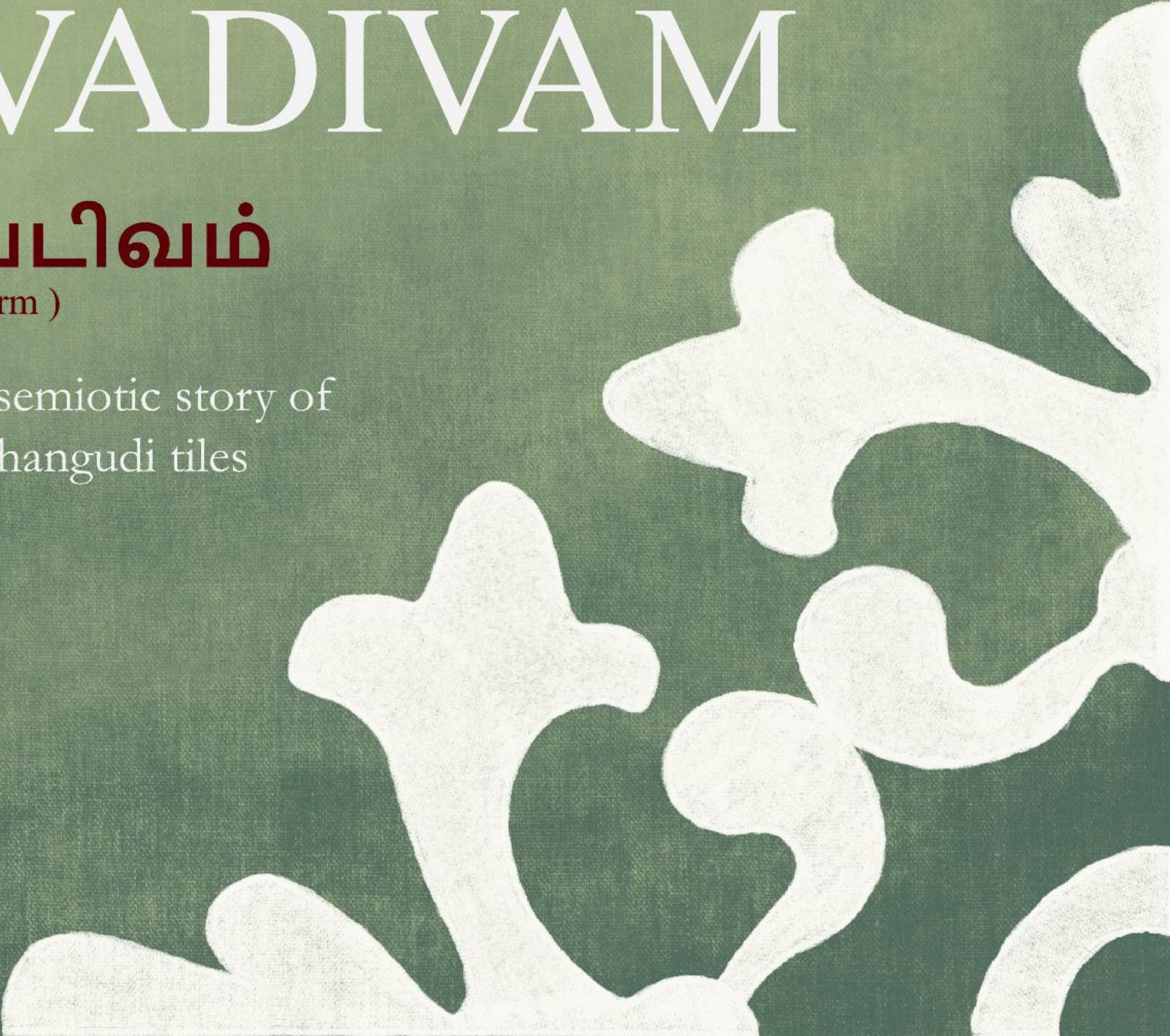


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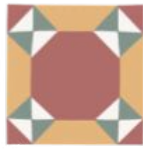
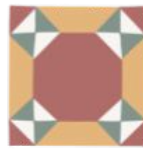
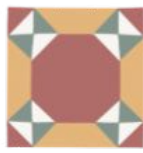
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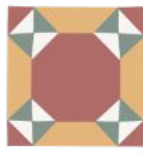
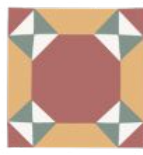
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A semiotic story of
Athangudi tiles



A SEMIOTIC STORY OF ATHANGUDI TILES







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BONAFIDE

This is to certify that the cluster document prepared by Maheswari, Monikka, Prithwiraj, Siddhi, Sujeet, and Tanishka, who are students of the Fashion and Lifestyle Accessory Department, Semester 5, Batch 2022-2026 at NIFT Bengaluru, is an authentic record of their work. The students undertook this project under the supervision of the faculty of the Fashion and Lifestyle Accessory Department at NIFT Bengaluru.





PREFACE

The rich cultural heritage of India is vividly reflected in its traditional crafts, among which Athangudi tiles hold a special place. Originating from the quaint village of Athangudi in Tamil Nadu, these handcrafted tiles are renowned for their intricate patterns, vibrant colours, and timeless appeal. As Semester 5 students at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Bengaluru, we have undertaken an in-depth field exploration and primary survey of the craft of Athangudi tile-making to understand and appreciate the craftsmanship and cultural significance embedded in each tile.

This document represents the culmination of our research, fieldwork, and creative interpretations of Athangudi tiles. Through this project, we aimed to delve into the history, techniques, and contemporary relevance of these tiles, gaining insights directly from the artisans who continue to preserve this traditional craft. Our journey involved engaging with the local communities, documenting the process of tile-making, and analysing the semiotics, motifs, and patterns of the Athangudi tiles.

We hope that this document not only serves as a comprehensive resource on Athangudi tiles but also sparks a renewed interest in preserving and promoting traditional crafts among the broader design community. It is our earnest belief that this endeavour will contribute to the enduring legacy of Athangudi tiles and inspire future generations of designers to value and incorporate traditional artisanship in their work.





THANK YOU

Development Commissioner for Handloom and Development Commissioner for
Handloom Ministry of Textiles - Ms. Sunitha I.A.S

Principal Secretary - Department of Handlooms & Textiles, Government of Andhra
Pradesh - Mr. Lakshmi Nath,

OSD to APHDC - Mr. Ramesh,

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We are deeply thankful to our mentors, Dr . Yathindra Lakkanna, Campus Director, NIFT, Bengaluru, Dr . R Reshmi Munshi, Associate Professor & Campus Coordinator, Department of Fashion and Lifestyle Accessories, Mr. Sharanabasappa M Byali, Associate Professor , for their impeccable support and guidance throughout the project. Special thanks to Dr . Shipra Roy, Associate Professor & CIC, NIFT, Bengaluru, for her valuable advice and suggestions, and to Mr . R.N. Srinivas, Mr . Narasegowda and Mr. Harish Gowda, for their assistance during the project.

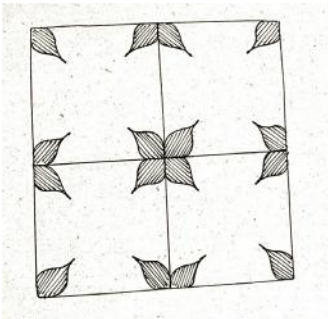
We also express our profound appreciation to Mr and Mrs Michael Raj A & Family, Mr and Mrs B Ravichandran & Family, Mr S Thomas & Family, Mr & Mrs Murugessan & Family, and Mr Ganesh and Ms Pandi Meenal & Family for their invaluable patience and cooperation in answering our questions and connecting us with the craft. Finally, we would like to thank our families for their constant encouragement and inspiration during our visit and we would also like to extend our sincere gratitude towards all the Faculty & Staff from the Department of Fashion and Lifestyle Accessories.



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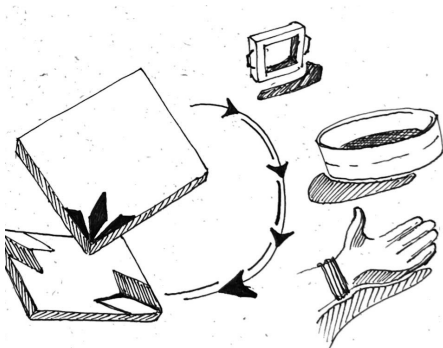
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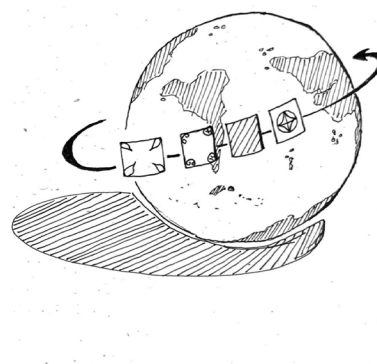
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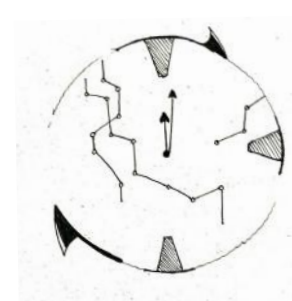
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ABSTRACT

This report presents an in-depth exploration and survey of the craft of Athangudi tile-making, aimed at understanding the artisanry and cultural significance embedded in traditional tile-making. The study delves into the historical significance of the place, traditional techniques handed down over generations and the contemporary relevance of this craft and its revival.

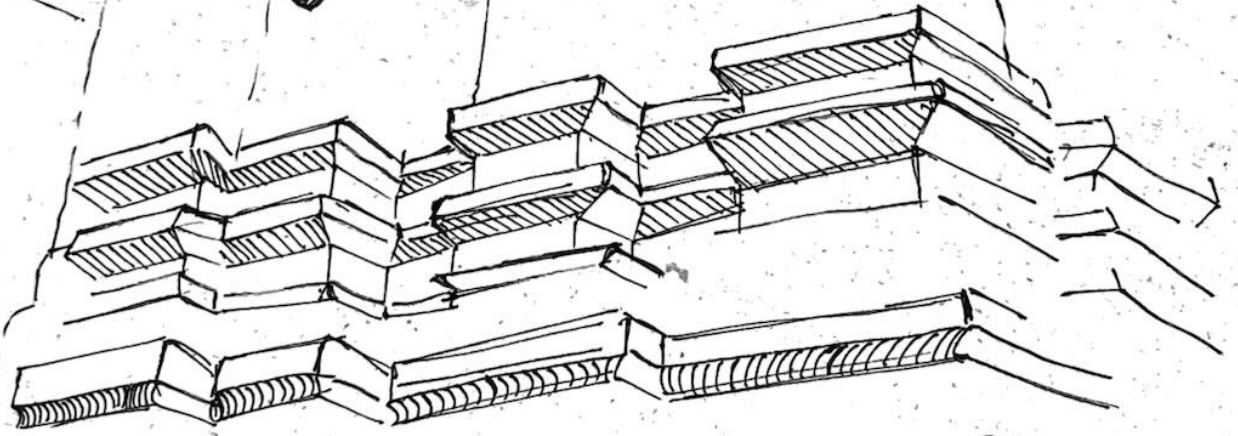
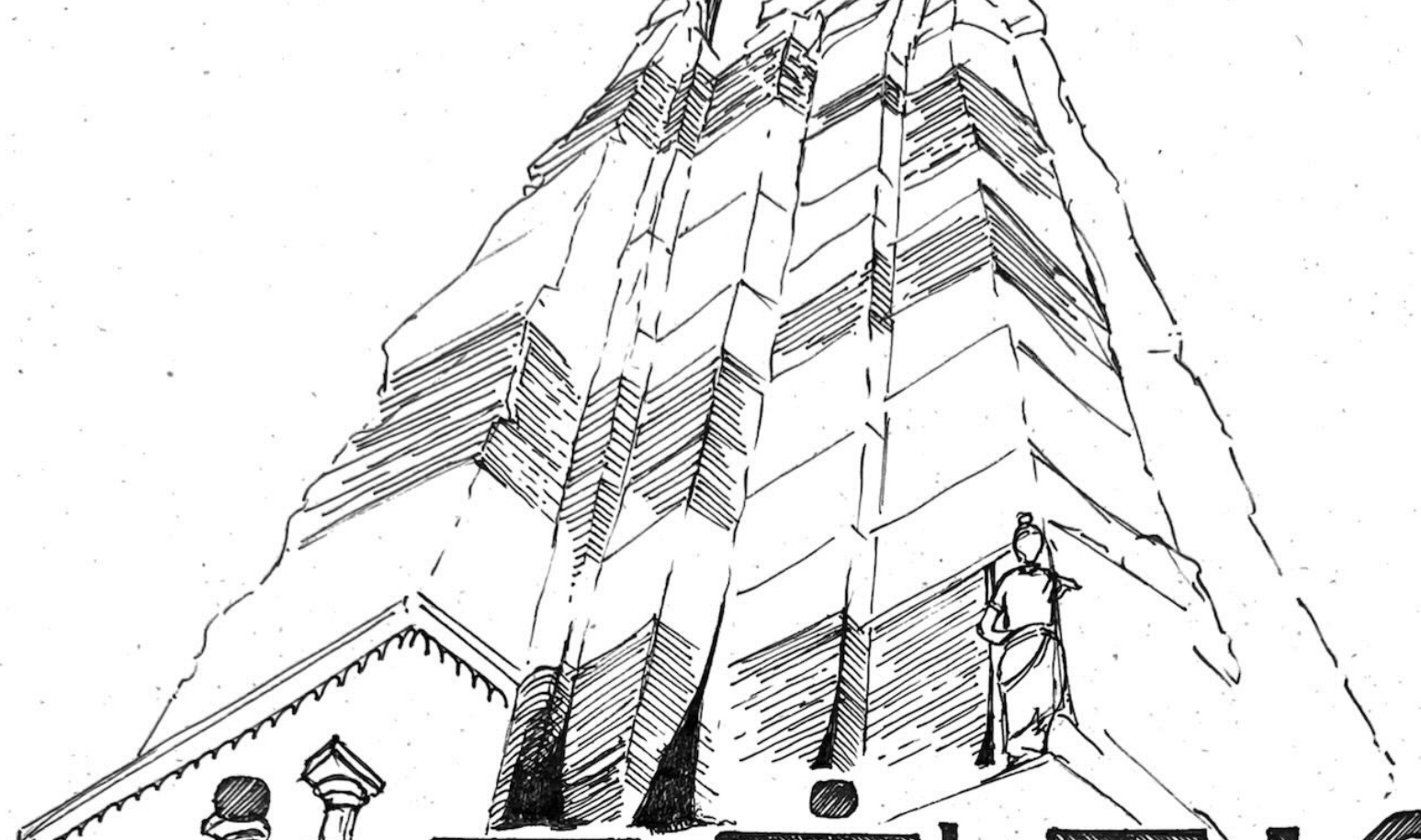
The intricate details of the process of tile making, the speciality of the materials used, the tools and techniques adopted elaborating the craftsmanship of the artisans is documented. An overview of the current market scenario is included. This report captures the narratives of the artisans themselves through interviews with the local community and documenting the intricate process of tile-making. It has enabled us to understand their struggles in evolving and adapting the craft of tile making, withstanding the challenges in the contemporary market.

Through creative interpretation and documentation, this report offers a detailed analysis of the semiotics of the motifs and patterns that defines the tile-making process, highlighting the cultural significance of each design and its meaning. The study has also covered the comparison of the Athangudi tiles with similar tiles available world wide and with the contemporary mass produced tiles. A SWOT analysis is included to understand the contemporary relevance of the craft.

Our findings highlight the importance of preserving and renewing traditional crafts through sharing the timelessness of these techniques that are safeguarded in rural communities like Athangudi. The enduring legacy of Athangudi tiles is a testament to the dedication of India's traditional artisanship – which warrants appreciation among designers and artists to maintain its relevance for future.



புத்தங்குடி



INTRODUCTION

This document is a testament to our experience with the craftsmen of Athangudi, Tamilnadu who have been handcrafting the well-known 'Athangudi tiles' for about a century, through four generations. Thirty-seven of us, the 2022-26 batch of Fashion and Lifestyle Accessory Department with Mr Harish, started on the night of July 20, 2024, from Bengaluru via overnight bus from Madiwala to Avudaipoigai, near Karaikudi where our accommodation was arranged at Thangam Residency. The hotel location was about 10 km from the village of Athangudi.

Our group, consisting of six students, had booked an appointment with Mr Michael Raj A, Owner of Malar Tiles, Athangudi for the next day and travelled to his manufacturing workshop. We met many skilful and talented artisans there and understood the various dimensions of the craft from their stories. We could examine the sequential arrangement of the workspace and the skilful assignment of different roles in the tile-making process according to their experience. They were very welcoming sharing insights about the craft. After observing the process till lunch, we visited M/s. Popular Tiles workshop owned by Mr Thomas S, accompanied by our faculties Prof. Dr R Reshmi Munshi and Prof. Dr Yathindra Lakkana.

Later we headed to M/s. ST Tiles, owned by Mr B Ravichandran who is the head of the Athangudi Tiles Association comprising twenty-seven members. During the interview, he explained in-depth the process of Athangudi tile making and was generous enough to gift us an Athangudi tile as a souvenir.

Over the next nine days, we visited and revisited five tile workshops (NM tiles owner- Mr Murugesan, Ganesha tiles- Mr Ganapathy and wife Mrs Pandi Meenal, and the above three Malar, ST, Popular) midway through our journey Prof Sharanabasappa M Byali and Mr Naresa Gowda joined us.

We could also spare time to visit Athangudi Palace, Athangudi Sivan temple, Chettinad mansions, Antique car museum and Kararikudi town and interact with the local people. We immersed ourselves in Chettinad architecture and the grandeur of Chettinad mansions. We also enjoyed the flavoursome Chettinad cuisine. As all the thirty-seven of us were staying together, we had great fun creating memorable bonds.

அத்தங்குடி
ATHANGUDI

Figure 1: Athangudi Village Board

ATHANGUDI, THE VILLAGE

HISTORY AND CULTURE

The village of Athangudi is part of the Chettinad region's cluster of towns and villages. Athangudi, being a part of the Chettinad region, has a rich cultural history and a wide variety of handicrafts and traditional building trades, which are reflected in its architecture. (Ramanathan, 2024)

In Athangudi, the practice of creating *kollam* (also known as rangoli or *kolam*) in front of houses is deeply ingrained in the local culture, with significant cultural, religious, and aesthetic implications. Traditionally, these patterns are crafted daily at the entrances of homes, especially during festivals and auspicious occasions. Often these Kollam designs are also seen as a motif in the tiles.



Figure 2: Kollam/Rangoli drawn in front of the house in Athangudi A) pointed star shaped pattern B) Circular ring shaped pattern.

Culturally, *kollam* serves as a symbol of hospitality, inviting prosperity and positive energy into the home while warding off negative influences. This practice reflects a profound belief in the interplay between the spiritual and physical realms, where the cleanliness and beauty of the space are thought to influence the household's fortune.

The 'thinnai' is also a prominent element of traditional Chettinad architecture, reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage. Usually located at the front of homes, the thinnai is more than just a structural component; it serves as a social space where family members and visitors gather, fostering community and shared experiences. Historically, thinnais were built during the Pandavas' era to offer tired warriors a resting place, often with a water pot for refreshment. This feature exemplifies Tamil hospitality, highlighting the importance of personal interactions and communal bonds. Functionally, the thinnai provides a shaded area to escape the intense heat, making it suitable for daily activities and festive gatherings. Architecturally, it improves ventilation and cooling by allowing air to flow freely, naturally moderating the indoor climate.



Figure 3: Front view of a traditional house in Athangudi, providing space to visitors to sit and relax.



Figure 4: Water pots kept in front of the houses in Athangudi, Tamil Nadu

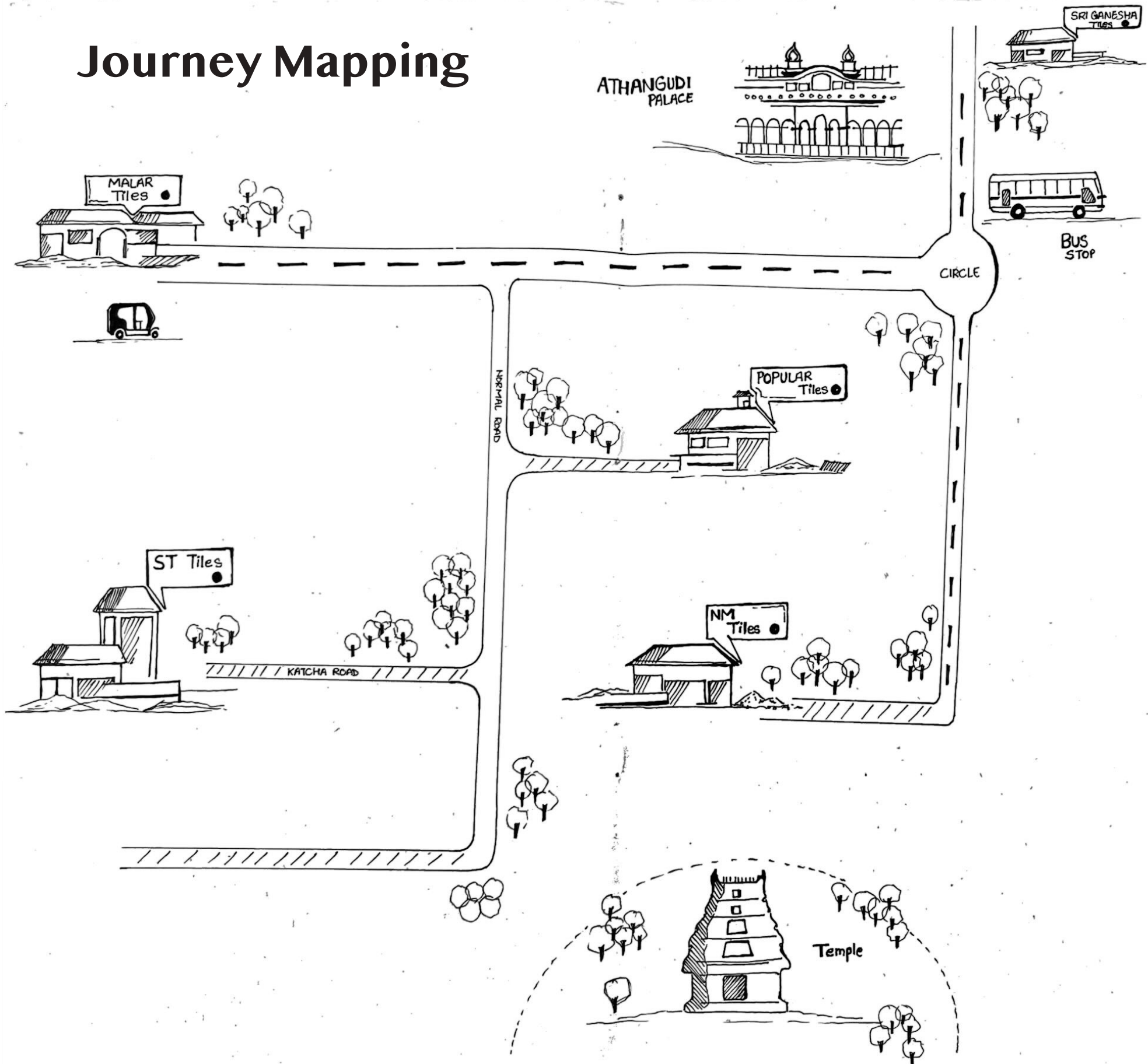


Area Mapping

(Not Fit To Scale)

Located in the Karaikudi taluk of the Sivagangai district of Tamil Nadu state. The total geographical area of Athangudi is 683.89 hectares. Situated 14km away from sub-district headquarters Karaikkudi (Tehsildar office) and 60km from district headquarter Sivaganga.

