

JANUARY 2021

# MUZIRIS NEWS

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# ATHANI

## PORTER'S REST

1086 Mēṭam 5<sup>൯</sup> parētanāya vayalil Bāppu ṭiyāṅṅre bhārya  
1106 Thulām 23<sup>൯</sup>

parēthayāya Kōtha ivarude smārakamāyi tiyān marude  
puṭṭan Kōnānal sthāpikkappēṭṭu.



P.M. Nowshad ■

# STUDENTS HERITAGE WALK

5cr earmarked for  
Heritage walk for promoting  
Non formal education



**M**uziris Projects Ltd (MPL) is introducing the 'Heritage Walk' program to provide with first-hand experience and knowledge about Kerala history to the school students. Finance Minister T M Thomas Isaac had officially launched the two-day tour-cum-study program on the premises of Kottappuram Fort in January 2020.

An amount of 5crores has been allocated in the budget 2021, mainly to impart non-formal education to school children. It is evident that, the cultural heritage of Kerala lies in its old towns and ancient settlements. Due to the ground breaking pace of urbanization in recent times, the historic face of many spaces has radically altered. With more attention being bestowed on heritage nowadays, many of the students have become aware of an ancient port town called Muziris. Yet many are still not unaware of the historical importance of this region, especially social science students.

Generally, Heritage walks are a popular way of exposing tourists to showcase countries rich heritage. It generates interest in heritage conservation by showcasing the built/natural heritage of the region. The concept of 'Students Heritage Walk' is first introduced in Kerala



to educate students about the rich culture of the ancient port city of Muziris. Duration of the heritage walk will be two days. During the days, Muziris will organize classes for the students on the cultural heritage of the region. Eminent scholars will deal with the session. Moreover, the students will get an opportunity to understand the significance of intangible heritage like bell metal making, handmade pottery, weaving tradition, folklore performance and different types of traditional fishing of the area. The program will be helpful for students to learn historical facts but also get an outlook to understand contemporary issues with their own approaches. As part of the program Muziris will provide all the needful like accommodation for students, food, transportation and support of the information officers to full-fill the aim and objectives of Heritage Walk.

There will be different activities in the museums for the students as part of the program. These activities will be helping the students to interact with museums and museum objects directly. Such activities may raise interest in the students to do further researches on the artifacts and museums. Also, it will be an experiential model for Heritage Education. Moreover a heritage walk can create an emotional bond with the place and sensitize the students and others about the value of cultural and architectural heritage so that the upcoming generation can preserve the essence of our culture.

**Program Objectives:**

One of the mandates of the Heritage Walk is to make the students aware of the importance of their cultural and historical environment and inspire them to develop a harmonious relationship with the cultural heritage of the region. Heritage walk is an important strategy to achieve the following objectives:

- Introduce the chronological history of Kerala through an informal educational pattern.
- Educate the value and need for protecting ‘Own Heritage’.
- To ensure the creative role of students in reviving the endangered traditional knowledge systems in Kerala.
- To create an awareness of the cultural and natural heritage of the country.
- To make aware the difference between tangible and intangible heritage
- Ensure the role of students in preserving the cultural heritage of our country without losing its sanctity.
- To make them aware of the role of museums in protecting the cultural heritage of the country.

As mentioned above, the two-day tour aimed at informal education allows exploring the heritage sites & monuments in Muziris. Muziris heritage project will also distribute activity books describing the nooks and corner of the historical site.

*Managing Director  
Muziris Projects Limited*



# ATHANI

## PORTER'S REST

The majority of these are made of granite although those made of laterite and even wood are known. They are seen on major routes and especially cross-roads. At a time when transport facilities were limited, goods were carried as headloads and these *athanis* offered great relief for the porters who carried them.

