, design, decoration, ornamentation, pattern, motif, architectural heritage, Muslim dynasties, floral & geometric motif, calligraphy, Sindh and wall surfaces.

1. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Sindh, prevailed in the territories now comprising Pakistan, reminds of an earlier Indus valley civilization. Moen-jo-Daro exists on the heart place of the map of Sindh where from thousands of design, pattern, and motif have been found on Pottery (Fig: 01), Seals, Jewelry and Sculpture (Fig: 02) etc. It seems that the trends to decorate the art pieces, crafts and products were an essential part of the people (Sheedai, 1995)¹.

After that, Corinthian² (Fig: 03) columns bear witness to Greco-Roman influence on Indus Valley Architecture and Design. There are evidences of floral decoration on the columns and that visual language is expressing its identity and influences. Along with this is visible Scythian (Fig: 04) and Kushan³ influence in the Buddhist Stupas and monasteries of the Gandhara region⁴ (Fig: 05). Recent excavations at *Banbhor* have revealed what is the earliest known mosque in the sub-continent, built to the Arab plan

of the Umayyads (Cousens, 1998)⁵. Specimens of Abbasid art are also found in Sindh, particularly at Brahman-abad, the capital of Abbasid Sindh; where along with other antiquities; the remnants of fortifications, a mosque and ivory chessmen found (Cousens, 1998)⁶.

The floral designs on the walls of the available Architecture in Sindh are predominantly representative of the various periods. Islam came to the sub-continent with Arab conquest of Sindh in 712 A.D (Quddosi, 2007)⁷ (Fig: 06). It brought with it a new concept of the universe which became the fountainhead of aesthetic inspiration pervading all manifestations of creative spirit. Relics left behind by Mughul rulers particularly are an eloquent testimony to thoughts and beliefs which impacted on culture of the sub-continent with arrival of the Muslim conquerors.

A distinct Muslim style developed in the sub-continent after foundation of the Mamluk Sultanate at Delhi about the beginning of the 13th century represented a combination of Turkish and Iranian influences⁸. In particular, the Central Asian or Turkish forms and motifs dominated in construction of architecture under the Khiljis and the Tughlaqs rule. Beautiful mosques, stalactites⁹, attractive inscriptions from the Quran and arabesque trefoil arches are some of the features of the Mamluk period¹⁰ (Fig: 07).

Under the Khilji (1290-1320 A.D.) (Quddosi, 2007)¹¹ (Fig: 08 & 09) and Tughlaq (1320-1414 A.D.) (Quddosi, 2007)¹² dynasties, architecture assumed a military character. The Tughlaqs introduced the purely military style in the architecture of the fortress, the palace and the tomb. The need for a proper defense against the Mongols and the setting up of highly efficient war machinery for the conquest of the whole of the indo-Pakistan sub-continent, were probably responsible for the new trend. There are some remarkable specimens of tomb architecture belonging to this period such as the mausoleum of Rukn-e-Alam at Multan, (Fig: 10) described as most of splendid memorials ever erected in honor of the dead. It has tapering walls, sloping corner towers, decorated merlons¹³ and pinnacles¹⁴. The interior has elaborate wood-carving with a liberal intermixture of azure¹⁵ and white glazed tiles.

The Sayyid dynasty (1414-1451 A.D.) (Powell-Price, J.C., 1955)¹⁶ and the Lodhi dynasty (1451- 1526 A.D.) (Powell-Price,

J.C., 1955)¹⁷ had started originally as vassals of the Timurids of Central Asia. They broke away from the Tughlaq tradition and were mainly influenced by Central Asian forms and motifs. They built mosques and tombs with vertical walls and high domes, occasionally with heavy but no longer tapering buttresses¹⁸ (Fig: 11). The decoration with geometric floral and calligraphic motifs was also an essential part of this time. At that time in Thatta Sindh, the finest examples of architecture are provided by tombs, mostly canopied¹⁹. The features which distinguish the architecture of this period are circular or polygonal²⁰ forms, extensive use of local materials and a rugged simplicity and massiveness. Geometrical decorations on the wall surface were also employed. Decorative art was further embellished with script and arabesque²¹ ornamentation. These geometric floral and calligraphic motifs were reproduced in endless combinations with zest & vigor (Fig: 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16).

