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MUZIRIS NEWS

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A PROMINENT HISTORIC SITE INCLUDED IN THE MUZIRIS HERITAGE PROJECT, 'CHERAMAN PARAMBU', IS A PROTECTED SITE UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY, GOVT OF KERALA. THIS IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN THE SITE OF THE PALACE OF CHERAMAN PERUMALS, KINGS OF THE CHERA DYNASTY.



MUZIRIS TO GET GOING IN 2020-21



The Muziris Heritage project, now announced to be commissioned in 2020-21, is expected to give a tremendous boost for the tourism sector in Kerala.

Finance Minister Dr T M Thomas Isaac's Kerala budget 2020 has earmarked Rs 320 crore for expansion in tourism, which was badly hit by two successive years of flood. This move to boost tourism segment underlines the state's effort in fast shaping up its tourism prospects.

The highlights of the 320 crore allocation for tourism sector include commissioning of Muziris Heritage Project, a dozen museums in Alappuzha under Alappuzha Heritage project, a concern of Muziris Heritage Project, emphasis on tourism projects in Malabar, marketing of the IPL-modelled Champions Boat League (CBL) and a pilgrim circuit Thatwamasi linking places of worship and festivals.

Hon'ble Finance Minister said effective marketing was a key factor that enabled Kerala tourism overcome two floods and achieve 18.5% growth in the number of domestic tourists and 8.24 % for foreign tourists in 2019.

Excerpts from the Hon'ble Minister's presentation:

Kerala Tourism has overcome two flood ravages. Effective marketing has played a vital role in this. 18.5 percentage growth could be achieved in the number of domestic tourists and 8.24 percent for foreign tourists in 2019. ₹320 crore is earmarked for development of tourism. Out of this,

₹63 crore is allotted for marketing.

When future possibilities are taken into consideration, Spices Route Project is the most elaborate tourism project. The theme of this circuit is the international path traveled by spices of Kerala from ancient times similar to that of Chinese Silk Route. China and East Asian countries, Africa and Europe will be partners in this. UNESCO has expressed interest in this. We are presently implementing heritage preservation projects, centered on our port cities. Among them, the heritage projects in Muziris and Alappuzha have moved a lot further. Activities of tourism circuits centered at Thalassery are going on. The plans of Kozhikkode, Ponnani and Thankassery ports are being formulated.

Muziris Heritage Project will be commissioned in 2020-21. This is not merely a tourism project. This journey along the Muziris historical monuments is a historical study tour as well. The profit from Muziris company will be utilised for encouraging and helping the school study groups for this purpose.

RESTORATION OF MISRI PALLI



Considering its historical and global importance, 'Misri palli' in the coastal town of Ponnani, believed to be built in the 16th century by the Egyptians, has been included in the Ponnani Heritage Project, a concern of Muziris Heritage Project.

Muziris Project has been entrusted with the conservation work of the mosque to retain its lost glory and splendour.

Kerala Assembly Speaker Shri P Sreeramakrishnan formally inaugurated the restoration work at 4 pm on Friday, 14th February 2020, in a function held at the Misri palli premises.

Perumpadappu Block Panchayat President Shri P.M.Aattunny Thangal presided over the function. Shri P M Nowshad, MD, Muziris Heritage Project welcomed the gathering.



CONSERVATION OF WORKS ON WOOD

(Shri M Narayanan Namboothiri,
Conservation consultant, Muziris Conservation lab)

Art has always taken a changing attitude and new dimensions across the world, over the years. Various main support media have been used for paintings. Some have remained common for centuries, while others took over from another in a short span of time. Panel painting was one of the prestigious kinds of paintings. Earliest example of panel painting in which wood was used as the medium dates back to the 14th century. After almost a century, wood was replaced by canvas.

Wood found its applications in many items of importance and fame. Some of them included:

1. Sculpture
2. Musical instruments
3. Building materials
4. Excavated materials(Ship wreckage)
5. Gun
6. Furniture

While coming to the conservation aspect of wood, the deterioration factors have to be discussed. There are various factors that cause or accelerate wood decay. The main among them is that wood is highly hygroscopic, or tends to absorb moisture from the air. The climatic changes, fluctuation in relative humidity (RH) and temperature from 45% to 55% and 26C To 32C respectively are other factors. Growth of fungus, insect larva, pupa and beetles etc weaken the structure of the wood.

Some sensitive kind of wooden material requires utmost care and conservation treatment, of which few are as follows:

FURNITURE

Methods like polishing, varnishing and painting act in a negative manner especially in causing heavy dust to

accumulate. When conservation is required, the conservators find it very difficult to proceed with the process. One needs to be extremely careful while applying anti-insect treatment also.