Journey Mapping



SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Administration : A sarpanch, chosen by the village’s voters in local elections, is in charge of overseeing Athangudi Village’s administration. Athangudi village is part of the Sivaganga parliamentary constituency and the Tiruppattur assembly constituency, according to 2019 statistics. The closest town to Athangudi Village for all significant economic activity is Karaikudi. (Anon., 2024)

Demographics: A total population of 1,696 people, out of which 844 are male population and 852 female, as shown from the census 2011. 471 families are residing in this region with the major population being engaged in main work activities such as tile manufacturing and masonry. (Anon., 2024)

The working-age people count is 881, of which 41% are marginal workers, meaning they do not provide a living for longer than six months. 28 individuals are employed as agricultural labourers, while 285 are cultivators (either owners or co-owners). Athangudi village has a lower percentage of literacy, 73.5% compared with 80.09% literacy of Tamilnadu State. 83.14% of men are literate, while only 63.44% of women are literate. (Anon., 2022)

Particulars	Total	Male	Female
Total No of Houses	471		
Population	1696	844	852
Child(0-6)	198	79	119
Literacy	73.50%	83.14%	63.44%
Total Workers	881	517	364
Main Worker	527		
Marginal Worker	354	175	179

Table 1:Athangudi data All data based on 2011 census

Public Utilities:

Schools: Athangudi is equipped with several primary and secondary schools that provide essential education to the village’s children. There is also a middle school available.

Veterinary Dispensary: The village has a veterinary dispensary to cater to the health needs of animals.

Primary Healthcare Centers: These centres offer basic medical services, including treatment for common illnesses, maternal and child healthcare, and immunizations. Notable facilities include the Dhanam Clinic and Siva Poly Clinic.

Hospitals: For more specialized medical care, residents usually visit hospitals in nearby towns like Karaikudi. These hospitals provide comprehensive healthcare services, including emergency care, surgeries, and specialist consultations.

Financial Services and Communication:

Banking: Indian Overseas Bank has a branch in Athangudi, providing essential banking services to the residents.



Figure 5: Dhanam clinic in athangudi village



Figure 6:Post banks in Athangudi, Tamil Nadu



Figure 7: IOB bank Athangudi branch

OTHER CRAFTS PRACTISED IN ATHANGUDI

Wood carving

Wood carving furniture in Athangudi is celebrated for its exquisite craftsmanship, intricate designs, and its integral role in the construction and decoration of Chettinad mansions. This craft was introduced to Athangudi by the Chettiar community, who brought back diverse artistic influences from their extensive trade travels across Southeast Asia. They employed skilled artisans to create detailed woodwork that adorned their grand homes, using materials such as teak, rosewood, and other hardwoods known for their durability and fine grain. The secret behind the popularity of Athangudi wood carving lies in its detailed artistry, featuring floral patterns, mythological figures, and geometric shapes that add a unique elegance to interiors. People choose this craft for its cultural significance, the high-quality materials used, and the timeless beauty it imparts to furniture and architectural elements. The combination of historical value, meticulous craftsmanship, and aesthetic appeal has made Athangudi wood carving a cherished and enduring art form.

Chettinad *Kottan* baskets

Chettinad *Kottan* baskets are renowned in Athangudi for their vibrant colours, intricate weaving, and versatility. This traditional craft was introduced to Athangudi by the Chettiar community, who sought practical yet aesthetically pleasing storage solutions for their homes. Made from palm leaves and natural dyes, these baskets come in various sizes and shapes, ideal for storing grains and other household items. The secret behind their popularity lies in the meticulous handweaving process, which ensures durability and a unique visual appeal. People choose Chettinad *Kottan* baskets for their cultural significance, the eco-friendly materials used, and the timeless elegance they bring to any setting. The combination of traditional techniques, quality materials, and functional beauty has made these baskets a cherished craft in Athangudi.

Chettinad sarees

Chettinad sarees, renowned for their vibrant colours and unique patterns, are a hallmark of traditional handloom weaving in Athangudi, Tamil Nadu. Originating from this culturally rich village, these sarees are crafted from high-quality cotton and silk, often blended to achieve the perfect balance of texture and durability.

The craft became prominent in Athangudi due to the village's historical involvement in the textile industry, where skilled weavers developed distinctive techniques over generations. The secret behind the popularity of Chettinad sarees lies in their bold checks, stripes, and contrasting colour combinations, which offer a striking visual appeal and reflect the region's artistic heritage. People choose these sarees for their durability, intricate designs, and the sense of tradition they embody, making them a cherished choice for those seeking both elegance and cultural significance in their attire.

Metalwork and brassware

Metalwork and brassware from Athangudi are renowned for their decorative and functional items crafted from brass, copper, and other metals. This craft became prominent in Athangudi due to the region's rich tradition of metalworking, which dates back centuries. The local artisans, known for their exceptional skill, produce items featuring traditional designs often used in religious ceremonies and as household decor. People choose these items for their durability, aesthetic appeal, and the sense of heritage they convey. The use of brass and copper is particularly special, as these materials are known for their longevity and ability to be intricately worked, allowing artisans to create detailed and enduring pieces that are both functional and beautiful.

Tile paintings and murals

Tile paintings and murals from Athangudi are famous for their hand-painted depictions of traditional Chettinad themes and motifs. This craft, which flourished in Athangudi due to the village's artistic heritage and skilled artisans, involves the use of ceramic tiles and both natural and synthetic dyes. The detailed artwork and vibrant colours of these tiles and murals have made them a popular choice for home decor, reflecting the rich cultural legacy of the region. The secret behind the popularity of Athangudi tile paintings and murals lies in the precision and creativity of the artisans, who bring traditional stories and patterns to life with their intricate designs. People choose these decorative items for their unique ability to add a touch of cultural elegance to any space, appreciating the craftsmanship and historical significance embedded in each piece.





22-7-2024



MANUFACTURING OF ATHANGUDI TILES

ATHANGUDI TILES

Artisanship & Manufacturing

HISTORY AND ORIGIN

Athangudi tiles, originating from the Chettinad region in Tamil Nadu, India, are renowned for their vibrant colours and intricate patterns. These tiles are a testament to traditional craftsmanship and are cherished for their aesthetic appeal and durability. They were first introduced by the affluent Chettiar community, who were well-travelled, prominent traders and financiers in the region.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Chettiars amassed wealth through trade and banking, leading to the construction of grand mansions adorned with luxurious materials and intricate designs. The Chettiar mansions, known for their opulence and architectural grandeur, prominently feature these tiles, making them an integral part of Chettinad's cultural heritage.

The Chettiars built palatial mansions with wooden pillars, Japanese tiles, Italian marbles and imported stained glass. Originally tiles from Germany, England and Italy were used in these affluent homes, but when the tiles aged with wear and tear, fixing them became cumbersome and highly expensive due to the non-availability of spares. So, the enterprising community set up a cottage industry that made replicas of the imported tiles. Thus, the famous Athangudi tiles emerged.

The name for this tile came after the village name of Athangudi, where it originated. Most people in Athangudi village learned the art of tile making and made the village name trademark for this tile. Locally, the Athangudi tiles are called "*Pookal*" which means 'flower'. These handmade tiles are made of natural materials and adorn traditional patterns and designs. (Dastkari Haat Samiti, n.d.)



Figure 8: Athangudi Palace in Athangudi, Tamil Nadu, featuring wooden pillars, Japanese tiles, Italian marble, and imported stained glass, showcasing materials from various countries.

SALIENT SPECIALITIES

Athangudi tiles emerged during the late 19th century as an affordable yet aesthetically pleasing alternative to imported European tiles.

The local artisans adapted techniques and designs influenced by British, Italian, and other European tile-making traditions, incorporating them into their own distinctive style. Most of the designs are inspired from Victorian tiles in United Kingdom. The tile processed was a blend of east and west.

During the earlier days of their production, these tiles were preferred more by the rich since it was a newer technology in those days and was a bit expensive to afford.

The use of these tiles in traditional Chettinad homes is not merely decorative but also practical, providing cooling effects in the hot and humid climate of Tamil Nadu.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

The production of Athangudi tiles has provided a livelihood for local artisans for four generations. The skills and techniques involved in tile making are often passed down within families, ensuring the preservation of this traditional craft.

The revival of interest in traditional and sustainable building materials has led to a renewed demand for Athangudi tiles, boosting the local economy and encouraging the continuation of this artisanal practice.

The distinctive aesthetics of Athangudi tiles have gained wide recognition. Designers and architects have incorporated these tiles into contemporary interiors, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern design sensibilities.

LOCAL PRESENCE

Athangudi tiles are popular among the Chettiyar community. Athangudi tiles are found in Chettinad mansions constructed over a period of one hundred years. The heritage Chettinad houses of earlier periods (more than one hundred years old) are laid with imported tiles. In general, the villagers are not found to be using Athangudi tiles in their residences or buildings, due to availability of cheaper alternatives. Artisans/ workers and labourers involved in this craft and their relatives are found to be using Athangudi tiles in their residences.



Figure 9: Athangudi tiles seen in a local tea shop

(FREE HAND)
PANDI
TOOL



RAW MATERIALS



Figure 10: Women collecting sand.



Figure 11: Cement piled up on the worktable.



Figure 12: Water is being used for curing the tiles and removing excess material.



Figure 13: The impression of the famous motif Thamarai used on the glass when the tile is separated



Figure 14: A) Colour Pigments like red oxide, yellow oxide, kolam powder kept in sac.



B) Red pigment no.H130

01 Sand:

The unique Vaarimanal Sand is sourced locally from the forests and the surrounding area. It has a high laterite content and a high rate of absorption of water because of which forms a texture when mixed with water.

02 Cement:

RAMCO PPC Portland Cement 53 grade

Cost: 400/- (Ramco brand)

BIRLA Super Strong Ultratech PPC for mixing with colours.

Cost: 480/-

The difference between the two types of cement is that Ramco has more fly ash and hence gives darker pigments.

03 Water:

Used with the colour powder to form a paste. The water is used for curing and the curing water is reused twice. Water is required also for cleaning the glass.

04 Glass:

A piece of glass is re-used three to four times. On re-use, the glass either breaks on its own or the shine of the glass fades away. The thickness of the glass does affect the thickness of the tile, but they prefer to have glass thicker than 4mm, normally 6mm to 8mm.

On our visit, we found one manufacturer using textured glass to provide a grip finish to the tile so that it can be used in wet areas like the bathroom.

05 Colours:

Red Oxide, Yellow Oxide, Cement and Kolam powder which is raw rice powder for white colour.

Red - Segappu

Blue - Neelam

Green - Pachhai

Yellow - Manjal

Black - Karuppu

White - Vellai, sourced from Madurai.

06 Engine Oil:

Applied on the moulds such that the cement mixture does not stick to it .

TOOLS

01

Mould / ash:

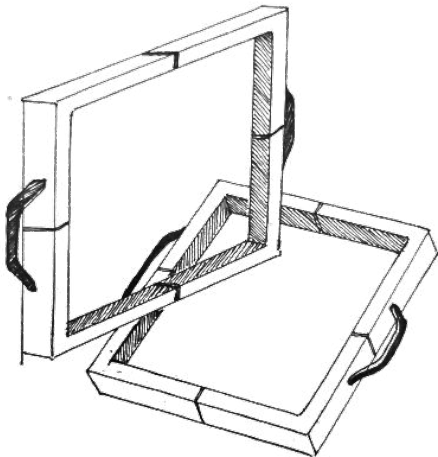
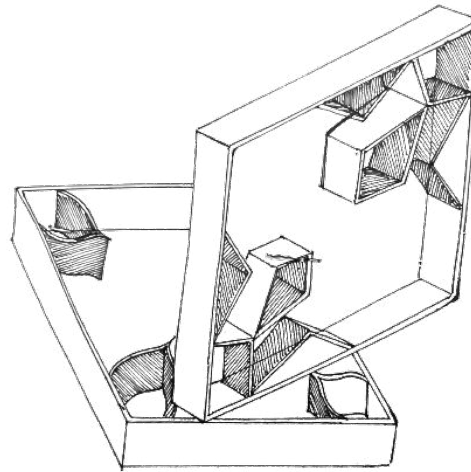


Figure 15: A) Base mould

02



B) Pattern mould

03

Divider: Patta



Figure 16: A) Patta is used as a divider to make rectangular tiles.

04

Brush tool:

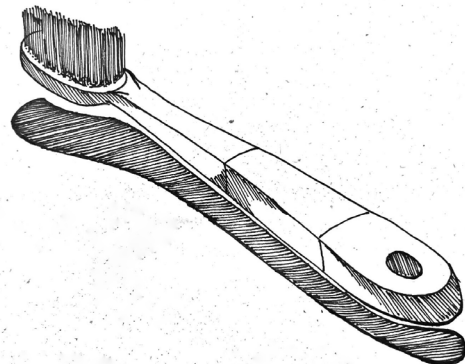


Figure 17: Brush

05

Sieve: Jalikki

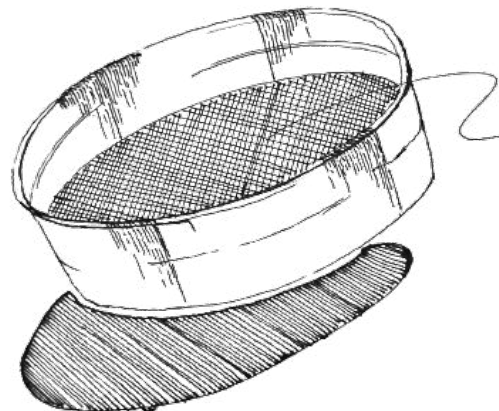


Figure 18: Sieves called "Jalikki" used for separating grain of sand.

06

Levelling tool: Valikaratatti

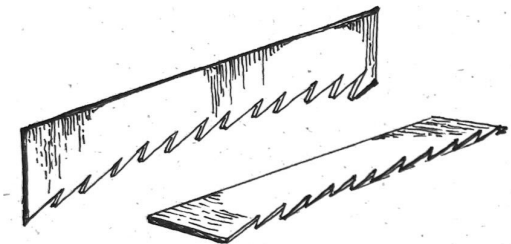


Figure 19: Valikaratatti for levelling the tile composition.

07

Spoon/ Pouring tool: Colour Karandi

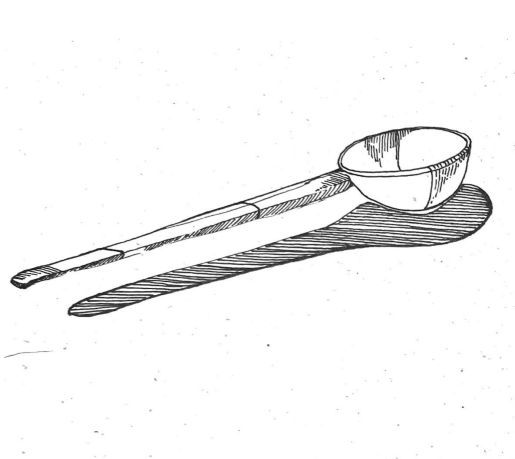


Figure 20: Colour Karandi used for mixing & pouring material into the mould.

08

Hoe: Manvetti

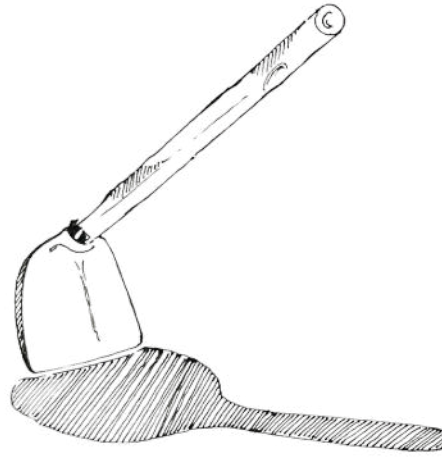


Figure 21: Hoe called Manvetti used for mixing sand and cement.

09

Paandi: Free-hand design tool:

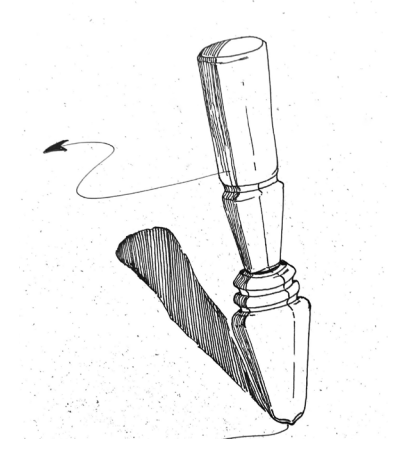


Figure 22: Paandi called a wooden tool used to mix the colour for free hand technique

10

Finger gloves:



Figure 23: Artisans use gloves for fingers not to get hurt while making tile

11

Press: Kal amakara karandi

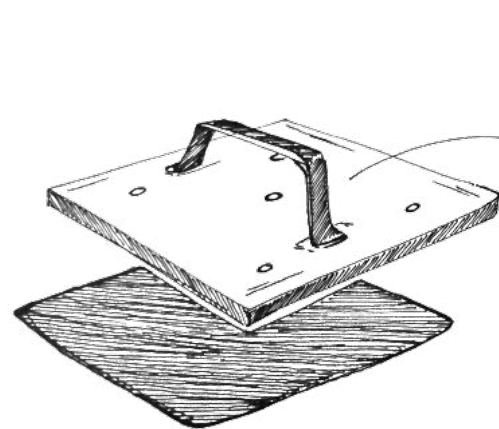


Figure 24: Kal amakara karandi used as pressing tool.

12

Trowel: Mason Karandi



Figure 25: Trowel known as Mason Karandi

PROCESS

01



Figure 27: Artisan "MICHAEL RAJ" explaining about the motifs and pattern.

Deciding the design or pattern of the tile.

A motif or pattern is chosen, and a stencil of the required pattern is prepared. Pre-prepared sketches and moulds are available for traditional designs. If a non-traditional design is required, the outline sketch of the design is made/ drawn out by an artist and the brass mould is made by mould manufacturers (located in Gujarat) which takes an additional time of ten days.



Figure 26: Unique Athangudi forest sand used to make Athangudi tiles.

Colour mixing.

The coloured mixes are pre-prepared by blending finely sieved sand and white cement with the respective coloured oxides in water to a thick consistency. The required colours are prepared by grinding the respective ingredients. Normally grinding is done using traditional grinders. In recent times, some artisans started using motor-driven grinding machines.

Mixing ratio:

- Five cup cement (1.5 kg approx.)
- Three cup sand
- One cup colour oxide
- Consistency of the colouring liquid -medium grainy



Figure 28: Preparation of colours by mixing oxides in grinding Machine.

02

Preparing the mould.

For the chosen pattern or motif, the stencil of the required pattern is placed over the glass plate within the cast iron frame. This step ensures a silky smoothness on the surface of the tile

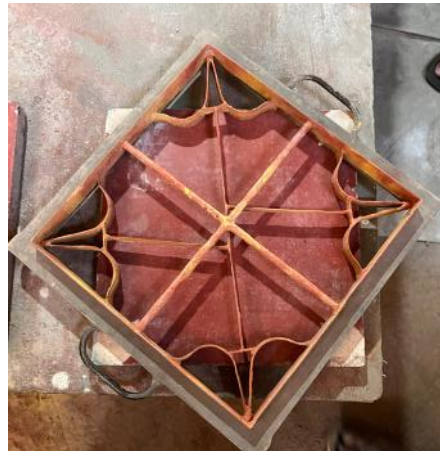


Figure 29: A) Stencil used for making patterns and motifs on tiles.

03

04



Figure 30: Pouring colours using Colour Karandi

Pouring the mix.

The pre-prepared coloured mixes are poured into the different sections of the stencil with ladles (Fig.). Alternatively, the coloured mixes are poured onto the glass plate directly and freehand swirls or floral designs are created with sticks (with a thickness of 3 to 4 millimetres). The whole setup of the metal frame along with the glass and poured in a mixture of colours is tilted with the mould so that the colour mixture spreads out evenly. The metal stencil is then removed carefully.

05



Figure 31: Fixing the base of the tile by adding the prepared mixture.

Fixing the pattern.

A dry powder of sand and cement is spread over the mix as soon as the stencil is removed from the frame to keep the colours in place. This layer has a thickness of three to four millimetres.

Fixing the base.

The tile is filled with a layer of cement mortar and compacted with a hand spade. In earlier times, powdered lime was used in place of cement. Once set, the dry powder is spread again to achieve a dry, level surface and the mixture is pressed with a thin iron plate to compress it. This layer is ten millimetres thick.



Figure 32: Removing the base using the press.

06

Setting and curing the tile

The bounding metal frame is then removed, leaving the tile on the glass plate. The patterned cement tiles are dried overnight before being immersed in water for the curing process. It takes about two to three days to cure the tiles underwater to gain the desired strength.



Figure 33: Tiles along with the glass submerged in the water.

07

08



Figure 34: Tiles left in the sunlight for drying.

Drying and Stacking

Lastly, the cured tiles are dried in the sun to soak up excess moisture. The tiles are kept under the sun for a maximum of 5 days after which the glass plates are gently removed from them and The edges of the tiles are evened using broken Athangudi tiles to obtain a smooth finish, and, finally, the tiles are stacked like sandwiches with the newspaper in between the glossy surfaces.



Figure 35: Feeling the finished Athangudi Tile.

MARKETING OF ATHANGUDI TILES: CURRENT SCENARIO

Marketing efforts for Athangudi tiles are driven by personal networks, accounting for about 90% of sales, with social media contributing around 10%. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, visits from international tourists have decreased. However, architecture students from several institutions have visited Athangudi, in the past year. Athangudi tiles primarily serve a niche market of high-end interior designers, architects, and homeowners with a cultural affinity. While the demand is steady, it is restricted due to limited awareness and accessibility. The artisanal nature of production limits the scalability of Athangudi tiles. Expanding production to meet large orders or entering new markets is challenging without compromising quality and authenticity. Despite their uniqueness, Athangudi tiles face competition from other handcrafted tiles and mass-produced alternatives that are more widely available and often cheaper.

Sales Channels:

Local Sales: The majority of sales are local, with artisans selling directly from their workshops or through small retailers in nearby towns.

Boutique Stores: A few boutique stores in major cities stock Athangudi tiles, but their reach is limited compared to mainstream home décor retailers

Online Presence: The presence on online platforms is growing but still limited. Some artisans and small businesses use social media and e-commerce websites to expand their reach, but these efforts are often fragmented and lack consistency. Athangudi tiles are listed on third-party websites like IndiaMART, with very few artisans having their own dedicated websites. All artisans are active on Instagram and Facebook. WhatsApp is also extensively used for communication and sharing sketches, and product images, though these efforts tend to be informal and lack professional marketing strategies.

LOGISTICS

Packaging:

Tiles are packaged using vaikol (paddy husk) to cushion and prevent breakage during transit. Damaged tiles are also utilized to tightly pack and protect the tiles.

Inventory Management:

Brass Moulds from Gujarat: Brass Molds are sourced from Gujarat, where new dyes are priced between Rs. 3000-6000, compared to locally made moulds which cost Rs. 5000-10000, making the Gujarat molds more cost-effective.

Manual Tracking: Inventory is typically managed manually, leading to potential inefficiencies and difficulties in accurately tracking stock levels, which can affect timely order fulfilment.