The period of greatest achievement of floral designs on architecture in sub-continent was in the Mughul period. The oldest building of this period was built by Emperor Akbar. His successors Jehangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, made numerous additions to the main building area, the most notable being the Pearl mosque, the Naulakha pavilion with its fine pietra-dura work, the Shish-mahal and the Diwan-i-khas, all built by Shah Jehan in Lahore Fort. One of the late Mughul monuments is the Badshahi mosque built by Emperor Aurangzeb, which is regarded as the biggest mosque in the world. Jehangir's mausoleum, the Shalamar gardens, Noor Jehan's tomb and Wazir khan's mosque are some of the other prominent Mughul monuments (Fig: 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 & 23). The tradition of ornamentation and decoration has developed through centuries. It has historical roots in the sub-continent as well as in Sindh.

2. DECORATION OF WALL SURFACES IN SINDH

The visual references are evident that the aesthetical approach to decorate the wall surfaces in Sindh territories was essential part of the social and cultural element of the people. The decoration was always being a part of the architecture, textile, pottery, wood works; and even on the body decorations of humans and animals. There are various periods of the history that had put

little impact on the style and technique of the decoration. It has gradual and varied impact in plan, elevation and decoration in different periods. Before Muslim rule in Sindh; the aesthetics and structure of material was different and after that the architectural heritage have got Islamic features. The architecture builds by Muslim Rulers having conceptually common features all over the world but it also contained with different cultural values. The various cultural values of different Muslim dynasties can be found on the architectural monuments through their plan, elevation and decoration. Architectural aesthetics of decoration of surface walls in Sindh are predominantly different than other parts Muslim dynasties of the Sub-continent. Most of the available architectural tomb heritage of Sindh has ornamented with stone work or decorated with Kashikari art. The most celebrated place of floral, geometrical, botanical, scenic, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representation of designs on architecture is found at Makli.²² The tombs and graves of the Makli are ornamented and decorated with stone work, in engraved and embossed techniques. Kashikari art is also used for the surface decoration at Makli but uses of *Kashikari* at the tombs of Makli necropolis are on small level. The later period architecture of Thatta has determined evidences of *Kashikari* tile work for decoration of wall surfaces. Dabghir Mosque, Shahjahan Mosque at Thatta, tombs in Kalhora and Talpur periods all over the Sindh are best examples of the Kashikari art surface decoration in Sindh with its distinctive subject matter.

In present Sindh; decoration of surface walls through *Kashikari* art can be found in every city; often in every small towns, their holy tombs, those shrine's domes, minarets, and gate ways mostly have been decorated with glazed tiles. In the region of Sindh *Kashikari* tiles used for adornment of buildings facade, in the mosques and tombs whole building's facade is covered with *Kashikari* designs. In the houses use of tiles is limited and often purpose related with architectural need, in the houses mostly used as ceiling tile and also used as revetment out side the walls and roofs for building ornamentation. Through all these references it is found that *Kashikari* art is a major style for decoration of wall surfaces in Sindh.

3. KASHIKARI ART

Kashi means Ceramics in general and *kari* means work. *Kashikari* is a high level developed form of Ceramics; which has been learnt by human being through a long process. There are few examples that in early civilization period human being had involved to experience the ceramics techniques and from beginning man lived with clay and fire. The playing with clay and fire made invention of bricks to build a secure space for him and finally that is called Architecture. When man found satisfactory materials for his built environment, then he thought about its ornamentation and decoration. The ornamentation needed the techniques and man invented the molding, casting, firing and glazing the bricks. There is a process of techniques that human being achieved the level of aesthetics from brick to tile. During the practice of many centuries, probably millenniums man developed a complicated art of Kashikari.