SCULPTURE

Mostly artists prefer not to use coating on a wooden sculpture. Undoubtedly, a coating over wood will change its visual impression. Similarly, when beetle holes and deep cracks are found in wood, its a normal tendency to touch these sculptures with some adhesives and further retouch it. This causes stain (due to salt from the human body) and other marks resulting in the darkening of the areas wherever the stains are found.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

One needs to be extremely careful while handling musical instruments. This is mostly because instruments are not made out of just one single material. For example, in a particular musical instrument, wires will be in a different thickness and so there can occur a change in the Tune value(Sruthi) after restoration. Another difficult task for conservators is the removal of the coating layer from the wooden part. Only an experienced hand can handle these kind of conservation works.

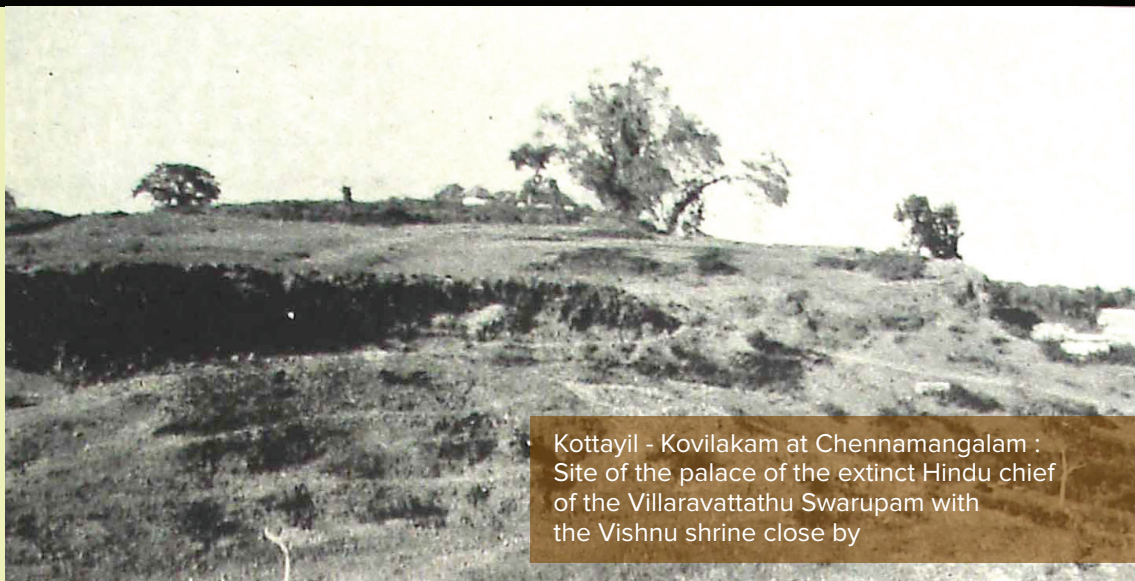
BUILDING MATERIALS.

Once a building is constructed, it is understood that one cannot see all parts of the building. There definitely will be many hidden parts. It is not practical to monitor all spaces that occupy a constructed building. Another peculiarity is the keys used in different joints. They play a major role in a building that is constructed purely on wood. Finally one has to be very careful with the Annual Ring appearing on the wood before one starts with any conservation work.

ACTIVITY CENTRE

Cheraman Parambu, a coastal area site that owns a significant place in the history of Kerala, is located around 3km from Kodungallur, on the Keezhthali-Kottappuram road. It is generally regarded as the site of the palace of the Cheraman Perumals, the kings of the Chera dynasty, who ruled Kerala during the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries A.D with its headquarters at the present day Kodungallur. The site was declared as a protected monument by the department of Archaeology in 1936. Explorations were carried in the site in various periods and unearthed evidences of archaeological importance.

Muziris Heritage Project, with the aim of engaging students and youth in the process of excavations and archaeological studies, has set up an Activity centre at the Cheraman Parambu. The centre is proposed to function as a space that will map the continuous history of 2000 years or more, with emphasis on the history of Kodungallur and for holding exhibitions and interactive sessions for students.



Kottayil - Kovilakam at Chennamangalam : Site of the palace of the extinct Hindu chief of the Villaravattathu Swarupam with the Vishnu shrine close by

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

(based on the Report on the Administration of the Archaeological dept of the Cochin State for the year 1102 ME(1926-1927 AD) by Anujan Achan, Govt Archaeologist, State Museum, Thrissur).

Muziris Heritage Project, as an inter-departmental mission, tries to preserve the historical legacy of the heritage zone under it. Against this backdrop, many multi seasonal archaeological research had been undertaken under the Archaeological Survey of India(ASI), the Archaeology department, Govt of Kerala and the Kerala Council for Historical Research(KCHR). Prior to these, Anujan Achan, Government Archaeologist, appointed to that post on probation for one year

from 1st Kumbham 1102, has produced a report on the Administration of the Archaeological Department of the Cochin State for the year 1102 ME (1926-1927 AD). He has mentioned the headquarters of the Government Archaeology being transferred from Tripunithura to Thrissur, with the office located in the State Museum.