Transportation:

Road Transport: Tiles are transported by road, often using trucks. Due to the tiles' weight and fragility, careful handling and secure packing are crucial to prevent breakage during transport.

Distribution:

Including Demurrage an additional 10% of tiles are included to account for potential demurrage. Finished tiles are distributed through retailers, wholesalers, and direct sales to customers. When selling directly to customers, the tile laying process is also offered, typically taking up to 25 days.

Waste Disposal:

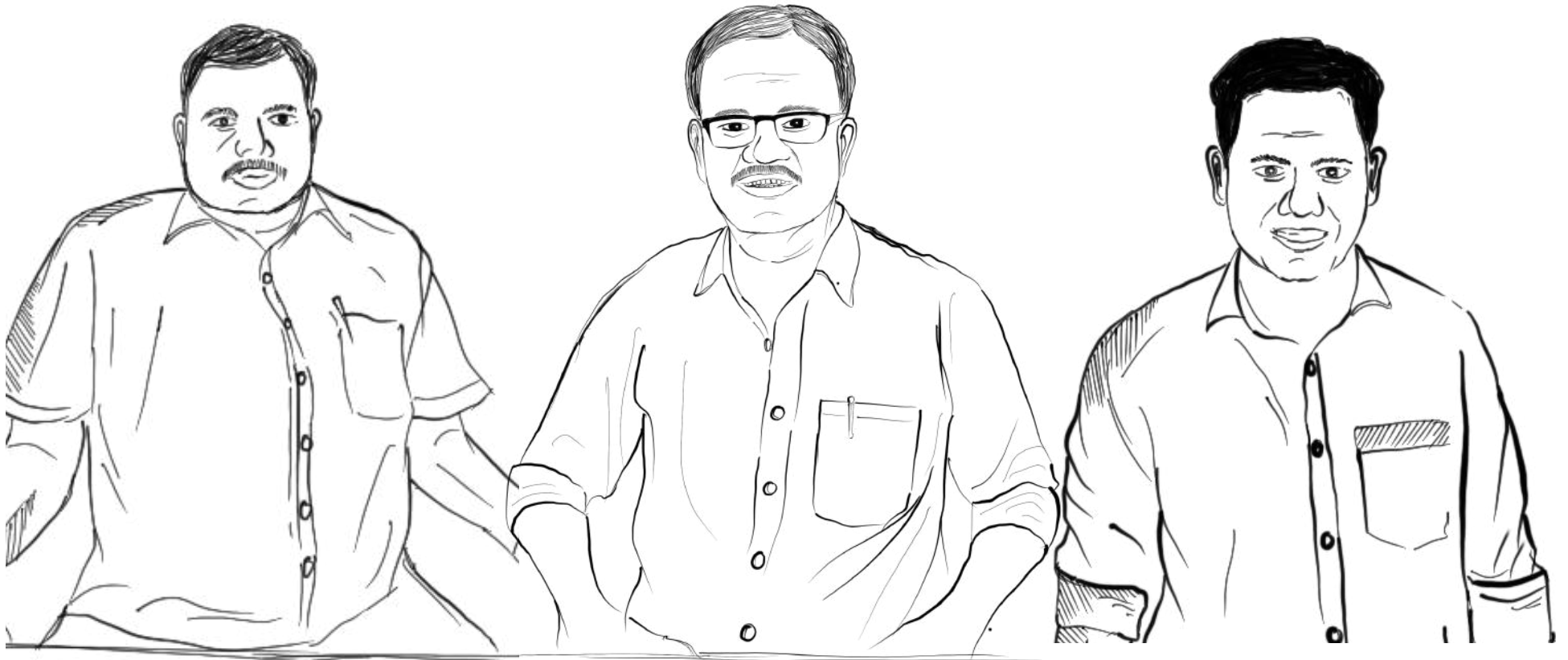
Most materials used are biodegradable, resulting in minimal waste. Broken tiles are repurposed as cushioning during packaging.



Figure 36: Trucks used as a medium of transportation to carry the tiles.



STORIES NARRATED BY THE ARTISANS



ARTISAN PROFILES



NAME: A. MICHAEL RAJ

AGE: 50 YEARS

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: ABOVE 25 YEARS

COMPANY NAME: MALAR TILES

ADDRESS: 60/1, C. PUTHUR MAIN ROAD, MALAR ROAD, ATHANGUDI, KARAİKUDI, SIVAGANGAI .

About

Michael Raj A, a seasoned artisan based in Athangudi village, located in Karaikudi, Sivagangai district of TamilNadu. Michael Raj has devoted over 25 years to the intricate craft of Athangudi tile-making. His company, Malar Tiles is a testament to his family’s enduring legacy. Michael Raj is a third-generation artisan, his family among the pioneers of this unique craft in Athangudi. The business began under the name Thangaswami and Brothers, with his late grandfather Rathinam Pillai, painstakingly creating three hundred designs for tile molds. Over the decades, architects from various places visited Athangudi to contribute their own designs, enriching the craft’s heritage. Mr Michael was kind enough to take us to his ancestral house which had the first athangudi tiles laid, we saw the 110-year-old home with 100-year-old athangudi tiles, highlighting the enduring legacy of this traditional craft.



Figure 37: First laid Athangudi tile(Chess board motif)in Michael's ancestral home.

Tiles laid in Michael's home:



Figure 38: Patta kall Tile



Figure 39: Mara Chedi tile.



Figure 40: New design Tile.



Figure 41: France design tile.

Tile Making

Michael Raj oversees a dedicated team of 15 artisans—9 males and 6 females—working under his meticulous guidance. Every day, from 9-11 AM and 5-7 PM, he ensures the quality of colour mixing, pattern creation, and overall production. The tiles from Malar Tiles are highly sought after and sold extensively in Karnataka, Kerala, Chennai, and Coimbatore. Monthly earnings for the company range between ₹60,000 and ₹100,000, depending on demand. The appeal of Athangudi tiles stretches beyond national borders; international tourists often visit, purchasing tiles as decorative items.



Figure 42: Artisans working at Malar tiles.

The artisans at Malar Tiles earn between ₹600-₹700 per day for small artisans and ₹1,000 for master artisans. Popular tile designs include Chokkattam, Mottu, and Kamalam Poo, with specific colours and patterns used for different rooms. Tiles are sold at ₹55 per sq. ft, with some popular designs priced at ₹60 per sq. ft. The tiles come in standard sizes of 8x8 and 10x10 inches with a thickness of 18mm.

Challenges

Despite his success, Michael Raj faces several challenges. Importing red and black oxides from other states is often problematic. The rainy season poses significant production difficulties, even as orders continue to flow in, leading to financial strains. The COVID-19 pandemic has also reduced the number of foreign tourists visiting Athangudi, impacting sales. Nonetheless, architecture students frequently visit Malar Tiles, eager to learn about and purchase the renowned Athangudi tiles. Through these trials, Michael Raj's dedication to his craft remains unwavering, ensuring the legacy of Athangudi tile-making continues to thrive.



NAME: S. THOMAS

AGE: 28 YEARS

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: 10+ YEARS

COMPANY NAME: POPULAR TILES

**ADDRESS: POPULAR TILE WORK, MADHA NAGAR,
AROCKIYAPURAM, SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT- 630101**

About

Thomas, a 28-year-old civil engineer passed out from Saveetha Engineering College in Chennai, is the driving force behind Popular Tiles, a family business with a rich heritage spanning four generations. Building on the legacy of his late father, D. Saagaayaraaj, and his grandfather, S.T. Thanasaami Pillai, Thomas has brought a fresh perspective to the traditional craft of Athangudi tile-making. Inspired by Moroccan mosaics, he has skilfully integrated these influences into over three hundred pre-drawn patterns, some of which are more than 50 years old.

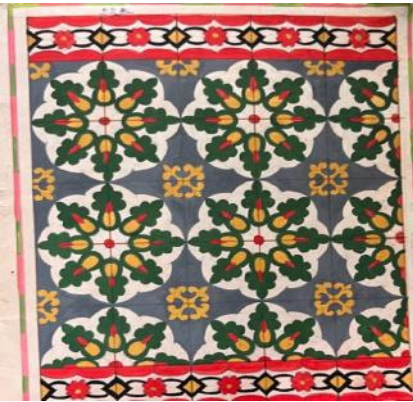


Figure 43: Hand-drawn sketches from 50 years ago drawn by Thomas's grandfather.

Tile Making

At Popular Tiles, Thomas has embraced the art of customization, collaborating closely with architects to create unique designs tailored to individual preferences. This blend of tradition and innovation has set his tiles apart. His marketing strategy combines modern digital platforms and traditional word-of-mouth referrals, with 30% of business generated online through social media and 70% through satisfied customers spreading the word.



Figure 44:A) Meeting the artisan along with Mentor



B) Artisan explaining details about the Athangudi tiles.

The tiles are priced at ₹60 per sq. ft for standard designs and ₹40 per tile. Cement costs vary depending on the type used, with Ramco PPC 53 priced at ₹400 and Birla PPC at ₹480. To enhance durability and address common issues like cracking and colour fading, Thomas is experimenting with plastic-fibre reinforcement and regular maintenance techniques using Thavudu (Rice bran) and coconut oil.



Figure 45: Shiny surface maintained using Thavudu and coconut oil



Figure 46: Plastic-fibre roll with which Mr Thomas is experimenting

Challenges

Thomas faces the ongoing difficulty of importing red and black oxide colours, essential for creating the vibrant hues his tiles are known for. Managing worker issues and ensuring timely payments from customers are additional hurdles he must overcome.

Despite these obstacles, Thomas remains committed to his craft, continuously seeking innovative solutions to improve the quality and longevity of his tiles. His dedication to both preserving his family's legacy and adapting to modern demands ensures that Popular Tiles remains one of the top manufacturers of Athangudi tiles.



NAME: RAVICHANDRAN B

AGE: 57 YEARS

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: 40 YEARS

COMPANY NAME: ST FLOWER FLOORING TILES

**ADDRESS: MADHA KOVIL STREET, AROCKIYAPURAM,
ATHANGUDI -630101, SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT, TAMILNADU**

About

Ravi Chandran is the head of the Athangudi Tiles Association and leads ST Flower Tiles, a well-respected name in the traditional Athangudi tile industry. Despite having only a 10th-grade education, Ravi has dedicated his life to the craft, which his family has embraced since 1980. Ravi's family legacy in tile making extends over three generations, beginning with his grandfather, who travelled to Myanmar, learned tile-making techniques, and brought those influences back to Athangudi. His company, based in Athangudi, exports tiles to Kerala, Karnataka, Chennai, Haryana, and Delhi.

Tile Making

During peak periods like Aavani, Vaikasi, and January, when housewarming events increase demand, Ravi and his 25-member team handle production efficiently. Male workers receive daily wages of 750 rupees, while female workers earn 500 rupees, and a 10x10 inch tile is priced between 40 and 43 rupees.



Figure 47: Exploring the workspace with Mr Ravi

Ravi is also involved in community events, supporting artisans when the business thrives, and takes part in government initiatives, having earned awards such as the Indian Institute of Architecture's Craft Excellence Award. Red tiles are especially popular, while green and blue tiles are less in demand due to fading issues. Through his dedication, expertise, and active community participation, Ravi Chandran preserves and enhances the tradition of Athangudi tile-making, ensuring its enduring legacy.



Figure 48: Indian Institute of Architecture's Craft Excellence Award achieved by Ravichandran B of ST tiles.



Figure 49: Meeting the Artisan of ST tiles with the group members (from left Prithviraj, Maheswari, Monikka, Tanishka, Siddhi and Sujeet).

INTERACTING WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

NAME: SOLLAI KOTHANAR
AGE: 84 YEARS OLD,
RETIRED ARTISAN

Sollai Kothanar, a distinguished artisan now 84 years old and retired due to health issues. His journey began at the tender age of 14.5 in his hometown of Athangudi, where he started working with tiles. By nineteen, Kothanar had moved to Samayanallur in Madurai, where he undertook significant building projects, including a prestigious contract with a British company to construct houses. After gaining invaluable experience, he returned to Karaikudi, continuing his passion for tile work.



Figure 50: A)Sollai Kothanar, a retired Artisan. B): Artisan showing his house.



Figure 51: Athangudi tiles found in Artisan's house.

Kothanar's expertise expanded beyond merely laying tiles in homes; he became renowned for his artistry. His notable achievements include the famous garden and Periya Mahal Mandappam in Athangudi, where he meticulously laid the tiles himself. Athangudi tiles, known for their eco-friendliness and health benefits, are crafted using raw materials from the Athangudi forest and water from the Sivan Temple Pond. These tiles are celebrated not only for their durability but also for their unique properties that contribute to well-being.

According to Kothanar, the distinctive artistry of Athangudi tiles began with a single skilled individual whose craftsmanship captured the community's imagination, leading to widespread recognition. The handmade nature of these tiles, created from natural materials, makes them environmentally friendly and beneficial for health. As artisans repeatedly worked with the same motifs, these designs became deeply embedded in their minds, allowing for more efficient and precise execution of their craft. Although new designs occasionally emerged, they were always rooted in traditional patterns, ensuring a blend of historical continuity and innovative evolution in the tile-making process.

SAND SUPPLIER
AGE : 45+ YEARS OLD

A sand supplier in Athangudi, faces significant challenges due to restrictions on acquiring forest sand, a critical component for high-quality tiles. The forest sand is prized for its superior iron content, which imparts exceptional strength and vibrant colours to tiles. However, recent regulations have led. officials demanding bribes for sand collection. Failure to comply results in legal charges; he himself has sixteen such cases against him. Despite these hurdles, the alternative, aathu sand, does not match the quality of forest sand. Traditionally and currently, sand is transported using bullock carts or tractors, a practice that has endured through the years. Retired artisan Sollaikothanar, who has supported Paandi and provided valuable work over the years, attests to the forest sand's unmatched quality and its importance in tile production.

NAME: RAVI (AUTO DRIVER)

AGE: 48 YEARS OLD

On our first day heading to Athangudi, we met Mr. Ravi, an auto driver, who shared the fascinating story of Athangudi tiles. He explained that A Michael Raj, owner of Malar tiles is the third generation of his Christian family to continue the Athangudi craft, which was originally started by his grandfather. Ravi also mentioned that Ravichandran B, Alex, Thomas S, owners of ST Flower Tiles , Selva Industries and Popular Tiles respectively, are Michael Raj's relatives and have also been involved in the craft for three to four generations. On a subsequent visit, we went to Ravi Anna's house to see tiles laid by his uncle, Sollaikothonar. His wife provided additional insights into the history and significance of Athangudi tiles.



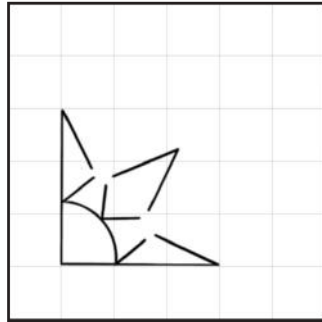
Figure 52: A) B) Tiles found in Artisans' relatives house.





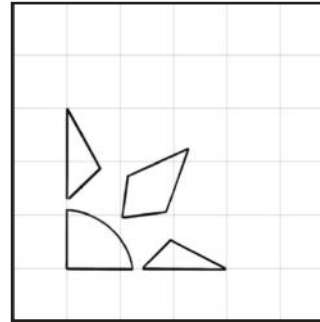
SEMIOTICS OF ATHANGUDI TILE- THE DESIGN, MOTIF PATTERNS AND ITS MEANING





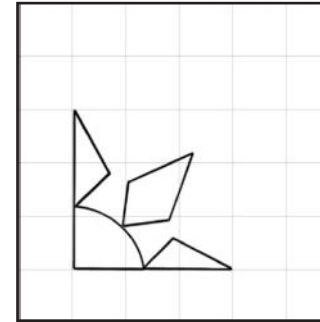
Line:

By using the combination of the smaller pieces while making the geometric shapes - diagonal and cervical lines are used in different direction to design the motif. As observed closely in the finished tile no outer border or outline is given to the shapes. When the mould is removed the colour spreads equally creating no other marks apart from the design.



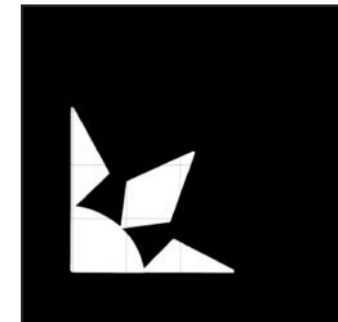
Shape:

The shape of the motif is very edgy and barbed in the ends while arched in the centre. All shapes used are very geometrical and proportional.



Balance:

Balance appears when the motif is completed by combining the tiles. At equal distance on the floor complete motif appears with an equal number of shapes as should in a circle. The purpose of the craft is to make the flooring which is improved by taking care of proportion and balance while planning.



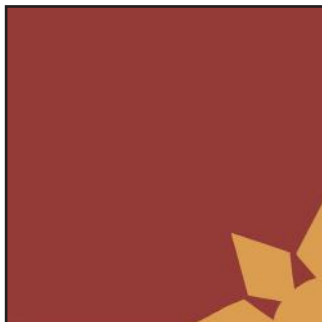
Space:

The motif takes up a very small space in the corner. A maximum of space is left empty or filled with other geometric or floral designs. Equal spaces are also given between the individual shapes only the pointed edges of the outer shape are joined with the quarter circle to give the appearance of the rays of the sun.



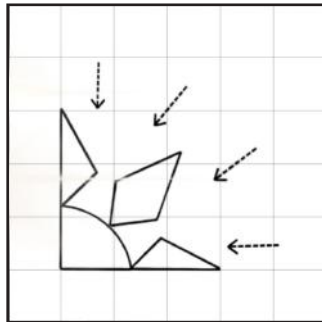
SOORIYAN

The Sooriyan motif (vilakku kall or "Sooryan motif," which means "sun" in Tamil) is a popular design in Athangudi tiles. It typically features a stylized representation of the sun, often surrounded by geometric patterns or floral elements. The Sooriyan motif is often combined with geometric patterns and floral designs, creating a harmonious blend.



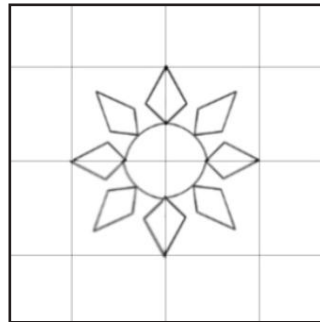
Colour:

Tiles which has the focus on the sun motif are filled with a solid colour to cover up the negative space and improve the contrast with the motif. Generally, all the shapes in the motif are coloured with the same shade to make the design more cohesive. Size: Smaller sizes of the shape are used in the corner edge of the single tile as combining all makes up the bigger motif.



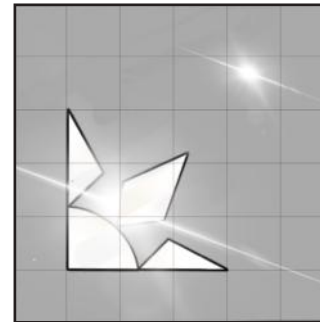
Emphasis:

Other areas of the single tile are kept plain filled with contrasting colours to improve the focus on the tile which stands out differently improving the overall design.



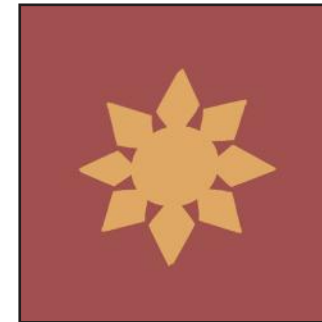
Repetition:

While making the sooriya motif only two shapes are used – one in the centre and the other in the repetition around the circle which appears as the rays of the sun. The same motif is repeated all around the flooring, completing the design



Texture:

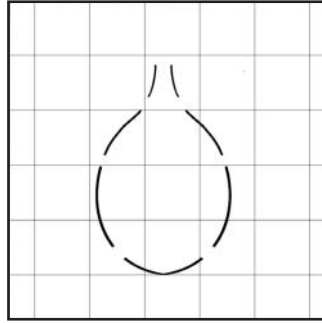
The texture of all the tiles is the same as they follow the same process of manufacturing only variation is done in the design and motifs and colours depending on the usage of mould and the visualised appearance of the floor.



Arrangement:

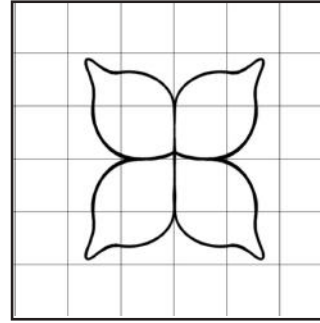
Generally, the shapes are arranged on the edge of the tile which completes the motif only when the four different tiles are arranged together while laying of the tiles on the floor. Each set of the four tiles completes the motif and creates the illusion representing the Sun.

This motif, like many others in Athangudi tiles, is a beautiful blend of traditional symbolism and artistic design principles, making it both a functional and aesthetically pleasing element in South Indian architecture.



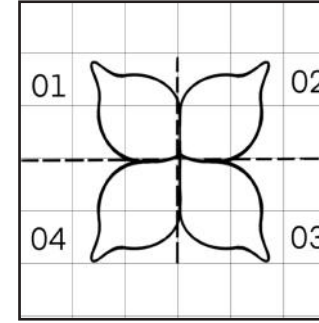
Line:

Organic survival lines are used to create a petal which is mirrored on vertical sides. No boundaries are given to separate the motifs and the back colours they are differentiated by using different colors.



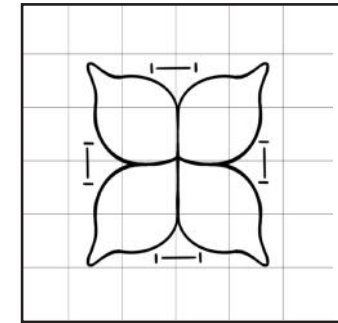
Shape:

The shape of the motif is organic and inspired by nature. The geometrical appearance is reflective of the aesthetics of the Athangudi designs.



Balance:

There are four counts of petals in the motif creating a balance. In the variations sometimes all the corners or only one corner of the tile has the shape. The corner balance only appears when all four different tiles are put together.



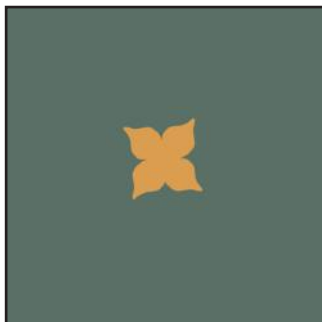
Space:

The space of the pattern is comparatively less than the other motifs. When all the single tiles are joined together, they appear to be merged as they are laid very close to each other. The maximum negative space which is filled with colour in the centre single or other end of the tile has the same curved petal which creates flowers at every corner.



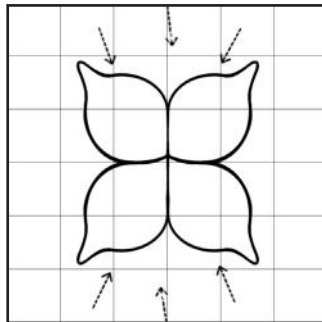
ORU MOTTU

The Tamil phrase “oru mottu” translates to “one corner” or “single bud.” It reflects blooming flowers when four tiles are arranged together and as a single tile, it shows the motif of the floral petal. This motif typically features a single floral bud, often stylized, which may be surrounded by leaves or simple geometric patterns. The “Oru Mottu” motif symbolises new beginnings, growth, and potential, reflecting the beauty and promise of a flower bud about to bloom.