Kashi is derived from word Kash, in Persian it means Glass; by this reason the origin city of Kashikari called Kashan. In Sindhi language the word Kanch is used for glass. Word Kanch²³ is inspired by Kash, some families of Kashan migrated to region of Sindh in Sultanate period and started the work (Nath-1989). Kashikari is divided into two different kinds and it varied through techniques; the one is called Kashi painted Tile and other is named Mosaic Tile.

3.1 Kashi painted Tile: Kashi painted Tile is made from natural red clay in various required sizes as per job assignment in crude form. After that motifs are transferred through a tracing paper and then same were drawn with brush on crude tiles. After that the pigment are applied as per design and then tiles are glazed, placed in Kiln and fired. Glazed tile work has different terminologies in different culture. For example in the region of Sindh it is called Kashi-a ji Sir²⁴ and in Persian culture it is called Hafet Rang Kashi.²⁵ (Fig: 28).

3.2 Mosaic Tile: The process of making the mosaic tiles is little different; first the different colored glaze tile are made and fired in kiln. After that required Kashikari motifs are cut on the

paper and pasted on those colored tiles, then these motifs made up with fragmentally cut pieces then join those pieces on as a panel and it will be found a Mosaic. In the Persian culture the Mosaic tile called 'Muarca Kashi'. Somewhat same kind of work is done by the artisans here in Sindh region with a different name 'Rezo Kashi'²⁶ (Fig: 29).

4. KASHIKARI ART IN SINDH

The tradition of decoration and ornamentation has long history here in Sindh, from the dates of Indus Valley to present time artisans of the region are involved through their skills in the ornamentation of the objects, buildings, textiles etc. With reference to the subject; here are hundreds of evidences available of Kashikari on the monuments, houses and in general places in Sindh. With span of time Kashikari art has reached to high aesthetical values and sophistication. The first reference of glazed technique had been found from Moen-jo-daro. "The archaeological evidence regarding the painted designs occurring on the interior of the rotundate drum walls of Stupa? At Moen-jo-daro suggest, that the tradition even in Sindh is at least as old as 3rd or 4th century A.D." (Bukhari, 2004)²⁷.

"Building constructed in Sindh before the Kalhora were adorned usually with either architectural elements or by Kashi tiles, or molding in plaster or even by xylography or with the stone carving but ornateness with painted designs was sparse. But the Kalhoras in their architecture, nearly all over Sindh, seem producing often different geometrical, floral and conventional besides," (Bukhari, 2004)²⁸. The Tomb of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai²⁹ (Fig: 26 & 27) is most famous mausoleum in Sindh; the architectural value of this place is related with ornamentation of wall surfaces, which are decorated with floral designs, calligraphy and geometrical patterns through Kashikari art. As like same there are a large number of monuments decorated with same philosophy, trends and tradition in Sindh. The most important and distinctive identity of art, craft, architecture and design heritage is having marked Islamic features. Besides a number of other places, here in Sindh there are Choukhandi graveyard at Karachi, Makli necropolis, Dabghir and Shahjahan's Mosques at Thatta, Kalhora

and Talpur Tombs at Hyderabad (Fig: 24 & 25), Shahun-ji-Masjid, Tomb of Missri Shah and Jamia Mosque at Naserpur (Fig: 29), Tomb of Hazrat Nooh at Hala, Talpur Tombs at Khudabad near Hala, Tomb of Qalander Lal Shahbaz at Sewhan, Kalhora Tombs and Mosque of Khudabad near Dadu, Tombs of Kalhora Rulers and Shah Baharo at Larkana, Bohi Quba at Shikarpur, Mian-ji-Masjid and Tomb of Adam Shah Kalhoro at Sukkur, Architectural heritage of Talpur at Khairpur Mir's, Tomb of Sachal Sarmast at Darza Kahirpur Mir's (Fig: 28) and Syedun-ji-Masjid at Ghotki where the Kashikari art work is available with its distinguished style, employed with floral, geometrical and calligraphic decorations on wall surfaces. Further embellished with script, arabesque ornamentation, floral and calligraphic motifs were reproduced in endless combinations. The Kashikari done in Kalhora³⁰ and Talpur³¹ period have an indigenous aesthetical approach of arts and crafts of Sindh. It is probably because of the prolonged association, visual adaptation and social relation with their cultural, artistic and aesthetical values attached to them.