In the report, Anujan Achan lists the historical places he visited and the sites and monuments examined during the 1st half year and 2nd half year in Appendix A and B respectively. It is no surprise that though the place names still exist, many changes have undergone over the years in the character of the sites and monuments he had examined. Or they have been modified or renovated. His work was mainly devoted to the preservation of ancient monuments and sites of historical interest lying scattered all over Cochin. Chendamangalam, Cheraman Parambu, Thiruvanchikulam and Krisnan Kotta are among the main sites under the Muziris zone that appear in his report.

Among the publications produced, he refers to the annual report for the year 1100 and a short paper on ' Cranganur' that got published in the 'Indian Historical Quarterly', Calcutta. Apart from all these, he also wrote and published as Supplements to the Educational Sheet in the Government Gazette on the following subjects:

- 1) the Cheraman Parambu
- 2) the Thrissur Kokkarani inscription
- 3) the Travancore Lines
- 4) the discovery of the two caves near Kunnamkulam and
- 5) the Urakam inscription of Narayana Iravi Varman

In Appendix B, the historical places he visited in Chendamangalam include :

- 1) an old Christian church in Gothic structure and the monument there being a Malayalam inscription of the 17th century in the centre of the Christian church
- 2) synagogue of the Black Jews, the monument being a Hebrew inscription of the 13th century in the Jewish synagogue
- 3) Ruined walls of the Vaippikkotta seminary, a 3 storied building, the monument being the mouth of a cave on the northern slope of the Vishnu temple at Kottayil Kovilakom
- 4) Site of the palace of the extinct Villarvattathu Swarupam

In Appendix B, he also mentions his visit to Krisnan Kotta, the site being the western extremity of the famous Travancore Lines.

In the following sessions among the sites he visited, he marks Thiruvanchikulam, the prominent sites there being

- 1) the site of the palace of the Cheraman Perumal

- 2) the old Siva temple with its ruined gateways
- 3) ruins of the Kiltali temple
- 4) ruins of the ancient city of Thiruvanchikulam
- 5) The Balaganesvara temple and the Balaganesvarapuram , which is now under the ground.

He has marked the monuments he examined there as ruins of wells, tanks, stone walls etc. Anujan Achan mentions that at Thiruvanchikulam, large areas of lands close to the site of the palace of the Cheraman Parambu were seen dug up, where ruins of an ancient city was found.

While referring to the details of work undertaken, Anujan Achan begins with the sites and monuments inspected in Section 1. ' I visited Chennamangalam twice during the year and spent five days in camp there. Chennamangalam is a prominent historic centre in Cochin. It is situated on the Alwaye river about six miles from its mouth. Its eastern end terminates in a laterite hill on the summit of which is an old Visnu temple. Close to the west of this shrine is the palace of the Raja of the Villarvattathu Swarupam, a local Hindu chief of the 15th century', writes Anujan Achan.

In the report, he has referred to Thiruvanchikkulam as the 'city of the Perumals'. He says he has visited Cranganore and Thiruvanchikkulam three times during the year. According

to him, it was a flourishing city in the early periods of the Christian era, of which ruins were found when it was dug for coconut plantations. He writes, ' It was a great emporium of trade, besides being the capital of the Perumals(monarchs) of Kerala who ruled there for several centuries continuously.'

He further goes on to explain the historic site of the palace of the Cherumal Perumal as a compound covering about 3 acres south of the Siva temple at Thiruvanchikulam, about 30 feet above the sea level, so elevated that the plot was visible from even a distance. There is also mention about a well that was found in a private compound a few yards to the south of the temple at Balaganesvara near Cheraman Parambu when digging operations were going on there. It was constructed out of a succession of earthen tubes of burnt clay and circular in form. He describes it as each measuring about 80 inches in circumference and 7-8 inches in height. It wasn't but certain as to the exact use of the wells in that period, whether it was for drawing water or for the disposal of sewage from houses. He points out to the reports where similar wells were found in Mesopotamia.

Anujan Achan concludes this report by saying treasure troves were unearthed by people from the Cheraman Parambu neighbourhood, though it wasn't possible to verify its truth.



▶ A circular soak well discovered from the ruins of an ancient city at Thiruvanchikkulam



BUNGALOW KADAVU

Muziris Heritage Project is engaged with the conservation of heritage and imparting information through non-formal education. The Project has undertaken the conservation of Bungalow Kadavu at Mathilakam, a structure that brings back memories of old. The work on the building has been successfully completed. The same will now be developed as a museum to showcase the functions of the bungalow through exhibitions and galleries.