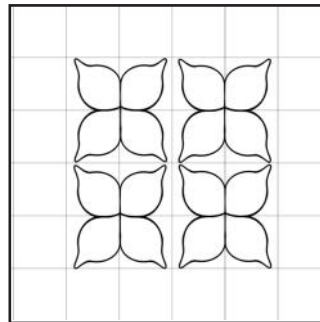
Colour:

The colour of the petal in the corner is the same which maintains the uniform shapes of the motif and easily merges with the design to make the flower and completes the pattern. The colour differences can be seen between the motif and its background which improves the emphasis on the motif and stands out differently.



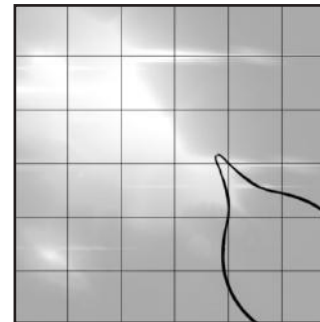
Emphasis:

The other areas of the single tile are kept plain filled with contrasting colours to improve the emphasis/focus on the tile and stand out differently improving the overall experience of the design.



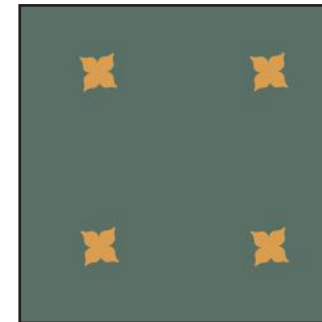
Repetition:

While making the oru mottu, only one kind of spiral pattern is replicated or mirrored in different directions and corners.



Texture:

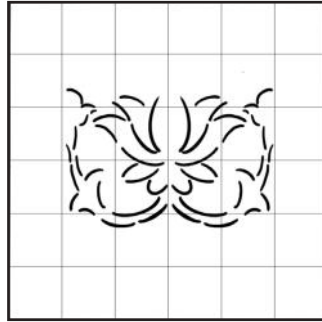
The texture of all the tiles is the same as they follow the same process of manufacturing. The only variation is done in the design and motifs and colours depending on the usage of mould and the visualised appearance of the floor.



Arrangement:

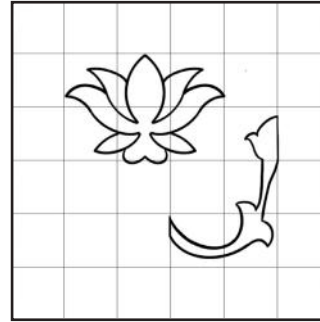
The arrangement of this specific type is kept very simple and minimal which is very similar to the Sooriyan motif. Each petal of the flower representation each made separately in the tile and merges together to complete the motif.

The “Oru Mottu” motif in Athangudi tiles is a carefully crafted design that leverages traditional elements and principles to create a visually appealing and culturally significant pattern. The balance within the motif make it a timeless design that continues to be cherished in India.



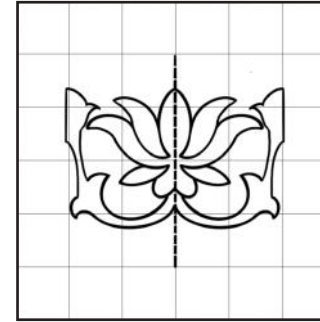
Line:

Organic curved lines are used to create the petal which is mirrored on vertical sides. No boundaries are given to separate the motifs and the back colours are differentiated by using different colors.



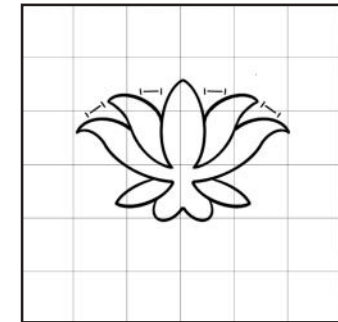
Shape:

The shape of the motif is unlike other geometric forms which are very pointy instead only edges are made that way. When observed only the cervical forms are made in different directions. The shape is also made by keeping the real shape of the lotus in focus so that it resembles and represents the reference.



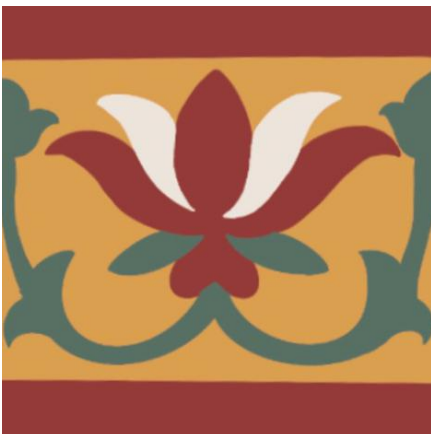
Balance:

Since the halves of the tile are the same proper balance can be seen if we divide the motifs into halves. The counts of each motif are also the same.



Space:

The central motif has the maximum space. Since the motif of the tile is the mirror of the other half the space is similar on either side. The background has comparatively less space than other motifs.



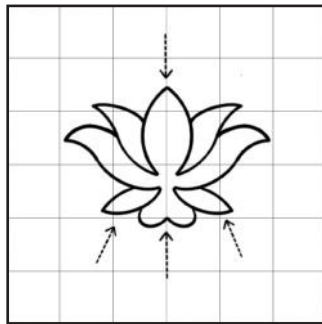
THAMARAI

The “Thamarai” border motif in Athangudi tiles refers to a design inspired by the lotus flower. “Thamarai” means lotus, with its purity and beauty, beautifully capturing the essence of this name. This motif is often used as a decorative border in Athangudi tiles to enhance the minimal design of the flooring tile.



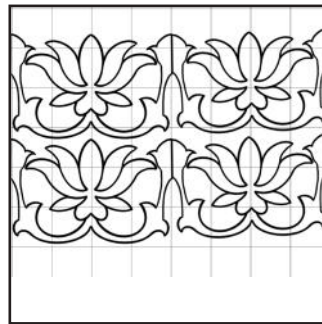
Colour:

The motifs are inspired by nature which has several geometric representations of the flowers with independent divisions. In each division, separate shades of colours are used to bring the contrast and cohesiveness of the design.



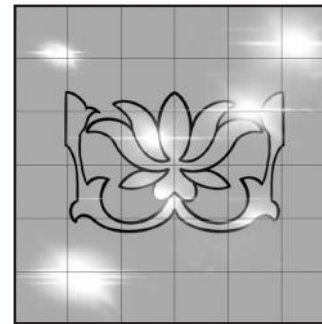
Emphasis:

Since the size and the proportion of the central part are so the main emphasis goes to the bigger flower. Also, the name of the motif itself says lotus so the central shape has to be bigger to match the size of the real flower inspiration.



Repetition:

The same curves and lines are repeated in the motif, both sides of the tile are also the same so it exactly repeats the same pattern as made in the first halves.



Texture:

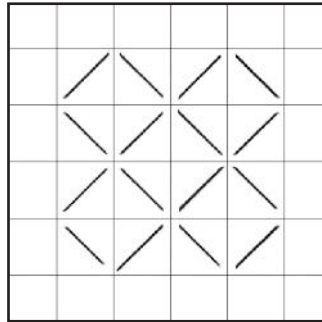
The texture of all the tiles is the same as they follow the same process of manufacturing, and the only variation is in the design of motifs and colours depending on the usage of mould and the appearance of the floor.



Arrangement:

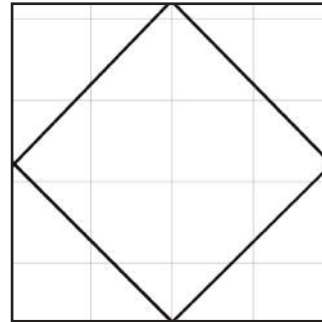
The arrangement of this specific type is kept very simple and minimal, similar to the Sooriyan motif. Each petal of the flower is a representation made separately in the tile and merges together to complete the motif.

The “Thamararai” motif in Athangudi tiles is a beautifully crafted design that combines traditional aesthetics with cultural symbolism. Through the effective use of line, shape, color, and balance, the motif creates a visually appealing pattern that highlights the elegance of the lotus flower. The design principles of balance, proportion, rhythm, and emphasis contribute to a cohesive and harmonious pattern that enhances the aesthetic value of the tile.



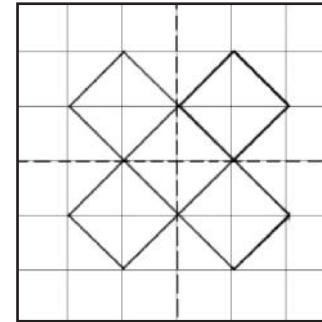
Line:

It is a clean, straight lines that define the boundaries of each square, contributing to the motif's crisp and orderly appearance.



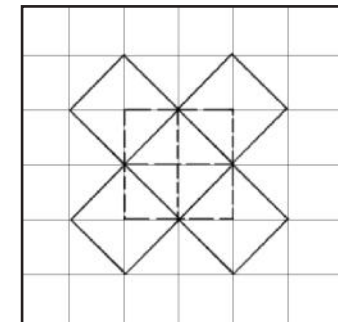
Shape:

The motif is composed entirely of squares, emphasizing uniformity and repetition.



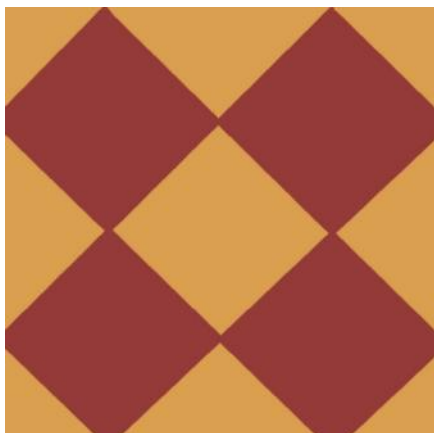
Balance:

The chess motif achieves a sense of balance through the equal distribution of contrasting colours and repetitive squares, creating visual stability.



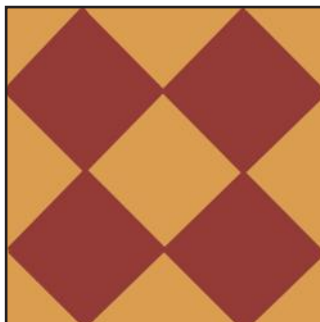
Space:

The checkerboard pattern is composed of squares of equal size, typically alternating between two contrasting colors. The uniformity of the squares is crucial for the pattern's visual impact. Each square is distinctly separated from the adjacent squares without any overlap. The edges of each square meet precisely at the corners, ensuring a clean, sharp transition between the colors.



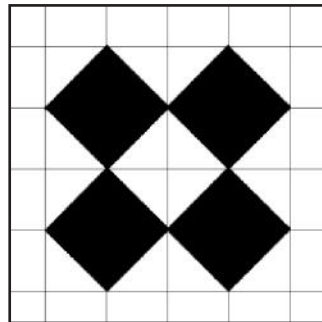
CHECKERBOARD

The "Chess" motif in Athangudi tiles, often referred to in Tamil as "Sathurangam", features a checkerboard pattern reminiscent of a chessboard. This motif symbolizes strategy, balance, and order, reflecting the intellectual and strategic elements associated with the game of chess. The motif consists of alternating squares, typically in contrasting colors, arranged in a grid pattern. The simplicity and symmetry of the design create a visually striking and balanced appearance.



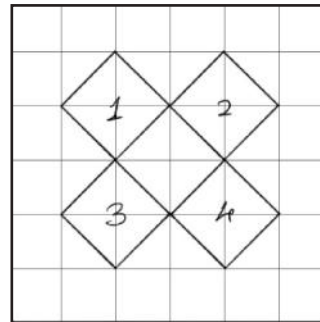
Colour:

Common colours include classic black and white or other contrasting combinations such as red and white, blue and white, or green and yellow. Synthetic oxides are used to ensure the colours are vibrant and durable.



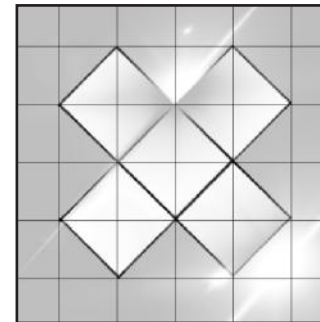
Emphasis:

In some variations of the checkerboard pattern, certain squares may be emphasized by using a different color, texture, or design. This can create a focal point within the pattern, drawing attention to specific areas.



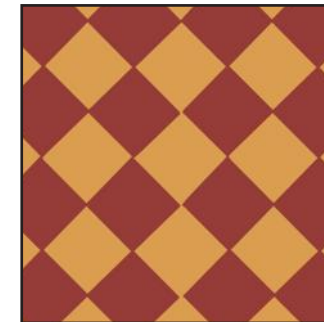
Repetition:

The repeated squares create a rhythm and unity within the design, reinforcing the motif's structured and systematic nature. The uniform size of each square maintains proportion and harmony within the overall design as the sizes of all sides are equal, ensuring that the pattern is cohesive and visually appealing.



Texture:

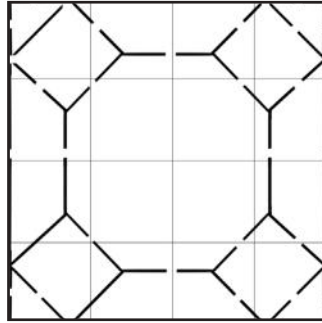
The texture of all the tiles is the same as they follow the same process of manufacturing, and the only variation is in the design of motifs and colours depending on the usage of mould and the appearance of the floor.



Arrangement:

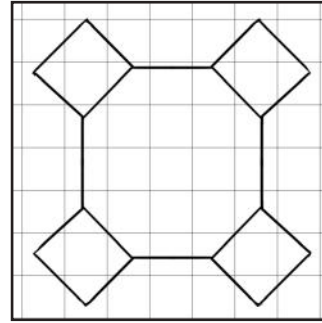
Plan the layout from the centre of the area, working outward to maintain symmetry. Lay the tiles in a classic checkerboard pattern, alternating colours like black and white or red and white. The precise alignment of squares in rows and columns contributes to the motif's orderly and methodical appearance, reflecting the strategic nature of chess.

The "Checkboard" motif in Athangudi tiles is a fully geometric design, characterized by its simplicity and clarity. The design effectively uses contrast, rhythm, and balance to create a pattern that is both timeless and versatile.



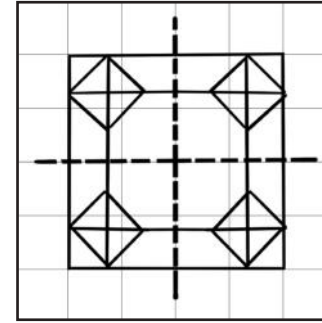
Line:

The use of crisp, precise lines defines the geometric shapes in the Chokkattan motif. These lines create boundaries, direction, and structure within the design, ensuring the clarity and distinctiveness of each shape. The white base colour highlights these lines, making the geometric patterns stand out prominently.



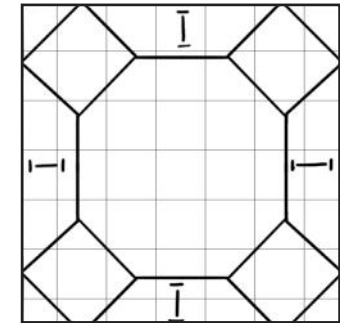
Shape:

Involves an intricate arrangement of hexagons, squares, right-angled triangles, rectangles, and trapeziums. Although a single piece of tile may appear unique on its own, when arranged together, they form an illusion of continuous, interlocking patterns. This complex interplay of shapes allows for multiple combinations, resulting in a stunning and dynamic visual effect.



Balance:

The Chokkattan motif achieves visual balance through the even distribution of geometric shapes and colours. The proportion of each geometric shape is carefully considered to ensure that they fit together seamlessly. This balance ensures that no single shape dominates the design, allowing for an equal distribution of visual weight across the tile.



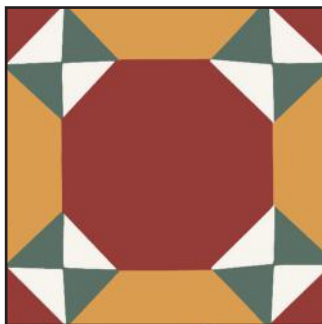
Space:

The design effectively uses positive and negative space to create a balanced and harmonious pattern. The white base colour serves as negative space, allowing the coloured geometric shapes (positive space) to be the focal points. Proper spacing and alignment of shapes ensure the overall design remains cohesive and visually appealing.



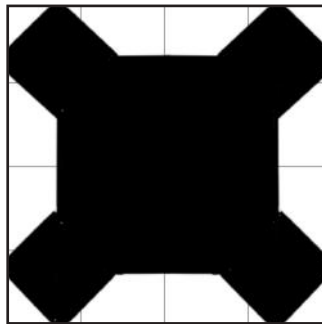
CHOKATTAN

The word “Chokkattan” refers to square or checkerboard patterns, symbolizing balance, and harmony. It reflects geometric shapes often arranged in a repetitive square or diamond layout. This design can be seen in a local ludo game called Chokkattan. They are also used in pot designs reflecting religious crafts.



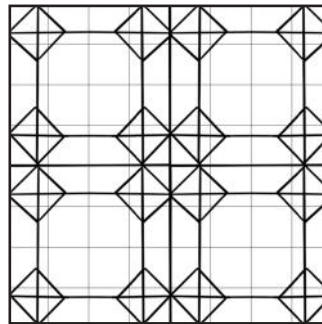
Colour:

The Chokkattan motif uses white as the base colour to showcase the geometric lines. Red is incorporated for a rustic and warm look, representing natural clay. Yellow adds vibrancy, highlighting certain areas of the tile design to create eye-catching patterns. Green or black is used at the meeting points of the design, serving as the connecting elements. Each colour stands independently, ensuring they do not collide but instead harmoniously contribute to the overall intricate and visually appealing pattern.



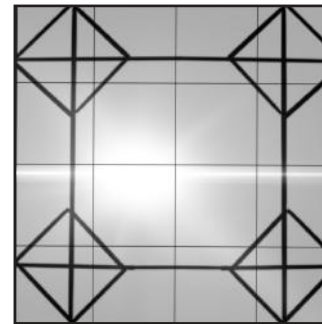
Emphasis:

Chokkattan tiles often feature a central geometric motif, such as a star, floral pattern, or abstract design, which serves as the focal point. This central design is typically more elaborate and detailed, drawing the viewer's attention immediately. Specific parts of the design, such as borders or intricate details, are often emphasized with accent colors that make them stand out against the background.



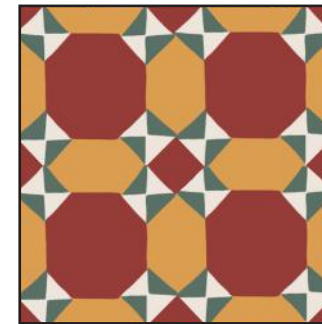
Repetition:

Each Chokkattan tile typically features a central motif, such as a geometric shape, floral design, or intricate pattern. This motif is repeated across all tiles, ensuring uniformity in the overall design. Often, the motifs are designed in such a way that when adjacent tiles are placed together, they mirror or complement each other, enhancing the sense of continuity.



Texture:

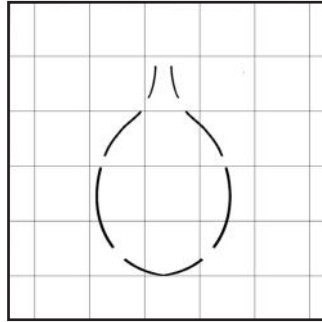
Seamless glossy finish due to the usage of glass giving the tiles a premium/luxury look. Even though robust design still manages to have a sophisticated look. The pieces are put separately yet when arranged together it does not affect the look and feel of the arrangement.



Arrangement:

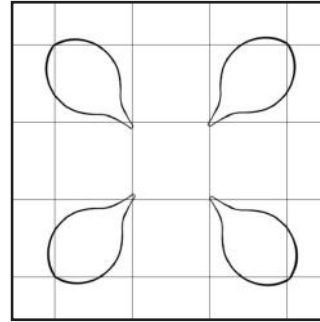
The Chokkattan motif typically consists of a grid or checkered pattern with intricate designs and symbols woven into each square or rectangle. The arrangement is characterized by its geometric precision and symmetry.

The "Chokkattan" motif in Athangudi tiles is a distinctive and structured design. The effective use of balance, rhythm, and contrast, combined with a harmonious color palette, makes this motif both visually striking and culturally resonant. It is a design that brings a sense of order and precision to any space.



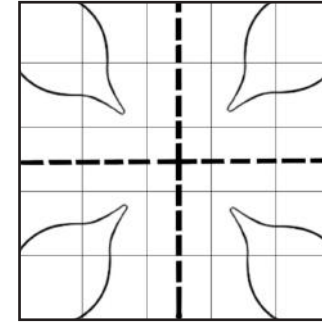
Line:

Curved lines are often used to create the shapes of the buds or blossoms. Whereas straight lines are used to form the grid or framework within which the motif is placed.



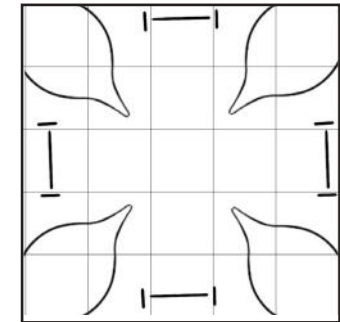
Shape:

Squares, circles, and other geometric forms are common. The buds or blossoms are often represented in organic, natural forms.



Balance:

The Naalu Mottu design typically features a central motif that serves as the focal point of the tile. This motif is often a floral pattern, geometric shape, or a combination of both, designed to draw the eye to the center. The central motif is precisely centered on the tile, ensuring that the design is symmetrical from all angles. This central placement is key to achieving balance in the overall pattern.



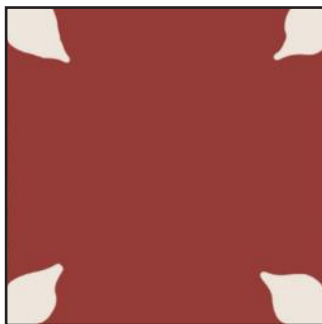
Space:

Positive spaces are the areas occupied by the motif itself. Negative spaces are the areas around and between the motifs, which help to define and highlight the design.



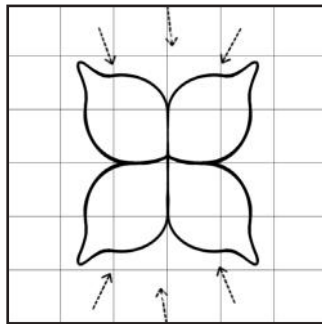
NALLU MOTTU

“Naalu Mottu” translates to “four buds” or “four dots” in English, referring to the tile’s distinct design featuring four symmetrical floral or geometric motifs. Each bud represents potential and new beginnings, embodying a hopeful and positive outlook. The arrangement of four buds placed in a symmetrical pattern. The dots can be developed as floral or geometrical designs, but the dots should be placed in the four corners.



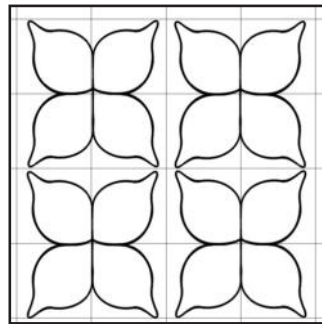
Colour:

Traditionally, white rice flour is used for kolams or bright, contrasting colours in textiles. Specific colours might be used to symbolize different festivals or cultural themes. Mostly red colour is used for a rich look and to highlight the white four buds in the corner.