5. CONCLUSION

It is fact that, whenever someone will encounter with architectural aesthetic of the sub-continent, he will have no way to trace pass the architectural heritage of Sindh which have a fine version and sub version of techniques of ornamentation and decoration of wall surfaces of the architectural buildings, especially the tombs. Gradual changes and slight variations have been made by the planners, engineers, architects, master masons and designers in the architectural plan, elevation and decoration. Innovations may have originated from the previous practices but the use of floral, geometrical patterns, motifs in stone or in Kashikari art work here in Sindh is totally different.

The available architectural monuments are witness to their distinctive style. The Historian has included 'Sindh Architecture' as a part of Mughal Architecture in general but in plan, design, elevation and decoration it is unique, different and distinctive with other monuments available in sub-continent, built under the supervision or support of Mughals (Cousens, 1998)³² or any other dynasty. The architectural remains of the Mughal period at Thatta,

the ancient capital of Sindh, include the Shah Jehan mosque with its unique patterns of blue tile work, and the tombs of princes, ministers, governors and saints in brick and stone are evident of their distinction. The main feature of this period is bulbous domes, spaciousness and a liberal use of decoration. Further the wall surfaces of the tombs are decorated with calligraphy which formed an integral part of the ornamentation and decoration of the architectural design. The use of calligraphy on color-glazed tiles as a form of architectural decoration was introduced here. The geometrical designs with representation of nature, trees, plants, birds and animals were the main visuals of the ornamentation by the Muslim rulers and same were adapted by the people of Sindh but with their own aesthetical values and cultural elements; which created a great visual difference in surface decoration of the architectural buildings. The use of Kashikari art work can be found at each and every city of Sindh.

Today, it can be said that the Kashikari is a national art of Sindh for decoration of wall surfaces. Now a day Kashikari is mostly used for the decoration and ornamentation of tombs, mosques and even houses and public buildings are using the Kashikari tile work to decorate their wall surfaces. With a small effort of the academic and public institutions the use of Kashikari work on wall can be enhanced, which will mark the identity of real architecture heritage and aesthetics of Sindh.

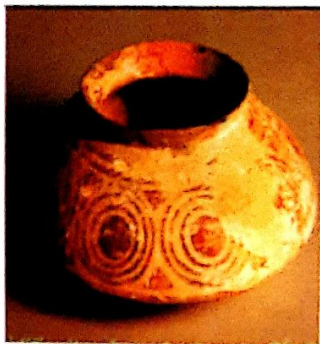


Figure 01. Glazed pot from Moen-jo-Daro decorated with circular and triangle pattern with brown colour and transparent glazed layer.

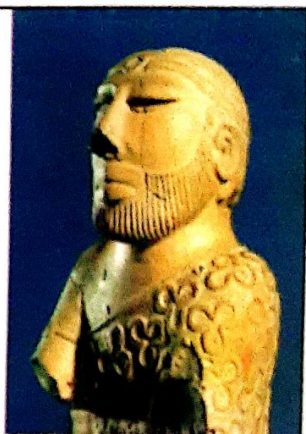


Figure 02. King Priest, a statue with embossed patterns from Moen-jo-Daro, same kind of patterns are still used in various crafts i.e. Ajrak, Block printing, tiles etc by the master artisans of Sindh



Figure 03: An example of Corinthian Column, used in the construction of buildings here in the sub-continent.