The bungalow in those days used to host the officials of the East India Company and later the Govt of India, the Collectors, Deputy Collectors and such officials. This included William Logan, author of the 'Malabar Manual' which is an authentic account of the district of Malabar and published in 1887, Rhodes Morgan, the District Forest Officer of Malabar who wrote the chapter on flora and fauna for the Manual and Henry Conolly who was responsible for the development of the Conolly Canal and others.

The proposed museum will adhere to two aspects: conservation and development. While the conservation would focus on the restoration of the architectural character of the building, the development would focus on the revival of the functional character of the bungalow. The various galleries in the proposed museum will give an overview of the British travellers' stay, about the bungalow, contributions of Logan and illustrations by Rhodes.

TEA & SNACKS STALL

The Muziris 'tea and snacks' stall at Kottappuram Muziris boat jetty nestles in the shadow of a grand era of history. Close to the Kottappuram fort and overlooking the waters, its simple decor and ambience infuses every aspect of a cultural restoration. Ms. Elsie Johny and Ms. Rosy Francis, both aged 70 years, and active members of the Kudumbashree says, 'Out of our love for cooking, this restaurant was born'.

With the fresh taste and light touch of home-cooked food, the tea and snacks served here sell out quickly. 'Ours is like an outdoor eatery. In the evenings, especially when we have visitors taking the Muziris boat ride, it's happy to see them lined up to eat freshly prepared 'parippu vada', 'pazham pori', or the steamed soft 'kozhukkatta'. Though these are all simple recipes to follow,



it demands quite a bit of attention too. We are passionate about cooking and we enjoy this work at our age. We equally ensure that each and every customer leaves happy', says Elsie and Rosy.

The views of Gothuruthu, Chinese fishing nets, country boats, vehicles plying the Kottappuram fort bridge surround you here. When the atmosphere is equally important as the food, the area becomes an intimate venue for any visitor. These kind of shops, while keeping their character largely intact, always carry something symbolic of what we love about a heritage site.

Muziris Conservation lab started functioning in Paravur six months back. The team is headed by Muziris Conservation Consultant Shri M Narayanan Namboothiri, supported by conservation assistants.

Ms. Saloni Ghuwalewala, paper Conservator from Mumbai visited Muziris Conservation Lab and explained the advanced methods to be used in the conservation of palm leaves.



As part of the various workshops planned in association with the crafts revival program under Muziris Heritage Project, Ms Anurag Rana, designer from Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage(INTACH) visited the handloom societies in the region under the project.



Students from Centre for Heritage Studies(CHS), Hill Palace Museum Thripunithura visited Muziris Conservation lab, Paravur. Shri Narayanan Namboothiri, Consultant, interacted with the students and led the sessions on 'conservation of palm leaves' and 'difference between traditional conservation and scientific conservation' through practical demonstrations.



The second phase of beautification work as part of the restoration of Paravur market and its premises has already started under Muziris Heritage Project. A discussion in this regard was held with Paravur market resident associations, merchants associations, representatives from the Municipality, Ward councillor Mini Shibu and staff of Muziris Heritage Project. Shri PM Nowshad, MD, Muziris Heritage Project, explained the works already completed in the area and the opportunities for the local public in the heritage project. The meeting was inaugurated by Municipal Chairman Shri Raj Kumar. Restoration of the Paravur market, construction of an entrance to the market and a toilet complex, sunset cruise at the heritage town, were a few among the various topics discussed.

Following her visit to the heritage site of Muziris, Ms Sreela Ghosh, Senior Consultant, Charles Wallace India, mentioned it as 'a beautiful work of art'. 'Every heritage site offers an opportunity to redefine history. Muziris Heritage Project thus opens up a space in slow tourism before the world', she added.



Apart from the completion of various projects, work on 9 projects is in progress under Muziris Heritage Project, and a few projects are in the tender stage.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS :

- Kodungallur temple museum
- Restoration of Mala synagogue
- Restoration of Cheraman Juma masjid
- P A Sayed Muhammed memorial
- Restoration of Canal office, Thiruvanchikulam
- Pattanam Interpretation centre
- Repair and maintenance of Holy Cross church, Chendamangalam
- St. Sebastian Parsonage, Gothuruth
- Bungalow Kadavu, Mathilakam

PROJECTS IN THE TENDER STAGE :

- Paliyam oottupura
- Conservation of Keezhthali temple
- Christian Lifestyle museum
- Work of Muziris Signages
- Restoration of Jewish houses in Paravur and Chendamangalam, P Kesava Dev's residence and Misri palli, Ponnani
- Expansion work of museums and visitors' centres
- Chavittu nataka museum
- Holy Cross Interpretation centre