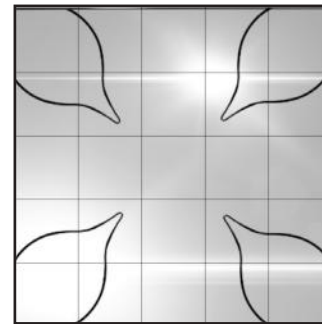
Emphasis:

The central point where the four buds meet often serves as the focal point, drawing attention. The size of the buds or blossoms in relation to the grid or overall design. The central motif might be larger or more detailed to emphasize its importance.



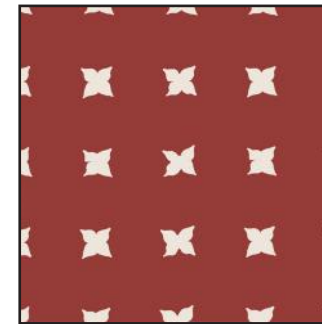
Repetition:

The pattern of the motif is often repeated in a grid, creating a continuous and cohesive design. The repetition of the motif establishes a rhythmic flow.



Texture:

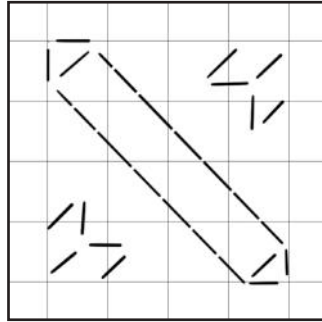
The texture of all the tiles is the same as they follow the same process of manufacturing only variation is done in the design and motifs and colours depending on the usage of mould and the visualised appearance of the floor.



Arrangement:

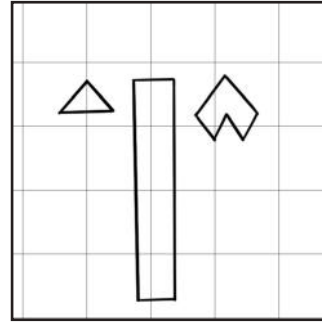
The Naalu Mottu motif is typically arranged in a grid or checked pattern. Each square or segment of the grid contains one set of four buds. The meeting point of the four buds often serves as the central focal point of the design, symbolizing unity and interconnectedness. The symmetrical arrangement signifies balance and harmony, both aesthetically and symbolically.

The “Nallu Mottu” motif in Athangudi tiles is a beautifully crafted design that combines geometric precision with artistic expression. By effectively using line, shape, color, and balance, the motif creates an engaging and visually appealing pattern. The principles of balance, proportion, rhythm, and emphasis contribute to a harmonious and cohesive design .



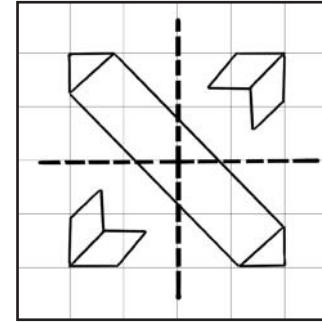
Line:

Straight lines are used to create the sharp edges and points of the star, contributing to its geometric precision. Curved lines are sometimes incorporated to soften the star's points or create intricate detailing around the central diamond.



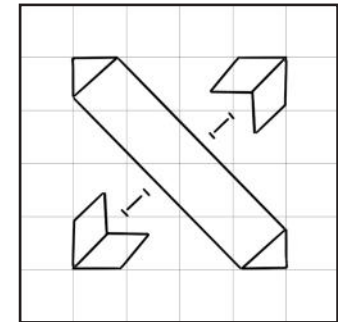
Shape:

The Diamond Star motif primarily consists of geometric shapes, with a central diamond shape surrounded by star-like elements. The star is typically composed of symmetrical points extending outward.



Balance:

The Diamond Star motif often features symmetrical balance, with the star's points evenly distributed around the central diamond, creating a harmonious and stable appearance.



Space:



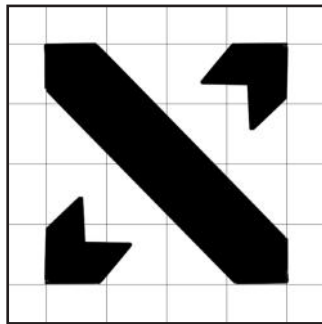
DIAMOND STAR

This tile signifies a diamond shape and a star in the middle by the combination of four tiles. The motif geometry is characterised by sharp, clean lines and perfect symmetry, creating a visually striking pattern. The interplay between the diamond and star shapes forms a harmonious design that is both complex and balanced. The design creates the illusion of three-dimensional cubes and stars.



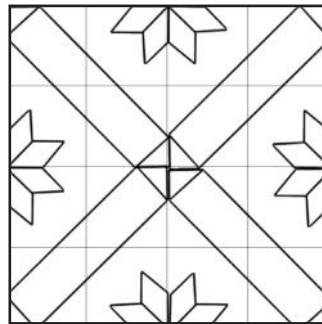
Colour:

Mostly they use red or green to make the diamond into stars.



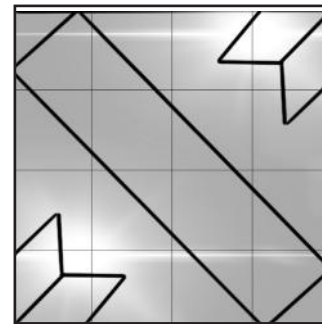
Emphasis:

The diamond at the centre of the star is the primary focal point, emphasized by its position and the contrast with the surrounding star shape.



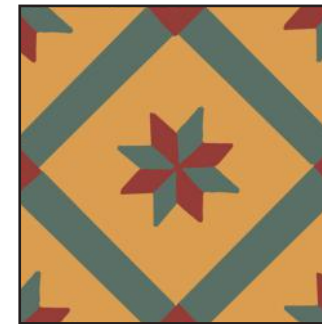
Repetition:

The diamond shape is consistently repeated across the tile surface, creating a unified and cohesive look. The tiles are laid out in a grid formation, with each tile featuring the same Diamond Star pattern. When tiles are placed side by side, the diamond and star motifs align to create a continuous, repetitive design.



Texture:

The texture of all the tiles is the same as they follow the same process of manufacturing only variation is done in the design and motifs and colours depending on the usage of mould and the visualised appearance of the floor.

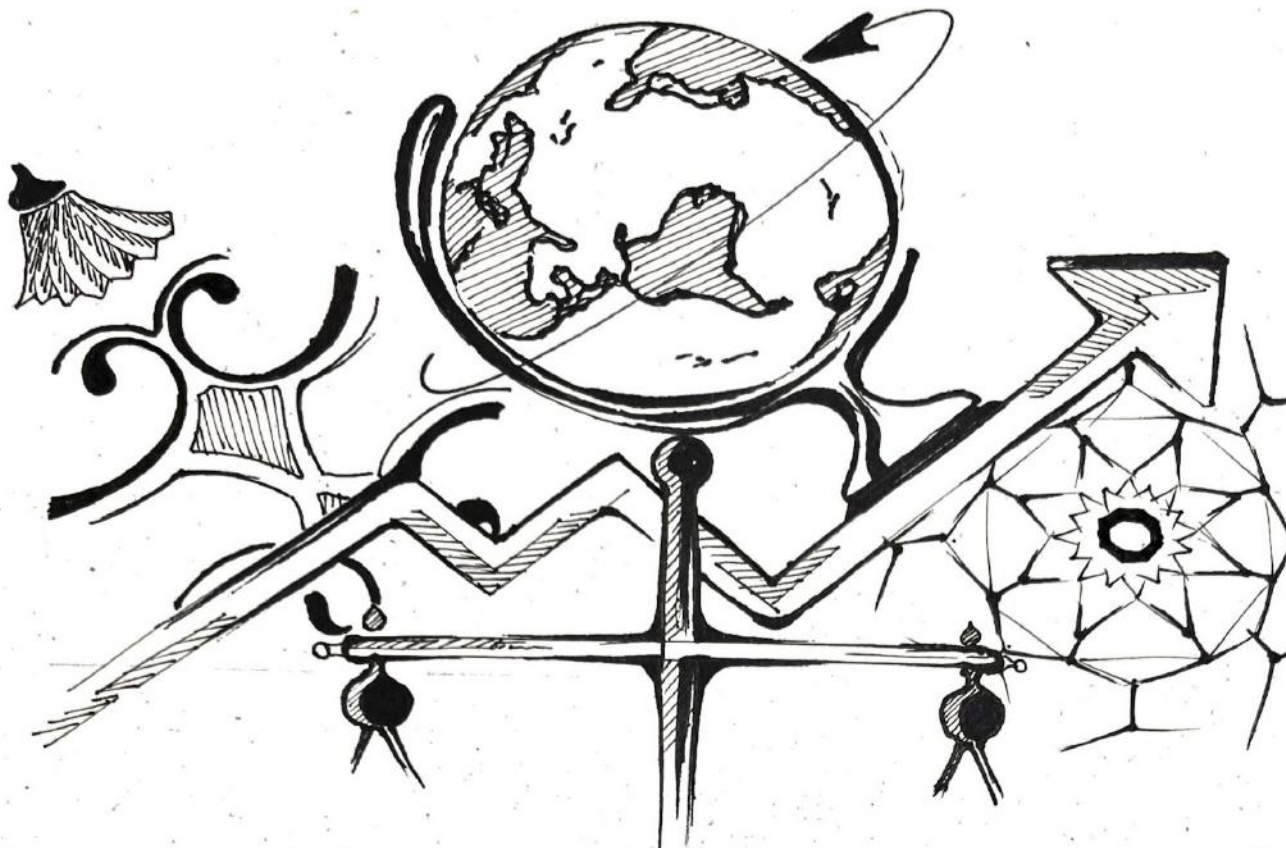


Arrangement:

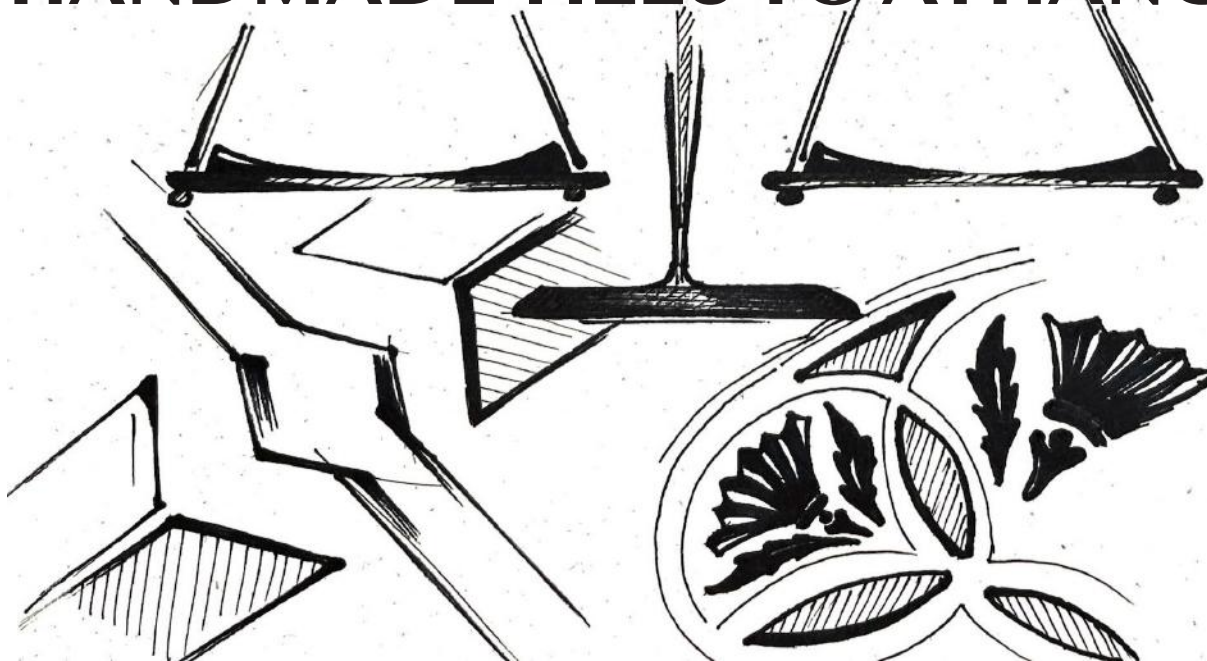
At the core of the motif is the diamond, typically set centrally to act as the focal point. The diamond may be round, princess-cut, or another shape, with its brilliance and clarity enhanced by its central position. Surrounding the central diamond are star-shaped elements with pointed tips radiating outward. The points of the star might be connected by lines or additional embellishments that integrate the central diamond into the overall design.

The “Diamond Star” motif in Athangudi tiles is a geometric design that combines precision with artistic elegance. Through the effective use of line, shape, color, and balance, the motif creates a visually engaging pattern that enhances the aesthetic appeal of any space. The interplay of geometric shapes and contrasting colors results in a design that is both dynamic and harmonious .





THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HANDMADE TILES TO ATHANGUDI TILES



The world of tile-making is rich with different styles and techniques, each reflecting its own cultural and historical background. Athangudi tiles from Tamil Nadu, India, are known for their bright and unique designs, showing the region's artistic heritage. Similarly, tiles from around the world, like Majolica from Italy, Zellige from Morocco, and Talavera from Spain, each have their own distinct styles. Majolica tiles are known for their Renaissance elegance, Zellige tiles for their complex geometric patterns, and Talavera tiles for their vibrant colours. This study compares these different tile traditions, looking at their materials, methods, designs, and cultural meanings to understand how they are unique yet connected.

Majolica Tiles



The craft's origins trace back to the Middle East, where it later flourished in Italy during the Renaissance. Initially produced in Italy in the 13th century, Majolica is still crafted today. The Florentine Della Robbia family was instrumental in developing a durable white tin-based enamel that allowed for painted decorations. This technique, originally used in the 1450s to protect terracotta sculptures, soon extended to decorating floors and ceilings. The term "Majolica" is derived from the island of Majorca, a significant trading hub between Spain and Italy, and refers to the ceramic technique introduced by Moorish Spain. The distinctive white, glossy surface characteristic of Majolica pottery comes from tin-glazing, a technique brought to Europe through Islamic pottery. The Islamic world had developed advanced methods for creating vibrant, lustrous ceramics, which significantly influenced the ceramic traditions of both Spain and Italy.

Colours:

Majolica painters traditionally utilized a palette consisting of five main colours: cobalt blue, antimony yellow, iron red, copper green, and manganese purple. The process involves painting ceramic tiles with intricate designs using these colours, after which the tiles are glazed and fired in a kiln. Initially, only manganese-brown and copper-green pigments were used. However, advancements in kiln technology and glaze composition between 1350 and 1460 allowed for the development of the polychrome decoration now characteristic of Renaissance ceramics.

Designs and patterns:

Designs frequently feature tessellated patterns, evident both in individual tiles and in larger tile arrangements. These patterns can include:

Grotesques: Fantastical designs that combine elements of plants, animals, and human figures in symmetrical and ornamental compositions.

Arabesques: Intricate, flowing patterns characterised by intertwined foliage, tendrils, and abstract forms, often drawing inspiration from Islamic art.

Material:

The primary materials used in the creation of Majolica tiles include:

Earthenware Clay: This type of clay, known for its relatively low firing temperature and porosity, is the base material for Majolica tiles. It is soft and malleable, making it easy to shape and manipulate.

Tin Oxide: A key component in the tin glaze, tin oxide provides the characteristic white, opaque surface of Majolica tiles. This glaze acts as a base coat that covers the clay body and offers a smooth, reflective surface for applying coloured designs.

Lead Oxide: Used as a flux in the glaze, lead oxide helps to create a glossy finish on the tiles.

Silica: This ingredient contributes to forming the glassy surface of the glaze.

Metallic Oxides (Pigments): Various metallic oxides are used to create vivid colours in Majolica designs:

Cobalt Oxide: Produces blue hues.

Copper Oxide: Results in green shades.

Antimony Oxide: Yields yellow colours.

Iron Oxide: Produces brown or red tones.

Manganese Oxide: Creates purple or black shades.

Chromium Oxide: Occasionally used to produce green.

These materials are carefully applied to the tiles and then fired in a kiln to achieve the final product.



Figure 53: One tile is repeated 16 times so the pattern it forms can be fully appreciated.

Motif:

The primary materials used in the creation of Majolica tiles include:

The works of majolica are influenced by a wide range of themes and stylistic sources.

Popular themes include antiquity and natural history, both of which were of great interest during the Victorian era. Other recurring motifs feature exotic creatures, both real and imagined, as well as agrarian imagery. In the creations of French potters, contemporary events and social commentary are prominently expressed.

Usage:

The production cost of these tiles is budget-friendly and environmentally sustainable. Their robust nature makes them suitable for installation in high-moisture areas such as bathrooms and kitchens. Additionally, Majolica tiles are commonly used to decorate altars and altarpieces in churches, often featuring religious scenes or symbols. They can also be employed to embellish entire chapels or smaller oratories, enhancing the visual impact and cohesiveness of these sacred spaces. (Anon., 2024)

The subject matter depicted on the facade of Majolica wares draws from various sources, including:

Roman and ancient Egyptian sculpture Chinese Sancai porcelain, known for its versatile decoration using glazes or slip in shades of brown, green, and off-white The works of Italian sculptor Luca della Robbia Meissen and Sèvres porcelain French animalier sculpture Renaissance art Neoclassical and Rococo sculpture Neo-Gothic work by English architect and designer Augustus Pugin Art Nouveau in Europe Chromium Oxide: Occasionally used to produce green. (Anon., 2024)

Moroccan Tiles (THE ZELLIGE TILE)

The technique of creating Zellige tiles has a rich history that dates back to the 10th century in North Africa and Andalusia. This art form became widely used in Spain and the Maghrib during the first half of the 14th century and reached its zenith in Morocco under the Marinid dynasty of the 14th and 15th centuries. Although the Islamic splendour of this craft in Spain diminished due to the Crusades, artisans continued their work in Morocco.

The origins of Zellige tiles are thought to be influenced by local interpretations of Greco-Roman mosaics, with additional influences from the Berbers and other indigenous North African peoples. The term “Zellige” comes from the Arabic word meaning “little polished stone”. Zellige tiles are characterized by their handmade, glazed surfaces with irregular patterns.

Starting in the 12th century, Zellige has become a timeless art form in Morocco, echoing the geometric precision of Roman mosaics. The craft, practised for centuries by artisans in Fez, is a testament to the blending of Islamic and Moroccan cultural influences. Research and field studies have contributed to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic and historical significance of Zellige.

Colours :

Originally, Zellige tiles were crafted in just white and brown. However, as their use evolved to symbolize wealth and status, they began to feature a broader spectrum of colours. Moroccan colour schemes are renowned for their rich palette, including jewel tones like deep blues, emerald greens, and ruby reds, alongside warm earthy shades such as terracotta and burnt orange. Bold and vibrant colours like intense reds, brilliant blues, and deep yellows are commonly seen in Moroccan design, often reflected in intricate tilework, textiles, and architectural elements. Moroccan tiles frequently incorporate colours such as brown, white, green, saffron, blue, and black, each symbolizing one of the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth.



Designs and patterns:

Each symbol and motif in Moroccan ceramic tile art carries its significance. The geometric shapes are intentionally designed to convey various meanings. For example, the eight-pointed star commonly seen in zellige patterns represents unity and balance, while the squared edges of the tiles reflect the Islamic appreciation for structure and boundaries within the infinite universe.

In adherence to Islamic artistic norms, these motifs avoid depicting living forms and instead focus on abstract and geometric symbolism. This approach is evident in the tile designs found in mosques, madrasas, and homes across Morocco.

Patterns often feature alternating squares of contrasting colours, creating a distinctive checkerboard effect that is used in both traditional and modern contexts. Floral and abstract patterns are also rich with symbolism, representing the lushness of gardens and the flowing nature of water—recurring themes in Islamic art that evoke the splendour of paradise.

Through these designs, zellige tiles do more than decorate spaces; they enrich them spiritually, transforming walls and floors into canvases that reflect ideals, beliefs, and values.

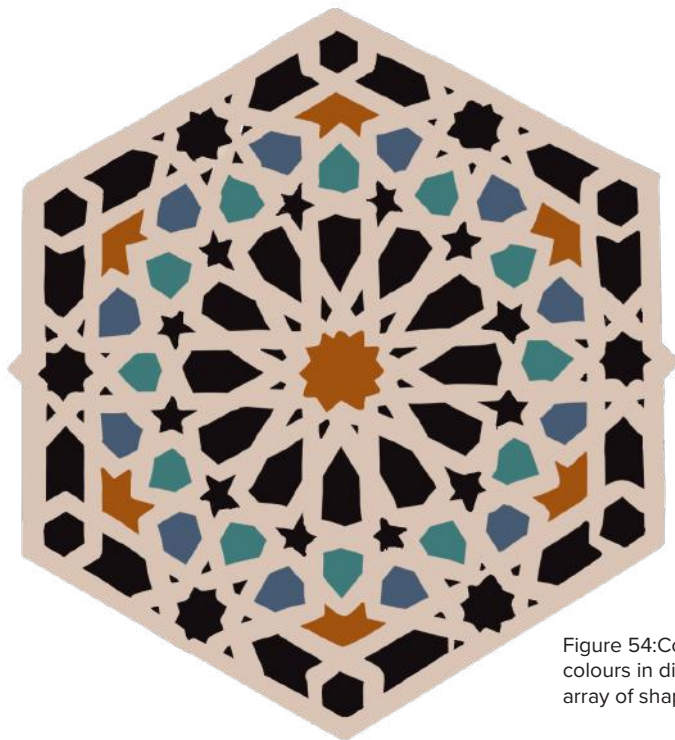


Figure 54: Combination of colours in different shapes a vast array of shapes

Material:

The materials used to make Moroccan tiles, particularly Zellige tiles, are:

Clay: Special Clay: The base material for Zellige tiles is a specific type of clay known as "terre de Fez" (Fez clay), which is found near the city of Fez in Morocco. This clay is prized for its fine texture and durability. The clay is typically mixed with water to create a workable paste and then shaped into tiles.

Glaze: Silica: A key component of the glaze, silica helps to form a glassy surface when the tiles are fired. It provides the hardness and durability of the glaze.

Metal Oxides: These are added to the glaze to achieve the vibrant colours characteristic of Moroccan tiles.

Pigments: Natural or synthetic colours added to the glaze.

Water: Used to mix with clay and prepare glazes.

Kiln: For firing the tiles at high temperatures.

Hammer and Hardie (Zellige Cutter): Traditional tools used to cut the tiles into small, precise pieces. The "hardie" is a stationary tool with a sharp edge, and the "hammer" is used to chisel the tile pieces to the desired shape.