Figure 04. An example of Scythian Architectural influence on construction and decoration of wall surfaces.



Figure 05: Durga Temple, Southern India, CA 675 AD an architectural heritage and style of Bhudhist period.



Figure 06: Ruins of Arab Mosque built by Muhammad Bin Qasim at Rohri/ Aron Sindh about 712 AD, architectural heritage of Islamic era in Sindh.

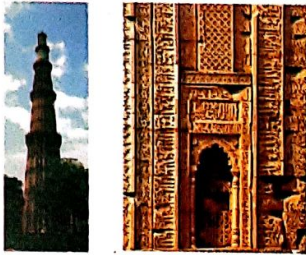


Figure 07: Qutb Minar, stone engraving and embossing, a mile stone of Islamic feature monument, Mumuk Sultanate Architecture.

Figure 08: Blund Darwaza by Allauddin Khilji at Ajmer Sharif in period of Khilji Dynasty.

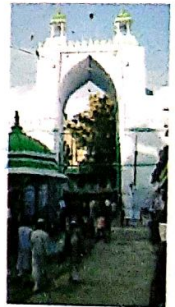


Figure 09: Jamaat Khana Masjid at Tomb of Nizaumduun Auliya, Khilji Dynasty 1290-1320 AD.

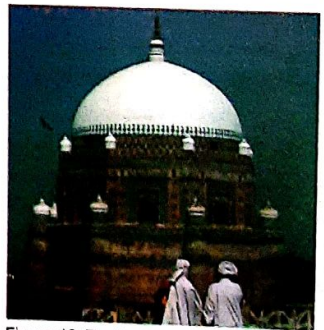


Figure 10: Tomb of Shah Ruk-e-Alam at Multan, an architectural mark of Islamic features in Tughlaq Dynasty 1320-1414 AD.



Figure 11: ShishGumbad built in Syed Dynasty 1414-1451 AD & Lodhi 1451-1526 AD.



Figure 13: Tomb of Jam Nindo, a Summa ruler of Sindh, who reigned from 1461-1508, wall surfaces are ornamented with floral and geometric patterns on stone.

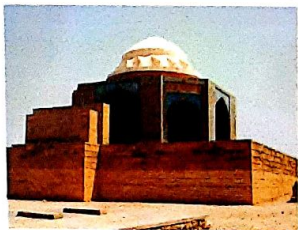


Figure 15: Canopied Tomb at Makli, Sindh, walls are decorated with Kashikari tile work.

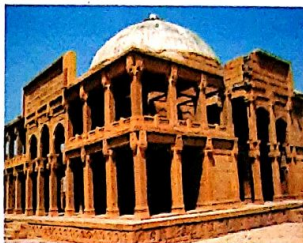


Figure 12: The Tomb of Mirza Isa Khan Turkhan 1644 AD, Makli, Sindh ornamented on stone work.

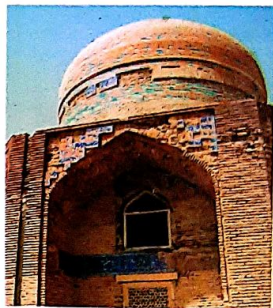


Figure 14: Tomb of Prince Ibrahim Bin Mirza Mohd Isa Tarkhan 1559 AD, Makli Sindh, *kashikari* tile work is evident.



Figure 16: Canopied Tombs at Makli, Sindh, surfaces and columns are ornamented through stone work.

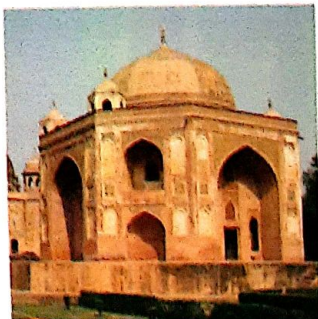


Figure 23: Mughal Architecture, NoorJehan Tomb.