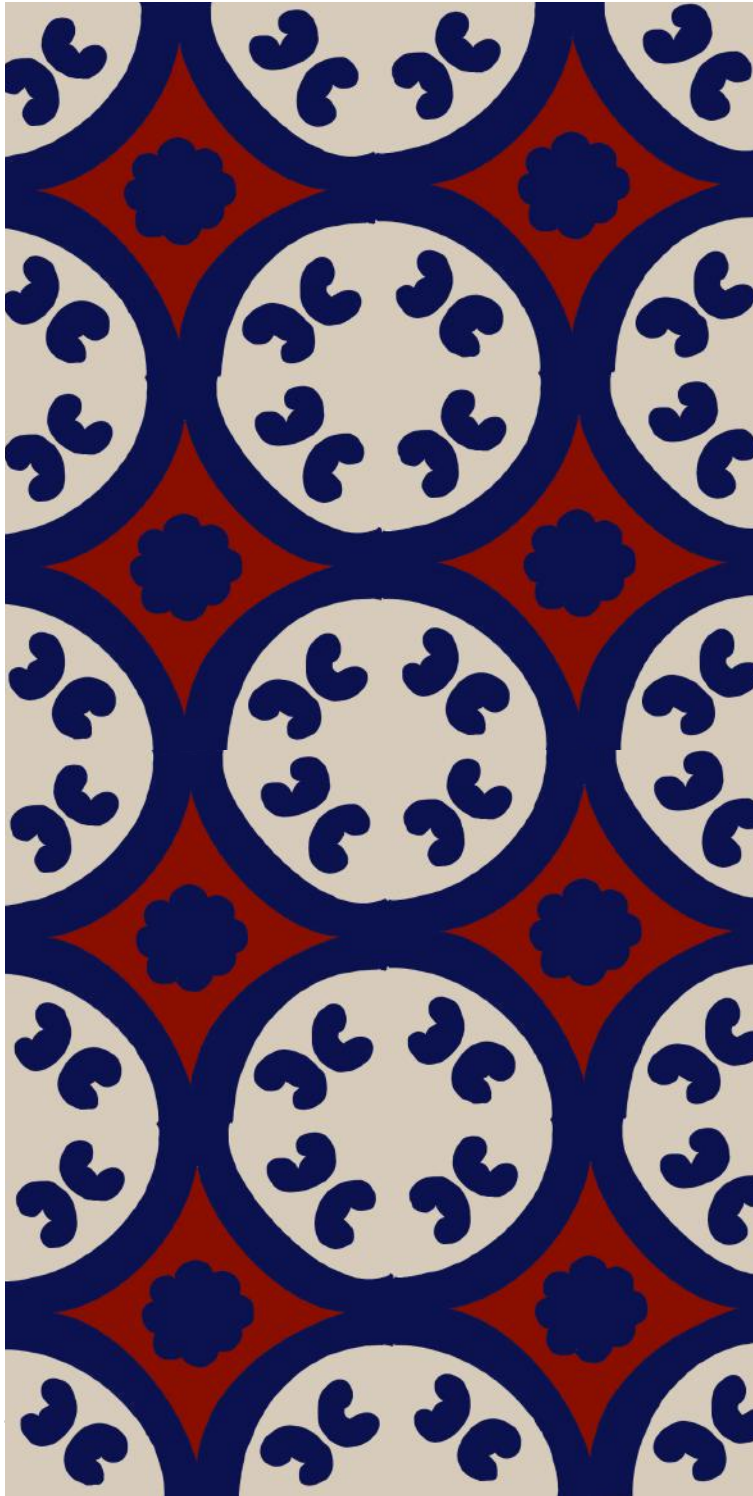
Wooden or Metal Molds: These are sometimes used to shape the clay into specific forms before cutting or glazing.

Motif:

Moroccan tile patterns feature a vast array of shapes, including squares, triangles, stars, diamonds, polygons, and crosses, arranged in precise, mathematical arrangements to create orderly mosaics. These geometric patterns are not just decorative; they hold a deeper meaning. Due to Islamic prohibitions on depicting living things, geometric designs were developed to introduce colour, embellishment, and symbolic significance into mosaics. The resulting patterns often create a mesmerizing effect, which can inspire meditation and religious reflection.

Usage: By the 14th Century, zellige tiles were used as decorative coverings for tombs, baths, fountains, patios and almost every kind of architecture.

Spanish Talavera Tiles



The Spanish term “azulejo,” used for tile, is derived from the Arabic word for “polished stone,” reflecting the historical influences that shaped its development. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Talavera de la Reina, a town in central Iberia, gained international acclaim for its ceramics, earning it the nickname “La Ciudad de la Cerámica” or “The City of Ceramics.” The city’s distinctive ceramic designs were influenced by its diverse population, including Dutch and Arab settlers, who introduced new techniques, tools, and aesthetic preferences that shaped the Talavera style.

When Puebla, Mexico was founded in 1531, just a decade after the conquest of the Aztec Empire, ceramic production became an integral part of local craftsmanship due to the abundance of high-quality clay and a strong tradition of earthenware. The Puebla artisans learned the Talavera techniques while working on the construction of the Church of Santo Domingo in 1571. Spanish monks reportedly invited craftsmen from Talavera de la Reina to cross the Atlantic to decorate the monastery and church with hand-painted tiles and religious motifs. (Anon., 2024)

Colours:

In Talavera ceramics, bright and vibrant colours are typically used, enhanced by a high-gloss finish. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, blue pigments were considered the highest quality and were particularly expensive to produce. However, by the 18th century, there was a shift towards using more green, yellow, and mauve, all of which were derived from natural sources. This change contributed to the intricate colour-quality system of Talavera tiles.

The quality of Talavera tiles was not only defined by their colours but also by their quantity, which indicated social status. Natural pigments were essential, and the glazing process often resulted in blurred paint strokes. Cobalt blue, a prominent colour, reflects Spanish pottery influences, while the vibrant yellows and greens are inspired by Mexican landscapes and flora. (Anon., 1981-2024)

Designs and patterns:

Moorish geometric designs, heavily influenced by Islamic art, encompass a variety of complex shapes such as stars, hexagons, octagons, and other polygons. These patterns utilize interlocking shapes and tessellations to create detailed, repeating designs.

Material:**1. Clay:**

The base material for Talavera tiles is a specific type of clay, typically sourced from the regions around Talavera de la Reina in Spain. The clay is known for its fine quality and is mixed with water to form a workable paste. The clay is shaped into tiles and then left to dry before the first firing.

2. Tin-Glaze:

After the initial firing, the tiles are coated with a tin-based glaze, which gives them their characteristic white, glossy surface. This glaze is essential for providing a smooth base for the application of colored designs.

3. Natural Pigments:

The vibrant colors seen on Talavera tiles are achieved using natural mineral pigments. Some common pigments include:

Cobalt oxide for blue.

Copper oxide for green.

Antimony for yellow.

Manganese oxide for black.

These pigments are mixed with the glaze to create the intricate patterns and designs typical of Talavera tiles.

4. Kiln:

After the design is applied, the tiles undergo a second firing in a kiln. This process bonds the pigments to the glaze, ensuring that the colors remain vibrant and the surface is durable.

The designs often include interwoven lines forming grids or lattices, which can range from simple to highly intricate. Additionally, flowing patterns featuring stylized plant elements and abstract forms are characteristic of the Mudéjar style, which merges Islamic and Christian artistic traditions.

Motif:

Talavera tiles are renowned for their intricate craftsmanship, featuring floral motifs, detailed geometric patterns, and scenes from Mexican folklore. Each tile is a unique work of art, reflecting the skill and dedication of the artisans who create them. When selecting a pattern, it's important to consider that colours in Talavera tiles carry deep symbolic meaning. Additionally, various patterns and motifs hold cultural significance, adding layers of meaning to the designs. (Anon., 2024)



Figure 55: A)Ximena Pattern

Usage:

The more decorative and intricately patterned tiles are commonly used for walls and floors. Often, a room can acquire character from the mere addition of Spanish tiles in the centre of the living room floor or on an accent wall. Spanish tiles are also very effective as patio floors and garden pathways.

COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS

Athangudi tiles from India, Moroccan tiles (particularly Zellige), Majolica tiles from Italy, and Spanish tiles (azulejos) each represent unique traditions in tile-making, reflecting the cultural and historical contexts from which they emerge. Here’s a comparative study of these tile types:

	ATHANGUDI TILES	MOROCCAN TILES (ZELLIGE)	MAJOLICA TILES	SPANISH TALAVERA TILES (AZULEJOS)
MATERIALS	Made from locally sourced sand, cement, and synthetic or natural pigments. The designs are created using a glass surface for smoothness.	Made from clay (especially from Fez), silica, and metal oxides for glazing. The clay is moulded, dried, and then glazed with vibrant colours.	Typically made from red or white clay, covered with a white tin glaze that serves as a base for colourful painting. This glaze is lead-based, providing a smooth, glossy finish.	Made from clay, often with a white glaze base. They are painted with metal oxide glazes and fired to achieve a glossy finish.
TECHNIQUES AND CRAFTMANSHIP	Handcrafted using a mix of cement and coloured oxides poured into moulds. They are then set on a glass surface to give them a smooth finish. The process involves skilled craftsmanship to create intricate, often floral designs.	Zellige tiles are meticulously cut by hand into various shapes after being fired. The artisans (maâllems) then assemble these small pieces into complex, colourful mosaics.	Hand-painted after being coated with a tin glaze. The painting technique allows for detailed, colourful imagery. After painting, the tiles are fired to set the design.	Typically involve painting on a white glaze base with vibrant colours. The painting can include geometric patterns, narrative scenes, floral motifs. They are then fired to fuse the glaze and set the colours.
DESIGN AND PATTERNS	Feature vibrant colours and bold, symmetrical patterns, often floral or geometric. The designs are typically traditional, reflecting the local Tamil culture.	Known for intricate geometric patterns, arabesques, and calligraphy. The designs avoid figurative depictions, focusing instead on complex, repeating motifs.	Characterized by their vivid, colourful designs, often depicting historical, mythological, or everyday scenes. The designs are less geometric and more pictorial.	Feature a variety of styles, including geometric patterns, floral designs, and narrative scenes. Influences range from Moorish geometric designs to Renaissance and Baroque artistry.

	ATHANGUDI TILES	MOROCCAN TILES (ZELLIGE)	MAJOLICA TILES	SPANISH TALAVERA TILES (AZULEJOS)
COLOUR PALETTE	Bright and vibrant colours, typically in bold, primary shades. The use of natural and synthetic pigments allows for a diverse palette.	Rich, earthy colours such as blues, greens, reds, and yellows, achieved through the use of metal oxides in the glaze.	Typically feature a white background with vibrant colours like blues, greens, yellows, and reds. The use of tin glaze allows for a wide range of hues.	Often use a white glaze as a base with a wide range of colours, including cobalt blue, green, yellow, and orange. The colours can be both vibrant and subdued, depending on the style.
TEXTURE	Athangudi tiles are known for their smooth and glossy texture, achieved through a meticulous handmade process. They are crafted using a mix of river sand, cement, and natural pigments on a glass base, which helps in achieving a shiny finish. The unique sand from Athangudi, with high laterite content, contributes to the tiles' distinct sheen and durability. These tiles are characterized by their vibrant colors and intricate patterns, often featuring geometric and floral designs. The final product is polished and sometimes coated with natural wax, enhancing both its durability and smooth texture.			
CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CONTENT	Originating from Tamil Nadu, India, these tiles reflect the local cultural heritage and are known for their durability and aesthetic appeal. They have seen a revival due to their eco-friendly production and traditional craftsmanship.	Deeply influenced by Islamic art, these tiles are a key element of Moroccan architectural identity. They reflect a rich cultural blend, including Andalusian and Berber influences.	Originating in the Renaissance period in Italy, these tiles were influenced by Islamic pottery and later developed into a distinct style characterized by vibrant storytelling and detailed painting.	Reflect a blend of Islamic, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque influences, mirroring Spain's complex cultural history. The use of azulejos became widespread in public and private spaces, serving both decorative and functional purposes.

	ATHANGUDI TILES	MOROCCAN TILES (Zellige)	MAJOLICA TILES	SPANISH TALAVERA TILES (AZULEJOS)
APPLICATIONS	Commonly used for flooring and wall decoration in homes and public buildings, known for their cooling properties and durability.	Used extensively in mosques, palaces, homes, and public buildings for wall and floor decoration. Zellige tiles are also used in fountains, patios, and as decorative elements.	Often used as decorative wall panels, especially in kitchens and bathrooms, as well as in churches and palaces. They are also used in pottery and tableware.	Used in architectural settings, including walls, floors, and facades. They are also used in churches, public buildings, and homes, often as decorative elements like murals or accent pieces.
SYMBOLISM AND MEANING	Reflect traditional Tamil aesthetics and cultural symbolism, often embodying local flora and fauna.	Geometric patterns symbolize infinity and the divine nature of creation in Islamic art. The use of non-figurative art reflects Islamic aniconism.	Often tell stories or depict scenes from mythology, history, or daily life, serving both decorative and narrative purposes.	Can include religious symbolism, historical narratives, and artistic expression, reflecting Spain's rich cultural tapestry.

Conclusion - Comparison of Athangudi tiles alongside other similar tiles

In examining Athangudi tiles alongside Majolica, Moroccan Zellige, and Spanish Talavera tiles, it becomes evident that each tradition represents a unique intersection of cultural heritage, artistic expression, and technological innovation. While Athangudi tiles embody the vibrant and enduring craftsmanship of Tamil Nadu, Majolica tiles reveal the influence of Renaissance artistry, Moroccan Zellige showcases the precision and symbolic richness of Islamic art, and Spanish Talavera reflects a blend of historical influences and vibrant color palettes. This comparative study underscores how these diverse tile traditions not only enhance their respective architectural and decorative contexts but also contribute to a broader understanding of global artistic practices. The shared commitment to craftsmanship and design across these traditions highlights the universal human desire to adorn and elevate our surroundings through beautiful, functional art.

COMPASRISON OF ATHANGUDI TILES WITH RESPECT TO VITRIFIED TILES

1. Manufacturing Process:

Athangudi Tiles: These are handcrafted using locally sourced sand, cement, and natural pigments. They are made on a glass surface, giving them a smooth finish. The traditional process involves no use of electricity, making them eco-friendly.

Vitrified Tiles: These are machine-made from a mixture of clay, silica, quartz, and feldspar. They undergo a process called vitrification, which gives them a glass-like surface, making them highly durable and water-resistant

2. Durability:

Athangudi Tiles: While durable, they can be prone to cracking if not installed properly. They also require careful maintenance to preserve their glossy finish.

Vitrified Tiles: Known for their extreme durability, they are resistant to scratches, stains, and moisture. They have a high breaking strength and are less porous, making them suitable for high-traffic areas and outdoor use .

3. Aesthetic and Design:

Athangudi Tiles: Each tile is unique due to the handcrafted process. They often feature traditional, vibrant designs with a cultural touch, suitable for adding a classic or traditional look to spaces.

Vitrified Tiles: Available in a wide variety of designs, including those that mimic natural materials like wood and stone. They can have a glossy or matte finish and are often chosen for their sleek, modern appearance .

4. Cost:

Athangudi Tiles: Generally more affordable, especially considering they are handmade. The cost includes both the tiles and the specialized labor required for installation.

Vitrified Tiles: Can range from affordable to expensive depending on the type and quality. They generally require less specialized labor for installation but can be more costly due to their manufacturing process .

5. Maintenance:

Athangudi Tiles: Require regular polishing and careful cleaning to maintain their luster. Not ideal for wet areas as they can become slippery.

Vitrified Tiles: Low-maintenance and easy to clean. They resist stains and do not require frequent polishing. However, grout lines can become dirty over time and may need resealing .

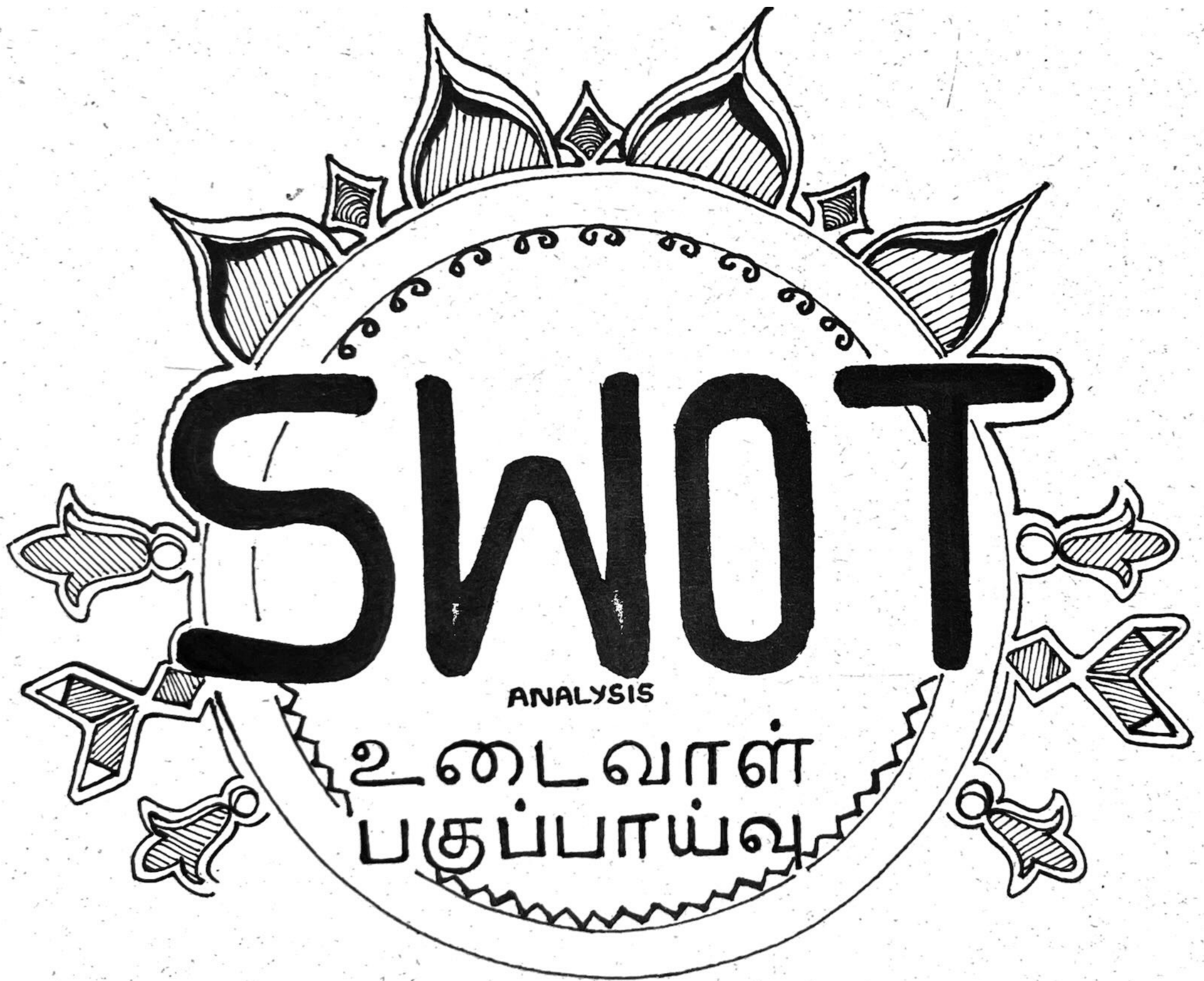
6. Environmental Impact:

Athangudi Tiles: More eco-friendly due to their handmade nature and the use of natural materials.

Vitrified Tiles: Though more energy-intensive to produce, they are also long-lasting and require less frequent replacement, which can be seen as a long-term eco-benefit .

In summary, Athangudi tiles are ideal for those looking for traditional, unique designs with a cultural touch and are more environmentally friendly. Vitrified tiles are preferred for their durability, low maintenance, and variety of modern designs, making them suitable for both residential and commercial spaces. The choice depends on aesthetic preference, intended use, and budget.





SWOT ANALYSIS

Athangudi tiles are a unique and culturally significant craft with potential appeal in both local and global markets. Their strengths lie in their distinctive aesthetic, eco-friendly production, and cultural heritage. However, they face challenges such as limited awareness, maintenance requirements, and competition from more modern and mass-produced tiles.

To thrive, the Athangudi tile industry can focus on promoting its unique qualities, expanding market reach, and targeting niche markets that value craftsmanship and sustainability. Addressing quality control and production scalability will also be key to capitalizing on growing demand for artisanal products. Protecting the authenticity and heritage of the craft while innovating in design and application can help secure a strong position in the market



S

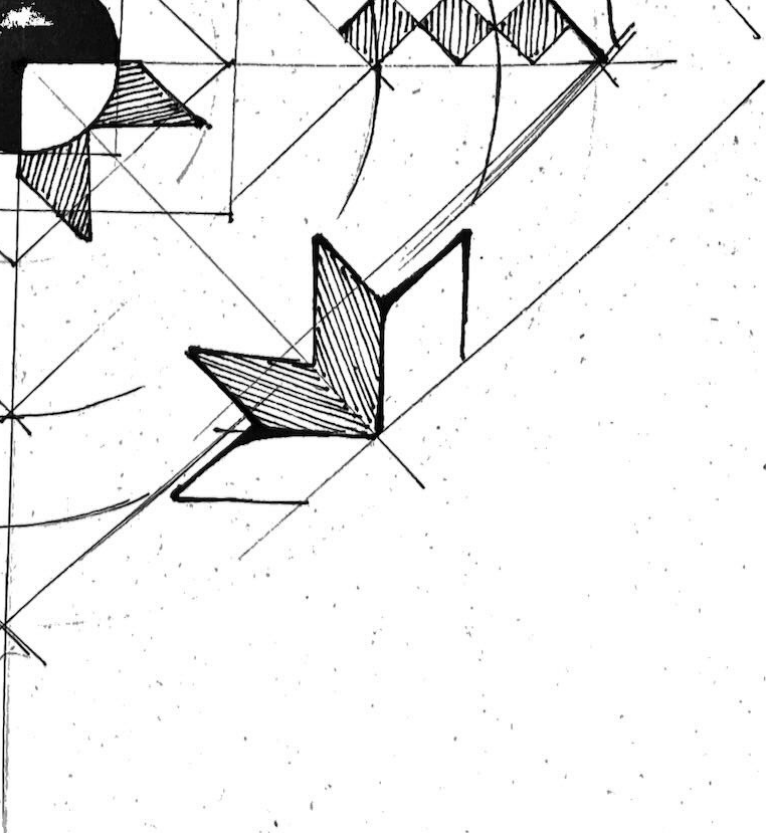
Strengths:

The Athangudi tile-making process is an exceptionally unique traditional craft that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Chettinad region in India. Artisans employ techniques passed down through generations, utilizing locally sourced sand and other raw materials, which contribute to the distinctive beauty and uniqueness of the tiles. Brass Moulds are used during the crafting process to ensure precision in the designs, even though each tile is handmade. The motifs, often inspired by flora and fauna and represented in geometric forms, set this craft apart, making it truly distinctive.

W

Weaknesses:

While Athangudi tiles boast a powerful aesthetic appeal, they may not offer the same durability as some modern tiles, particularly under heavy wear. They are less recognized internationally compared to other traditional tiles. Due to their handmade nature and the traditional techniques employed, these tiles require regular maintenance to preserve their shine; without proper care, they can lose their lustre. Additionally, they lack certain properties needed for installation in bathrooms, making them less suitable for wet environments.



O

Opportunities:

Increasing demand for eco-friendly and sustainable building materials. Opportunity to promote these tiles to international markets as a unique, artisanal product. Since they designs are made through Mould so more different kind of design can also be made by maintaining the aesthetics of the craft.

T

Threats:

The market for Athangudi tiles faces competition from both local and international sources, including modern and mass-produced tiles. There is also the risk of cheaper imitations, which could diminish the market for authentic Athangudi tiles. The craft's popularity is partly due to the unique materials available at its place of origin. If these raw materials were to become unavailable, the craft could be at risk.