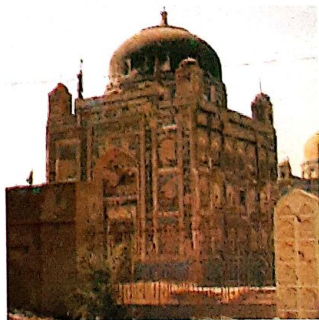


Figure 24: Talpur Mir Tomb at Hyderabad walls are decorated with *Kashikari* tiles.

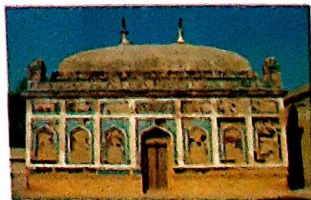


Figure 25: Tajjar decorated with *Kashikari* tiles at Tombs of Talpur Mir's at Hyderabad, Sindh.

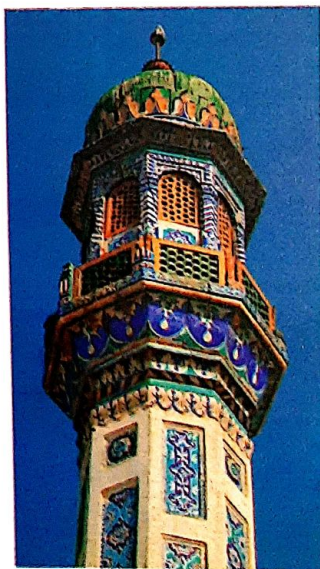


Figure 26: *Kashikari* tile work on the Minaret of Hazarat Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's tomb at Bhit Shah, Sindh.

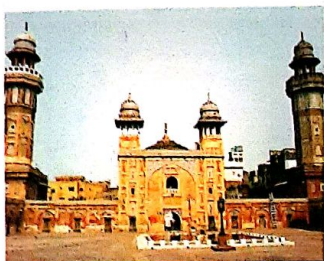


Figure 17: Mughal Architecture, Wazir Khan Mosque, Lahore.



Figure 18: Mughal Architecture, A Close view of Wazir Khan Mosque, Lahore.



Figure 19: Mughal Architecture, Amber Fort, Shish Mahal at Jaipure.



Figure 20: Mughal Architecture, Badshahi Mosque at Lahore.



Figure 21: Mughal Architecture, Diwan-e-Khas, Fatehpur Sikri.



Figure 22: Mughal Architecture, Jahangir Mausoleum.

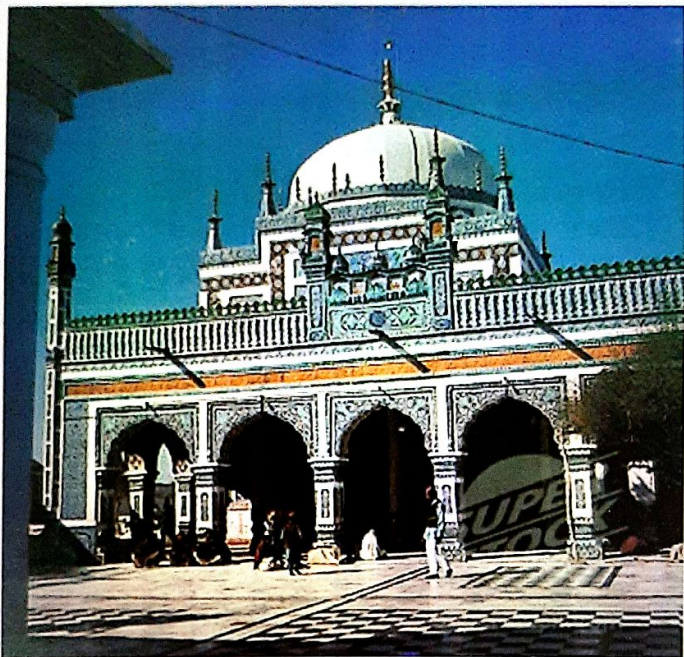


Figure 27: Tomb of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai; wall surfaces are decorated with *Kashikari* tiles built in Kalhora period, Bhit Shah, Sindh.



Figure 28: *Kashikari* tile work at Tomb of Hazrat Sachal Sarmast, Daraza Sharif, Sindh.

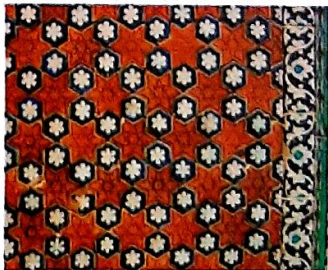


Figure 29: Wall panel of Rezo Kashi (Geometrical *Kashikari* pieces), Jamia Mosque Nasarpur, Sindh

END NOTES

1. Sheedai, p.72.
2. Pertaining to Corinth, a city of ancient Greece noted for its artistic adornment, luxury and licentiousness. Further the two books of epistles of the New Testament addressed by St. Paul to the Corinthians Deluxe Encyclopedic, p.226.
3. A branch of Yueh-chi inhabitants of North West China called Scythians, penetrated the region of Afghan hills, attacked on India, overran a greater portion of Punjab, Sindh and other parts of Indus valley. incorporated the Kushan empire by the powerful Kanishka in 78-123 A.D. Dr. Pathan, p.28.
4. V. Smith, p.272.
5. Cousens, p.64.
6. Cousens, p.39.
7. Quddosi, p.105.
8. After the death of Sultan Mahmood Ghori in 1206, Kutb-ud-din Aibak an origin of Turk Slave was elected as Sultan in Sub-continent Powell-Price, p.118.
9. Tickling or dropping, pendant form the roof of a cavern, A Gothic ornamentation style in architecture.
10. Of the still surviving buildings of the later period of the Mamluk Sultanate, the most important are the mausoleums of Saint Bahauddin Zakaria (d. 1261) and Shams Tabrezi (d. 1276) at Multan, Pakistan. Khan, p.110.
11. Quddosi, p.182.
12. Quddosi, p.191.
13. In a battlement, the solid part between two embrasures or crenels, To from with square indentations as a molding.
14. A high peak; ending in a cone or pyramid which rises above the roof of a building or crowns a buttress or tower.
15. Resembling the clear blue color of sky, a name common to several sky colored or blue pigments, ultramarine or cobalt; the sky or vault of heaven.
16. Powell-Price- 178.
17. Powell-Price- 182.
18. To uphold or strengthen, a structure built against or projecting from a wall or building for the purpose of giving it stability; something resembling such a structure in use or appearance; a prop or support.
19. An ornamental roof like projection or covering.

20. A closed plane figure with three or more straight sides or a figure on a sphere formed by arcs of great circles.
21. Ornamentation in which flowers, foliage, fruits, geometrical figures (in strict Mohammedan use) no animals, Deluxe Encyclopedic, p.52.
22. Makli necropolis near Thatta, 400 hundred years old graveyard.
23. In Sindhi, Persian, Hindi and Urdu its meaning is Glass.
24. Tile of Ceramics.
25. Seven colored Ceramics.
26. *Rezo Kashi* means Geometrical Kashikari Pieces, which created massive sign.
27. Bukhari, p.44.
28. Bukhari, p.44.
29. Tomb was built in the Kalhora period by Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhora.
30. 1701-1782 A.D. 12 Kalhora rulers ruled the Sindh. This period is the main area of research; development in the field of arts and crafts specially related to Kashikari art will be discussed in my thesis.
31. 1782-1843 A.D. Talpur ruled Sindh for 61 years. The Country was divided in to three states i.e. Hyderabad, Kahirpur and Mirpur khas. The design and decoration of architectural surfaces in this period are major component of the research.
32. Cousens, p.1.

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