CONCLUSION

This document underscores the enduring legacy and intricate artistry of Athangudi tiles, highlighting their profound significance within Tamil Nadu's cultural and historical landscape. Our journey through Athangudi has illuminated the remarkable craftsmanship that defines these tiles, showcasing their vibrant patterns, rich colors, and unique production methods. These tiles are not merely decorative elements; they embody a century-old tradition that weaves together the skills of artisans, the history of a region, and the artistry of handmade craftsmanship.

Athangudi tiles stand out for their artisanal excellence and cultural resonance. The traditional techniques used in their creation—spanning from the selection of local materials to the precise crafting processes—reflect a deep-rooted commitment to preserving and celebrating cultural heritage. Each tile tells a story of craftsmanship passed through generations, characterized by its distinctive patterns, vibrant hues, and intricate designs. This dedication not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the tiles but also affirms their role as a living tradition.

In comparison with global tile traditions such as Majolica from Italy, Zellige from Morocco, and Talavera from Spain, Athangudi tiles hold their own with a unique blend of local materials, design elements, and sustainable practices. While each tradition has its distinctive features—Majolica's Renaissance-inspired painting, Zellige's geometric precision, and Talavera's vibrant colors—Athangudi tiles offer a singular perspective through their blend of geometric and floral motifs, locally sourced materials, and eco-friendly production methods.

The examination of Athangudi tiles against these global standards reveals their strengths in artisanal craftsmanship and cultural depth. Yet, it also highlights areas where the craft can evolve to meet contemporary market demands. Addressing these aspects—such as improving durability, enhancing global visibility, and expanding market reach—will be pivotal for the continued relevance and growth of Athangudi tiles in a competitive and evolving market.

As we move forward, it is crucial to balance the preservation of traditional techniques with innovation. Embracing new design opportunities, exploring broader market potentials, and strengthening global connections will ensure that Athangudi tiles remain a symbol of heritage and artistry, celebrated both locally and internationally. By fostering this blend of tradition and modernity, Athangudi tiles can continue to enchant and inspire, securing their place in the global tapestry of artisanal craftsmanship.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE

Designing products using Athangudi tiles provides an excellent opportunity to blend traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design. According to artisans, while these tiles can be manufactured in various sizes, the optimal sizes for maximizing their durability and longevity are 8x8 inches and 10x10 inches.

These dimensions not only enhance the tiles' strength but also provide versatility in various applications. With this consideration in mind, here are some suggested future design directions for using Athangudi tiles beyond traditional flooring:

Home Decor and Furniture

Tabletops and Side Tables: Athangudi tiles can be used as tabletops for dining and coffee tables, adding a touch of tradition to modern furniture. They can be framed with materials like wood, metal, or acrylic.

Wall Art and Decorative Panels: Arranging tiles in creative patterns can transform them into unique wall art or decorative panels, serving as focal points in interior spaces.

Framed Mirrors: Incorporating tiles into mirror frames can create a stylish contrast between the reflective surface and the colorful, intricate designs of the tiles.

Cabinet and Drawer Fronts: Tiles can be used on the fronts of cabinets, drawers, and wardrobes, adding vibrant patterns and textures to furniture pieces.

Kitchen and Dining Accessories

Serving Trays: Using Athangudi tiles as bases for serving trays combines functionality with aesthetic appeal, making them perfect for home entertaining.

Coasters and Placemats: Smaller tiles can be crafted into coasters and placemats, offering a decorative yet practical addition to dining settings.

Kitchen Backsplashes: Athangudi tiles are ideal for kitchen backsplashes, providing a durable and visually striking element that enhances the kitchen's overall look.

Personal Accessories

Jewelry: Small, lightweight versions of Athangudi tiles can be incorporated into jewelry designs, such as pendants, earrings, and bracelets, creating unique, handcrafted pieces.

Handbags and Clutches: Tiles can be used as decorative inlays in handbags and clutches, or as patterns on fabrics, blending traditional motifs with modern fashion.

Architectural Features

Stair Risers: Tiles can be installed on stair risers, adding a pop of color and pattern to stairs and making them a focal point in the home.

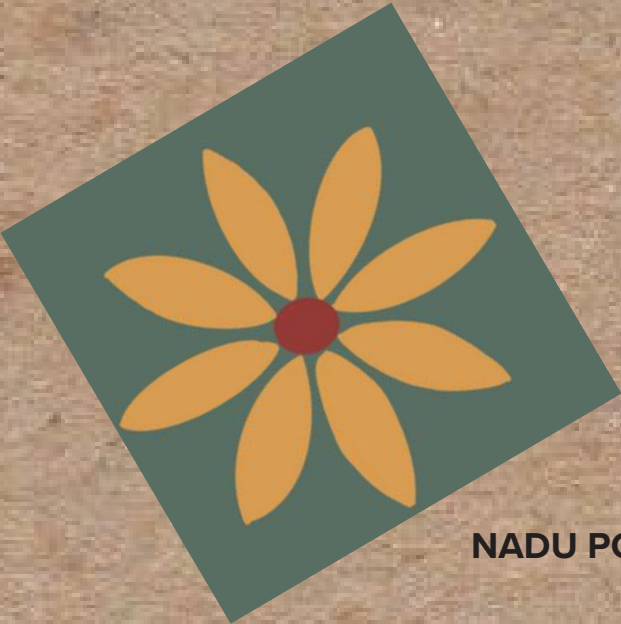
Fireplace Surrounds: Athangudi tiles can be used around fireplaces to create a unique and visually engaging surround that stands out in living spaces.

These innovative uses of Athangudi tiles not only preserve traditional craftsmanship but also expand its application into modern interiors and everyday products.

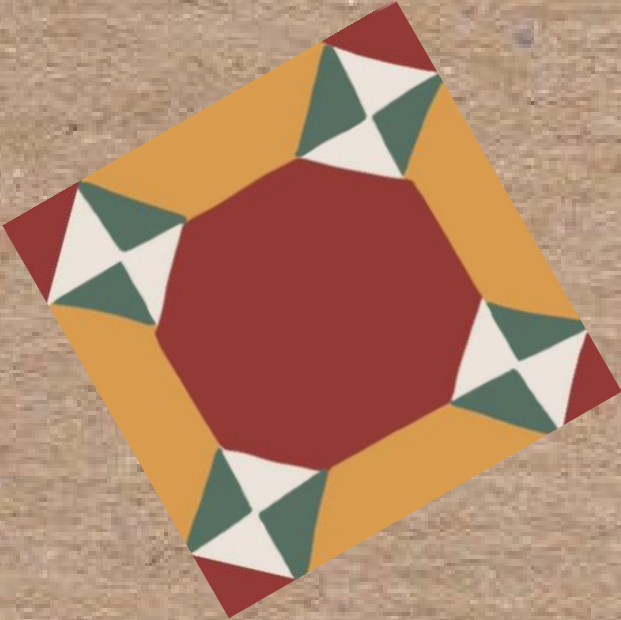
POPULAR MOTIFS



ORU MOTTU

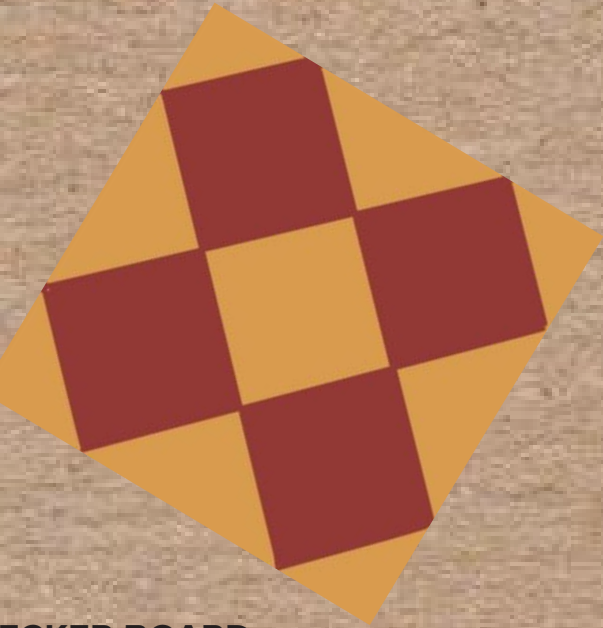


NADU POO



CHOKATTAN

CH



ECKER BOARD

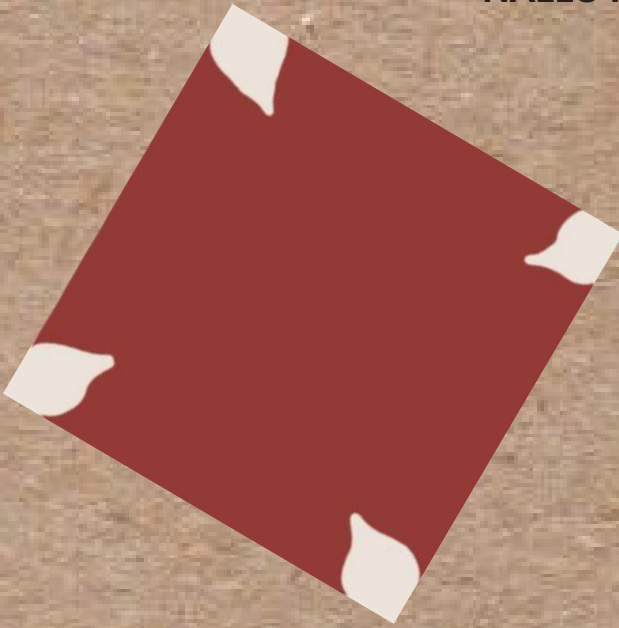


SOORIYAN



THAMARAI BORDER

NALLU MOTTU



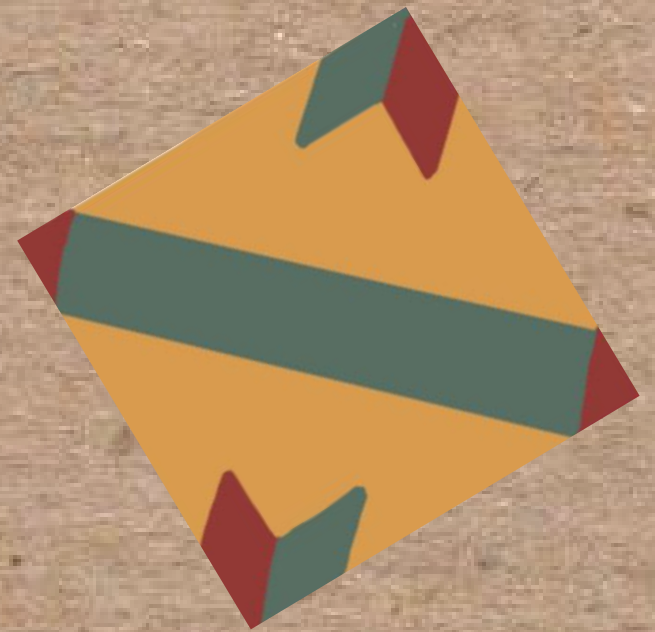
FRENCH DESIGN



CHEDI POOKAL



DIAMOND STAR



RANGOLI RENDU MOTTU



VALAIVU KAMALAM





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THE TEAM

RESEARCH

Maheswari Gopalakrishnan
Monikka V S
Siddhi Barnwal
Tanishka Jain

LANGUAGE

Maheswari Gopalakrishnan
Tanishka Jain

INTERACTION

Maheswari Gopalakrishnan
Monikka V S

LAYOUT

Maheswari Gopalakrishnan
Monikka V S
Tanishka Jain

PHOTOGRAPHY

Prithwiraj Chaudhuri

ILLUSTRATION

Maheswari Gopalakrishnan
Prithwiraj Chaudhuri
Sujeet Stephen Kacchap



ANNEXURE

**National Institute of Fashion Technology
Bengaluru**

CRAFT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Artisan's Name- Michael Jay. A

2. Contact Number- 94428 94422

3. Artisan's Address- 60/1 C. Puttur Main rd Malavalli

4. Artisan's Age- 50 Malavalli

5. Artisan's Sex
1) Male (✓) 2) Female ()

6. Education level of artisan
1) Illiterate () 2) Primary ()
3) Secondary () 4) College (✓) DTED

7. Languages known- Comprehend Tamil Read Tamil Write Tamil
English

8. Size of the family unit - Male (3), Female (1). Children (below 13 yrs) ().
19, 16 wife, mother

9. What craft are you associated with? Athangudi Tiles

10. For how many years the craft has been practiced by family?
0-5yrs () 5-10yrs () 10-25yrs () 25-50yrs () beyond 50 yrs (✓) 90 years

11. Family members participating in craft - Male (), Female () 70 units

12. Average number of hours devoted to the craft per week - 27 Associa
Male (), Female () 5 hours


13. No. of months for which artisan is involved in craft related activity:
1) 3 - 6 months () 2) 6 - 9 months () 3) Throughout the year (✓)

14. Are you engaged in any other activity apart from the handicrafts?
1) Yes () 2) No (✓)
If yes, specify the occupation _____ Not specific month

15. Any month /months in the year that is high in demand for craft - Rainy seasons
production issue

16. Has there been a change in the location or area of the craft?
If yes, specify original Thangaswami & Brothers

17. Are you a member of any of the following organizations?
1) SHGs () 2) Cooperative ()
3) Society () 4) any other () 5) None (✓)



18. Are you planning to train your children in your traditional craft practices?

1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

Give reasons for your choice Pursuing different occupation

INCOME RELATED QUESTIONS

19. Current monthly income of the artisan:

1) Rs. 2500 - 5000 () 2) Rs. 5000 - 7500 ()
3) Rs. 7500 - 10,000 () 4) More than Rs. 10000 ()

From other source owner 1 lakh - 1 month
(max)

20. Do you have a saving account in the:

1) Bank (✓) 2) Post Office ()
3) Any Other () 4) No ()

Cash

ASSETS

21. Dwelling

1) Own House (✓) 2) Rented House ()

22. Type of House

1) Kachha () 2) Pucca (✓) 3) Semi-Pucca ()

23. If own house, did you

1) Purchase () 2) Constructed () 3) Inherited (✓)

24. If rented house, what is the monthly rent _____

25. In the last two years, have you purchased/changed or added any of the following:

- Land ()
- Cattle ()
- Two-wheeler ()
- Four-wheeler ()
- Electronics (TV/Radio/Mixer/Grinder/Music System/etc) ()
- Mobile ()
- Gas Connection ()
- Computer ()
- Any other item ()
- None

MEDICAL FACILITY

26. Are there any occupational health hazard/diseases, linked with your craft practice

1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

If yes, please specify _____

7. Do you have health/ life insurance policy?

- 1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

8. Are you working on-

- a) Traditional Design (✓) b) Latest Design ()
c) Market Demand Design (✓)

9. Who gives the design?

- 1) Own () 2) Trader/Agent () 3) Old Patterns (✓) 4) Designers (✓)

10. Has there been an adoption of new techniques in development of craft because of any change of location? **No**

If yes, specify _____

11. Have you developed any new products in last two years? **No**

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

12. Have you explored new raw materials other than traditional?

Yes (✓) No ()

If yes specify reason - **New colors have been introduced.**

- 1) Better pricing () 2) Non availability () 3) Creative persuasion
4) Market Demand (✓) 5) Any other _____

13. If yes, are the new products more profitable than the old products?

- 1) Yes () 2) No ()

14. Identify the skill level of the artisans (as per the artisan's perception), with respect to the handicraft only:

- 1) Unskilled () 2) Semi-skilled ()
3) Skilled () 4) Master craftsmen (✓)

15. Are you self employed - Yes (✓) No ()

If no, specify place _____

16. Which are would you like to strengthen for your growth

- 1) Production (✓) 2) Design () 3) Packaging ()

4) Marketing () 5) Any other _____

TRAINING

37. Have you received any training recently for upgrading your skills?

- 1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

If yes, specify the kind _____

38. Are these kind of training good for your work opportunities?

- 1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

39. Do you need further training?

- 1) Yes () 2) No ()

40. In which of the following areas would you want to be trained?

- 1) Skill Development 2) Capacity Building 3) Design Innovation
4) Better Quality 5) Marketing 6) Any other _____

41. Do you know how to use Computer?

- 1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

42. Do you use Internet?

- 1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

If yes, what do you use it for?

- 1) Personal () 2) Business Purpose () 3) Both (✓)

43. Have you benefited in any way by the use of Internet?

- 1) Yes (✓) 2) No () If yes, specify **10% benefit in attraction of customers**

PRICING

44. Who or what decides the pricing of your products?

- 1) Self (✓) 2) Trader/Agent () 3) Raw Materials () 4) Local Market Demand ()
5) Labour Cost () 6) Any other _____

45. Are you satisfied with the present system of pricing?

- 1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

If no, then give suggestions _____

46. Where do you procure raw material from?

- 1) Local Market (✓) 2) Agents () 3) Nearby Markets (✓) 4) Far away markets ()
Madurai Chennai **Gujarat Machine mould**

**National Institute of Fashion Technology
Bengaluru**

CRAFT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Artisan's Name- Ravi Chandran. B
2. Contact Number- 94421 61221
3. Artisan's Address- ST. Flower Flooring Tiles, Madha Kovil, Arochiyappa, Athangudi - 630101, Sivagangai District.
4. Artisan's Age- 57
5. Artisan's Sex ☒ 1) Male ☐ 2) Female
6. Education level of artisan ☐ 1) Illiterate ☒ 2) Primary ☐ 3) Secondary ☐ 4) College
7. Languages known- Comprehend Tamil Read Tamil Write Tamil
8. Size of the family unit - Male (1), Female (2), Children (below 13 yrs) ()
9. What craft are you associated with? Athangudi Tiles
10. For how many years the craft has been practiced by family? (1980)
0-5yrs () 5-10yrs () 10-25yrs () 25-50yrs () beyond 50 yrs (☒)
11. Family members participating in craft - Male (1), Female ()
12. Average number of hours devoted to the craft per week - [7am to 5 pm]
Male (), Female ()
13. No. of months for which artisan is involved in craft related activity:
1) 3 - 6 months () 2) 6 - 9 months () 3) Throughout the year (☒)
14. Are you engaged in any other activity apart from the handicrafts?
1) Yes () 2) No (☒)
If yes, specify the occupation _____
15. Any month /months in the year that is high in demand for craft - Avani Vaikai January
16. Has there been a change in the location or area of the craft?
If yes, specify original _____
17. Are you a member of any of the following organizations?
1) SHGs () 2) Cooperative ()
3) Society () 4) any other () 5) None (☒)

27 members - Association Athangudi Tiles Assoc.
(Head)



18. Are you planning to train your children in your traditional craft practices?

1) Yes () 2) No (☒)

Give reasons for your choice _____

INCOME RELATED QUESTIONS

19. Current monthly income of the artisan:

- 1) Rs. 2500 - 5000 () 2) Rs. 5000 - 7500 ()
3) Rs. 7500 - 10,000 () 4) More than Rs. 10000 ()

From other source _____

20. Do you have a saving account in the:

- 1) Bank (☒) 2) Post Office ()
3) Any Other () 4) No ()

ASSETS

21. Dwelling

- 1) Own House (☒) 2) Rented House ()

22. Type of House

- 1) Kachha () 2) Pucca (☒) 3) Semi-Pucca ()

23. If own house, did you

- 1) Purchase () 2) Constructed () 3) Inherited (☒)

24. If rented house, what is the monthly rent _____

25. In the last two years, have you purchased/changed or added any of the following:

- Land ()
- Cattle ()
- Two-wheeler ()
- Four-wheeler ()
- Electronics (TV/Radio/Mixer/Grinder/Music System/etc) ()
- Mobile ()
- Gas Connection ()
- Computer ()
- Any other item ()
- None

MEDICAL FACILITY

26. Are there any occupational health hazard/diseases, linked with your craft practice?

1) Yes (☒) 2) No ()

Normal Fever for 1 week

If yes, please specify _____

27. Do you have health/ life insurance policy?

1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

28. Are you working on-

a) Traditional Design (✓) b) Latest Design ()
d) Market Demand Design (✓)

29. Who gives the design?

1) Own (✓) 2) Trader/Agent () 3) Old Patterns () 4) Designers (✓)

30. Has there been an adoption of new techniques in development of craft because any change of location?

If yes, specify _____

31. Have you developed any new products in last two years? No

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

32. Have you explored new raw materials other than traditional?

Yes () No (✓)

If yes specify reason -

1) Better pricing () 2) Non availability () 3) Creative persuasion
4) Market Demand () 5) Any other _____

33. If yes, are the new products more profitable than the old products?

1) Yes () 2) No ()

34. Identify the skill level of the artisans (as per the artisan's perception), with respect to the handicraft only:

1) Unskilled () 2) Semi-skilled ()
3) Skilled () 4) Master craftsmen (✓)

35. Are you self employed - Yes (✓) No (✗)

If no, specify place Other

36. Which are would you like to strengthen for your growth

1) Production () 2) Design (✓) 3) Packaging ()

4) Marketing () 5) Any other _____

TRAINING

37. Have you received any training recently for upgrading your skills?

1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

If yes, specify the kind _____

38. Are these kind of training good for your work opportunities? Not necessary

1) Yes () 2) No ()

39. Do you need further training?

1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

40. In which of the following areas would you want to be trained? None

1) Skill Development 2) Capacity Building 3) Design Innovation
4) Better Quality 5) Marketing 6) Any other _____

41. Do you know how to use Computer?

1) Yes () 2) No (✓)

42. Do you use Internet?

1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

If yes, what do you use it for?

1) Personal (✓) 2) Business Purpose (✓) 3) Both (✓)

43. Have you benefited in any way by the use of Internet?

1) Yes (✓) 2) No () If yes, specify better connectivity

PRICING

44. Who or what decides the pricing of your products?

1) Self (✓) 2) Trader/Agent () 3) Raw Materials () 4) Local Market Demand ()
5) Labour Cost () 6) Any other _____

45. Are you satisfied with the present system of pricing?

1) Yes (✓) 2) No ()

If no, then give suggestions _____

46. Where do you procure raw material from?

1) Local Market () 2) Agents () 3) Nearby Markets (✓) 4) Far away markets ()

National Institute of Fashion Technology
Bengaluru

CRAFT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Artisan's Name- Thomas . S
- Contact Number- 98 650 50982
- Artisan's Address- Populus Tile work, Athangudi Rd, TN 630208
- Artisan's Age- 28 yrs
- Artisan's Sex
1) Male ☒ 2) Female ()
- Education level of artisan
1) Illiterate () 2) Primary ()
3) Secondary () 4) College ☒ Civil Engineer
- Languages known- Comprehend Tamil Read English Write English
- Size of the family unit - Male ☒, Female ☒, Children (below 13 yrs) ().
Mother
- What craft are you associated with? Athangudi Tiles, Civil.
- For how many years the craft has been practiced by family? 4 Generations
0-5yrs () 5-10yrs () 10-25yrs () 25-50yrs () beyond 50 yrs ☒
1. Family members participating in craft - Male (), Female ()
2. Average number of hours devoted to the craft per week - [8 am - 5 pm]
Male (), Female ()
3. No. of months for which artisan is involved in craft related activity:
1) 3 - 6 months () 2) 6 - 9 months () 3) Throughout the year ☒
4. Are you engaged in any other activity apart from the handicrafts?
1) Yes () 2) No ☒
If yes, specify the occupation _____
5. Any month /months in the year that is high in demand for craft - No specific mo
6. Has there been a change in the location or area of the craft?
No
If yes, specify original _____
7. Are you a member of any of the following organizations?
1) SHGs () 2) Cooperative ()
3) Society () 4) any other () 5) None ☒



18. Are you planning to train your children in your traditional craft practices?

1) Yes () 2) No ☒

Give reasons for your choice _____

INCOME RELATED QUESTIONS

19. Current monthly income of the artisan:

- 1) Rs. 2500 - 5000 () 2) Rs. 5000 - 7500 ()
3) Rs. 7500 - 10,000 () 4) More than Rs. 10000 ()

From other source _____

20. Do you have a saving account in the:

- 1) Bank ☒ 2) Post Office ()
3) Any Other () 4) No ()

ASSETS

21. Dwelling

- 1) Own House ☒ 2) Rented House ()

22. Type of House

- 1) Kachha () 2) Pucca ☒ 3) Semi-Pucca ()

23. If own house, did you

- 1) Purchase () 2) Constructed () 3) Inherited ☒

24. If rented house, what is the monthly rent _____

25. In the last two years, have you purchased/changed or added any of the following:

- Land ()
- Cattle ()
- Two-wheeler ()
- Four-wheeler ()
- Electronics (TV/Radio/Mixer/Grinder/Music System/etc) ()
- Mobile ()
- Gas Connection ()
- Computer ()
- Any other item ()
- None

MEDICAL FACILITY

26. Are there any occupational health hazard/diseases, linked with your craft practice?

1) Yes ☒ 2) No ()

Normal Fever for 1 week

If yes, please specify _____

27. Do you have health/ life insurance policy?

- 1) Yes (☒) 2) No ()

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

28. Are you working on-

a) Traditional Design (☒)

b) Latest Design (☒)

d) Market Demand Design ()

customised.

29. Who gives the design?

1) Own (☒) 2) Trader/Agent () 3) Old Patterns (☒) 4) Designers *customer*

30. Has there been an adoption of new techniques in development of craft because of any change of location? *No*

If yes, specify _____

31. Have you developed any new products in last two years?

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

32. Have you explored new raw materials other than traditional?

Yes () No (☒)

If yes specify reason - _____

- 1) Better pricing () 2) Non availability () 3) Creative persuasion
4) Market Demand () 5) Any other _____

33. If yes, are the new products more profitable than the old products? _____

- 1) Yes () 2) No ()

34. Identify the skill level of the artisans (as per the artisan's perception), with respect to the handicraft only:

- 1) Unskilled () 2) Semi-skilled ()
3) Skilled (☒) 4) Master craftsmen ()

35. Are you self employed - Yes () No (☒)

If no, specify place _____

36. Which are would you like to strengthen for your growth

- 1) Production () 2) Design () 3) Packaging ()

- 4) Marketing (☒) 5) Any other _____

TRAINING

37. Have you received any training recently for upgrading your skills?

- 1) Yes () 2) No (☒)

If yes, specify the kind _____

38. Are these kind of training good for your work opportunities? _____

- 1) Yes () 2) No ()

39. Do you need further training? _____

- 1) Yes () 2) No (☒)

40. In which of the following areas would you want to be trained? _____

- 1) Skill Development 2) Capacity Building 3) Design Innovation
4) Better Quality 5) Marketing 6) Any other _____

41. Do you know how to use Computer?

- 1) Yes (☒) 2) No ()

42. Do you use Internet?

- 1) Yes (☒) 2) No ()

If yes, what do you use it for?

- 1) Personal () 2) Business Purpose () 3) Both ()

43. Have you benefited in any way by the use of Internet?

- 1) Yes (☒) 2) No () If yes, specify _____

PRICING

44. Who or what decides the pricing of your products?

- 1) Self (☒) 2) Trader/Agent () 3) Raw Materials () 4) Local Market Demand ()
5) Labour Cost () 6) Any other _____

45. Are you satisfied with the present system of pricing?

- 1) Yes (☒) 2) No ()

If no, then give suggestions _____

46. Where do you procure raw material from?

- 1) Local Market () 2) Agents () 3) Nearby Markets (☒) 4) Far away markets ()

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the full name of the person associated with the company?
The full name is Michael Raj A.

2. How old is Michael Raj A?
Michael Raj A is 50 years old.

3. What is Michael Raj A's contact number?
His contact number is 9442894422.

4. Where is Michael Raj's residence located?
He resides at 60/1 C Puthur Main Rd, Malar Rd, Athangudi, Karaikudi, Sivaganga district.

5. What is the educational background of Michael Raj ?
He studied at an aided college and holds a TDED degree.

6. Which languages does Michael Raj speak?
He speaks Tamil and can understand English.

7. Can you describe Michael Raj's family?
He has two sons aged 19 and 16, a wife who is 46 years old, and a 76-year-old mother. His late father was Arogya Swami, and his late grandfather was Rathinam Pillai.

8. What was the original company founded by Michael Raj's family?
The original company was named Thangaswami and Brothers.

9. What is Michael Raj's current salary range?
His salary ranges from 60,000 to 1 lakh INR.

10. Which regions does Michael Raj export his products to?
He exports to Karnataka, Kerala, Chennai, Madurai, and Coimbatore

11. What are the wages for master artisans and workers in Michael Raj A's company?
Master artisans earn 1000 INR per day, while workers earn between 600 to 700 INR per day.

12. How many motifs and designs are used by Michael Raj A's company, and who created them?

There are over 300 motifs and designs, originally drawn by his grandfather. They also offer customized designs by architects.

13. What challenges does Michael Raj A face in his business?
He faces challenges in importing red and black oxide colors, dealing with workers' personal issues, receiving payments from customers, and the reduced number of international visitors after the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. What percentage of sales is generated through online marketing?
10% of sales are generated through online marketing, while 90% come

15. What is the cost per square foot for normal and complex designs?
The cost is 55 INR per square foot for normal designs and 60 INR per square foot for complex designs.

16. Does the government provide any subsidies or loans for the business?
Yes, the business receives government loans under the MUKTA scheme.

17. What is the training process for new helpers in the company?
New helpers are trained for 10-15 days, with further training for color mixing taking 2 years, pouring 2 years, and perfecting designs 2 years.

18. How many artisans and laborers work under Michael Raj A?
There are 15 artisans/laborers and 15 laying laborers employed in the company.

19. How is the packing of tiles managed during transportation?
The tiles are packed using paddy straw (vaikol) placed on the top, bottom, and sides of the truck to protect them during transportation.

20.What is the full name of the individual leading Popular Tiles?

The full name is S. Thomas.

21.How old is S. Thomas?

S. Thomas is 28 years old.

22. How many years of experience does S. Thomas have in the tile industry?

He has over 10 years of experience.

23.What is the educational background of S. Thomas?

S. Thomas is a civil engineer who graduated from Saveetha Engineering College, Chennai.

24.What is the name of the company led by S. Thomas?

The company is named Popular Tiles.

25.Where is Popular Tiles located?

Popular Tiles is located at Popular Tile Work, Madha Nagar, Arockiyapuram, Athangudi Road, Tamil Nadu, 630101.

26.What is the family legacy behind Popular Tiles?

Popular Tiles is a family business with four generations of expertise, originally founded by S. Thomas's grandfather, S.T. Thanasaami Pillai, and continued by his late father, D. Saagaayaraaj.

27.How has S. Thomas innovated the traditional Athangudi tile designs?

He has incorporated Moroccan mosaic inspirations into the traditional Athangudi tile designs.

28.How many pre-drawn tile patterns does Popular Tiles have, and how old are they?

Popular Tiles has over 300 pre-drawn tile patterns that are more than 50 years old.

29.Does Popular Tiles offer customized designs, and if so, how are they created?

Yes, Popular Tiles offers customized designs, which are created in collaboration with architects.

30.What challenges does S. Thomas face in running Popular Tiles?

Challenges include importing red and black oxide colors, managing worker issues, and securing timely payments from customers.

31.How is marketing divided for Popular Tiles?

Marketing is split, with 30% through internet platforms like YouTube and 70% through word-of-mouth referrals.

32. What is the price per square foot and per tile for the tiles produced by Popular Tiles?

The price is 60 INR per square foot for standard designs and 40 INR per tile.

33.What are the costs of cement used by Popular Tiles?

The cost is 400 INR for Ramco PPC 53 cement and 480 INR for Birla PPC cement.

34.What innovative solution is S. Thomas experimenting with to prevent cracking and color fading in tiles?

He is experimenting with glass fiber reinforcement to prevent cracking and color fading.

35. What maintenance method does S. Thomas recommend to preserve the quality of the tiles?

He recommends regular maintenance using Thavudu and coconut oil.

36. What is the full name of the individual leading ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

The full name is Ravichandran B.

37. How old is Ravichandran B?

Ravichandran B is 57 years old.

38. How many years of experience does Ravichandran B have in the tile industry?

He has 40 years of experience in the tile industry.

39. What is the name of the company led by Ravichandran B?

The company is named ST Flower Flooring Tiles.

40. Where is ST Flower Flooring Tiles located?

The company is located at Madha Kovil Street, Arockiyapuram, Athangudi - 630101, Sivagangai District, Tamil Nadu.

41.What position does Ravichandran B hold in the Athangudi Tiles Association?

He is the head of the Athangudi Tiles Association.

42.What is the educational background of Ravichandran B?

Ravichandran B completed his education up to the 10th grade.

43.Since when has Ravichandran B's family been involved in tile making?

His family has been involved in tile making since 1980.

44.To which regions does ST Flower Flooring Tiles export its products?

They export to Kerala, Karnataka, Chennai, Haryana, and Delhi.

45.What is the price range of tiles produced by ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

The tiles are priced between 40 to 43 rupees for a 10x10 inch piece.

46.How did Ravichandran B's family initially learn about tile-making techniques?

His grandfather traveled to Burma, learned about tile-making techniques, and brought those influences back to Athangudi.

47. What materials are used in crafting the tiles at ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

They use local sand from the Athangudi forest and water from the Sivan Temple.

48. How are the workers at ST Flower Flooring Tiles compensated?

Male workers receive a weekly wage of 750 rupees, while female workers receive 500 rupees.

49.How many workers are employed by Ravichandran B at ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

He employs 25 workers.

50.During which seasons does demand for Athangudi tiles peak, and why?

Demand peaks during Aavani, Vaikasi, and January, especially due to housewarming functions.

51. What type of glass is used to achieve a polished finish on the tiles?

They use 3mm plain glass for a polished finish.

52. How are the tiles packaged to prevent damage during transportation?

The tiles are packaged using paddy grains (vaikol) to prevent damage.

53. What is the damage rate during tile production at ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

There is a 10% damage rate in production.

54. What processes are involved in producing the tiles at ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

The processes include color mixing, pouring, curing, and drying.

55. How does Ravichandran B support his community and workers when the business is successful?

He assists artisans and engages in community celebrations when the business performs well.

56. Does Ravichandran B participate in any government schemes?

Yes, he participates in government schemes.

57. Has Ravichandran B received any awards for his contributions to the tile industry?

Yes, he has won awards for his contributions.

58.Which color of tiles is particularly popular, and which colors are less favored at ST Flower Flooring Tiles?

The red-colored tiles are particularly popular, while green and blue are less favored due to fading issues.

59. What is the full name of the manager at Sri Ganesha Tiles?

The manager's full name is Paandi Meenal.

60. How old is Paandi Meenal?

Paandi Meenal is 43 years old.

61. How many years of experience does Paandi Meenal have in the tile industry?

She has 10 years of experience in the tile industry.

62. What is the name of the company where Paandi Meenal works?

The company is named Sri Ganesha Tiles.

63. Where is Sri Ganesha Tiles located?

Sri Ganesha Tiles is located at 4PXG+RFM, Athangudi Road, Athangudi, Tamil Nadu 630208.

64. Who is the owner of Sri Ganesha Tiles?

The owner of Sri Ganesha Tiles is Ganapathy, who is also Paandi Meenal's husband.

65. What is the unique design created by Paandi Meenal, and what inspired it?

The unique design created by Paandi Meenal is called "Nattavakaali," inspired by the scorpion insect.

66. How many years has Sri Ganesha Tiles been established?

Sri Ganesha Tiles has been established for 29 years.

67. How does Sri Ganesha Tiles contribute to the cultural heritage of Athangudi?

Sri Ganesha Tiles reflects the rich cultural heritage and craftsmanship of Athangudi by preserving and advancing traditional tile-making techniques.

68. Who is Mr. Mani, and how did he become involved in tile-making at Sri Ganesha Tiles?

Mr. Mani is a 30-year-old craftsman who joined Sri Ganesha Tiles four years ago. He initially worked as a driver but transitioned to tile-making for financial reasons.

69. What challenges did Mr. Mani face when he first started working at Sri Ganesha Tiles?

Mr. Mani faced challenges such as receiving scoldings from the owner, but he motivated himself to improve and became a valuable team member.

70. How many members are required to produce 250 tiles at Sri Ganesha Tiles?

Three members are required to produce 250 tiles.

71. What is the significance of Athangudi sand in the tile-making process?

Athangudi sand is known for its superior soil absorption and healing properties, making it a crucial component in the tile-making process.

72. What is the process for ensuring the quality of the tiles at Sri Ganesha Tiles?

The process involves testing the first four tiles for quality before proceeding with the production of more tiles.

73. What role does color mixing play in the creation of tiles at Sri Ganesha Tiles?

Color mixing is essential in the creation of tiles, requiring precision and the use of specific color oxides to achieve the desired design and quality.

74. What is Pandi's full name and age?

Pandi is 65 years old.

75. How many years of experience does Pandi have in tile-making?

Pandi has 60 years of experience in tile-making.

76. Where does Pandi work, and what is the name of the company?

Pandi works at Malar Tiles, located in Athangudi.

77. Who is the owner of Malar Tiles?

The owner of Malar Tiles is A Michael Raj.

78. How did Pandi learn the craft of tile-making?

Pandi learned the craft of tile-making from his father.

79. How many tiles does Pandi produce daily?

Pandi produces 200-250 tiles daily.

80. What is Pandi's daily wage for his work at Malar Tiles?

Pandi earns a daily wage of 1000 INR.

81. Where did Pandi work as a civil worker before returning to Athangudi?

Pandi worked as a civil worker in Singapore before returning to Athangudi.

82. Why did Pandi return home after attempting to establish tile-making in Kozhikode, Kerala?

Pandi returned home because the local raw materials in Kozhikode were unsuitable for tile-making.

83. What are the basic amenities that Pandi owns?

Pandi owns a scooter, basic household appliances, including a TV, and uses a simple phone instead of a smartphone.

84. How does Pandi's current wage compare to what he earned in his younger days?

Pandi's current wage of 1000 INR per day is a significant increase from the 12-15 INR he earned in his younger days.

85. At what age did SollaiKothanar begin his career in tile work?

SollaiKothanar began his career in tile work at the age of 14.5 years old.

86. Where did SollaiKothanar move to at the age of 19, and what type of projects did he take on there?

At the age of 19, SollaiKothanar moved to Samayanallur in Madurai, where he took on significant building projects, including a contract with a British company to construct houses.

87. What are some of SollaiKothanar's notable achievements in his craftsmanship?

Some of SollaiKothanar's notable achievements include laying tiles in the famous garden and the Periya Mahal Mandappam in Athangudi.

88. What are the unique properties of Athangudi tiles, according to SollaiKothanar?

According to SollaiKothanar, Athangudi tiles are known for their eco-friendliness, health benefits, and durability, with raw materials sourced from the Athangudi forest and water from the Sivan Temple pond.

89. How did the unique artistry of Athangudi tiles begin, according to SollaiKothanar?

According to SollaiKothanar, the unique artistry of Athangudi tiles began with a single individual's skillful craftsmanship, which captured the community's attention and led to widespread adoption.

90. What is the distinctive feature of Athangudi tiles?

The distinctive feature of Athangudi tiles is their handmade nature, crafted from natural materials that are environmentally friendly and beneficial for health.

91. Where were the vibrant colors for Athangudi tiles traditionally sourced from, and how were they handled?

The vibrant colors for Athangudi tiles were traditionally sourced from Karaikudi, arriving in tins that were carefully handled by the artisans.

92. How did artisans manage to create tiles with greater efficiency and precision over time?

As artisans repeatedly worked with the same motifs, these designs became deeply ingrained in their minds, allowing them to create tiles with greater efficiency and precision.

93. What is the relationship between new designs and traditional patterns in Athangudi tiles?

New designs in Athangudi tiles are often rooted in traditional patterns, with each redesign building upon the old, ensuring a continuity of aesthetic that honors the past while embracing innovation.

94. What role does SollaiKothanar's legacy play in the ongoing tradition of Athangudi tiles?

SollaiKothanar's legacy plays a crucial role in the ongoing tradition of Athangudi tiles, as his exceptional skill and dedication have contributed to the enduring popularity and quality of these tiles.

95. What is the age of the sand supplier in Athangudi?

The sand supplier in Athangudi is 45+ years old.

96. What is the significance of forest sand in tile production?

Forest sand is significant in tile production due to its superior iron content, which imparts exceptional strength and vibrant colors to the tiles.

97. What challenges does the sand supplier face in acquiring forest sand?

The sand supplier faces significant challenges due to recent regulations, with police, Tahsildar, and forest officials demanding bribes for sand collection. Failure to comply can result in legal charges.

98. How many legal cases have been filed against the sand supplier for not complying with the regulations?

The sand supplier has 16 legal cases filed against him for not complying with the regulations regarding forest sand collection.

99. What alternative to forest sand is available, and how does it compare in quality?

The alternative to forest sand is aathu sand, but it does not match the quality of forest sand.

100. How has sand traditionally been transported in Athangudi?

Sand has traditionally been transported in Athangudi using bullock carts, a practice that has continued over the years.

101. What modern method is also used to transport sand in Athangudi?

In addition to bullock carts, tractors are also used to transport sand in Athangudi.

102. Who is Sollaikothanar, and what is his connection to the sand supplier?

Sollaikothanar is a retired artisan who has greatly supported Paandi (the sand supplier) over the years and provided valuable work. He attests to the unmatched quality of forest sand in tile production.

103. Why is the forest sand preferred over aathu sand despite the legal challenges?

Forest sand is preferred over aathu sand because of its superior quality, which enhances the strength and color of the tiles, making it essential for high-quality tile production.

104. What impact have the regulations and bribes had on the sand supplier's business?

The regulations and demands for bribes have created significant challenges for the sand supplier, including legal issues and difficulties in maintaining the quality of tile production due to restricted access to forest sand.

105. Who is Mr. Ravi, and what is his profession?

Mr. Ravi, also known as "Auto Uncle," is a 48-year-old auto driver.

106. What story did Mr. Ravi share during the visit to Athangudi?

Mr. Ravi shared the story of Athangudi tiles, explaining the history of the craft and its connection to Michael Raj and his family.

107. Who is A. Michael Raj, and what is his significance in the Athangudi tile craft?

A. Michael Raj is the owner of Malar Tiles and the third generation of his Christian family to continue the Athangudi tile craft, which was started by his grandfather.

108. How is Michael Raj's family renowned in the Athangudi tile industry?

Michael Raj's family is renowned for creating numerous designs and laying tiles across various states, making significant contributions to the Athangudi tile craft.

109. Who are Ravichandran B, Alex, and Thomas S, and what is their relationship to Michael Raj?

Ravichandran B, Alex, and Thomas S are relatives of Michael Raj and are also involved in the Athangudi tile craft as owners of ST Flower Tiles, Selva Industries, and Popular Tiles, respectively.

Michael Raj's company, Malar Tiles, employs 15 artisans, including 9 males and 6 females.

110. How many generations have Michael Raj's relatives been involved in the Athangudi tile craft?

*Michael Raj's relatives have been involved in the Athangudi tile craft for three to four generations.

111. What is the global significance of Michael Raj's work in Athangudi tiles?

Michael Raj is highly esteemed as an artisan, with many clients from across the globe purchasing tiles from his company, Malar Tiles.

112. How many artisans are employed by Michael Raj's company, and what is the gender distribution?

113. Who is Sollaikothanar, and what role does he play in the story?

Sollaikothanar is a well-known retired artisan in Athangudi and the uncle of Ravi Anna. He laid the tiles in Ravi Anna's house.

114. What additional information did Mr. Ravi's wife provide during the visit?

Mr. Ravi's wife provided additional insights into the history and significance of Athangudi tiles during the visit to their house.

115. Color psychology behind the tiles

They used to believe that yellow colour tile used for Pooja room and dark colours used for kitchen room

116. Which color symbolises what?

Nothing specific like that

117. What are the health benefits of the tiles

It will cure Knee problem, eco friendly, no health problems for senior citizens and kids

118. Is there any spiritual beliefs behind them

No

119. Color category and color combinations

Red, yellow, blue, green, black and white major 6 colours

120. Limitations and challenges in color?

Red colour is tough to import

121.Sourcing and preparation of color
Sourcing from Madurai and Chennai, we buy iron oxide colour and grind it in the grinder machine

122.Do you use it in your homes as well
Yes I laid in my house which was built by myself

123.where do you sell them ?
Many states such as Kerala, Karnataka, Chennai, Haryana and Delhi

124.Who are your target audience
Around 30-50 years old

125.What is your business structure and how has it evolved
From my 3rd generation

126.Repetition of motif in a tile
Yes, we can do the repetition

127.Material used for packaging
Vaikol

128.How do you store the finished goods
We will cover it with vaikol in truck or lorry

129.What is the lifespan of the product
Till you keep the tile clean and polished

130.what is the finishing and polishing done on the product
Coconut oil polish

131.How do you deal with losses
Till now there is no such loss

132.how many extra tiles do you keep
10 tiles

133.While do you marketing is there any third parties involved
No

134.Joining the tiles and how the pattern reflects and how do they plan this?
The artisans knows how to do that

135.Ratio of men and women working there
Men : Women , 70:30

136.How much manpower is required for the tiles(set of)
For 250 tiles , 2 people required (1 day)

137.When does a person start their training in the process of making the tile
It takes about 5-6 years

138.Is there any existence of secret trade points/aspects
No

139.Do you customise the motifs and patterns
Yes we do, with n number of motifs and patterns in 1 tile

140.Does customisation help in selling of the tiles
Yes

141.Do you have any help for the govt
No

142.are you aware of the govt schemes
Yes

143.Have you received any awards?
Yes, from architecture college

144.Is there any gov inspection done
(if yes in what time period)
No

145.Do you think it will be helpful if govt help in and how do you think it will impact
Yes if the govt has helped us, we would have got our raw materials with no charge and many industries would have developed

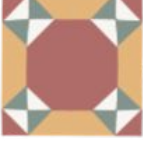
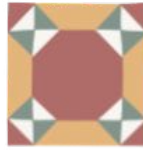
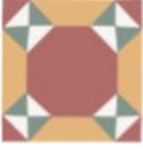
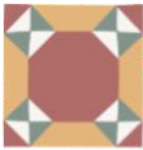
146.Have other students,officials ect.. Visited
Yes, many architecture students has visited, gave designs to make mould and bought some tiles

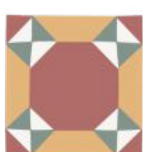
147.Have you seen your craft motifs on other crafts products or in market
No

148.Have you used any motifs inspired from other crafts
Yeah from daily routine work, kollams,saree designs etc.

149.How do you feel about our visit
Very happy that you students had visited to our company and gained information about Athangudi tiles









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CRAFT RESEARCH DOCUMENTATION

F&LA - 2024

Maheswari . Monikka . Prithwiraj

Sujeet . Siddhi . Tanishka