The *Athani* (Porter's Rest) is used for unloading loads from the head of porters who used to carry loads over long distances. Usually, an *attani* is a relatively flat stone supported by two or more pillars about four feet in height. The majority of these are made of granite although those made of laterite and even wood are known. They are seen on major routes and especially cross-roads. At a time when transport facilities were limited, goods were carried as headloads and these *athanis* offered great relief for the porters who carried them. *Athanis* were known by various other names such as Chumaduthangi, Elappu, Thangikkallu, Unnukallu, Athanikkallu, and Moonnukallu. There are a few Chumaduthangis still standing in the Muziris Heritage Project zone, such as those at Sringapuram, Padakulam, Kodungallur, Chennamangalam, Kothaparambu, Pravaur and *Athani* just a few that have not fallen victims to road widening.

Muziris, possibly identical with medieval Muyirikodu, was an ancient port and urban centre on the west coast dating from at least the 1st century BC. The lower Periyar region, modern Kodungalur and Paravur area, formed the core of the kingdom of the Cheras who ruled from Mahodayappuram or Kodungallur for more than three centuries from the ninth century CE. Even after the Cheraman Perumals bowed down from the scene, the



*Athani having malayalam inscription*

preservation. However, many of these monuments are misused by local people to tie banners or paint them for advertisement purposes. Some others convert them into small tea shops. Some people have used the broken stone slabs of *athanis* for construction purposes as well. Some of the *athanis* are in inaccessible conditions due to vegetation growth and soil deposition.

It is clear from historical records that Kodungallur and Paravur region area was part of an active trade route from early-stage till today without any gap in the last 2000 years. The *athanis* exists as an indicator of the

town continued to thrive as a major centre of trade. The region was sandwiched between the kingdom of Kozhikode and the kingdom of Kochi when the Portuguese arrived on the scene. The Portuguese were defeated and by the Dutch and took control of the region. Later Travancore annexed this region. It was the major trade center, where pepper and other commodities were traded-in. *Athani* stands as evidence of the ancient system of transport that can be seen in the Project area. *Athani* is a more frequently used term in this region. It is found in association with markets, trade routes, and areas where agricultural products and other trade commodities were sourced.

Many of the *Athanis* bear short inscriptions. The inscriptions found on horizontal stone blocks were engraved in old Malayalam script. These valuable sources provide information about the year, month, name of the donor, the name of his/her house, and lineage. It is observed that donors are mostly men. In some instances, there were women donors, too. It indicates that the particular structure was erected by or on behalf of a lady whose name is

inscribed on it. Such donations were believed to be meritorious, particularly to ward off risks during pregnancy and childbirth. The *athanis* constructed at regular intervals indicate that the area was on the trade route. Probably there were also day markets and evening markets on this trade route. In fact, one can reconstruct a trade route by connecting the find spots of *athanis* on a map.

Though many of the *athanis* in the area are in a good state of

ancient trade network system of medieval and late medieval. Many places owe their place name from these stones and today acts as a landmark. Though many of the *athanis* are in a dilapidated condition, some others are well preserved. Being valuable archaeological evidence, these monuments need to be protected from further destruction to reconstruct the trade mechanism that prevailed in medieval and late medieval Kerala.



*Two Pillar Athani - N 10° 13.869 E 76° 25.607*



# Digital Archiving

## Islamic tradition of Kerala

■ Prof. M.H. Ilias

This project is supposed to be the first of its kind in Kerala archiving the historical documents, visuals and sounds of a particular community and preparing metadata out of it. The project involves digitization of rare documents related mainly to the trans-regional trade, cultural and religious activities of Muslims of Kerala preserved in mosque libraries and personal or family collections. These documents, kept mostly in archives, mosque libraries and family collections in various places of Kerala, shed lights on people, ideas, goods, networks of traders and scholars, texts, technologies which were in constant motion all across the Indian Ocean region. The themes range from maritime trade, travel, trans-regional networks of traders and scholars and technology transfer to exchange of cultures and diasporic settlements of Arabs on the South-Western coasts of India.

*Written mainly in four languages-Arabic, Persian, Arabic-Malayalam and Malayalam-these materials cover a wide variety of subjects like philosophy, medicine, theology, maritime trade, travel etc.*

*Almost 1,00,000 documents have already been digitized as a part of this project. The project also involves audio-visual documentation of Muslim food, Islamic architecture, dress, Muslim art forms, rituals, customs and life cycle events.*

*The project also involves archiving the rare photographs of early migrants from the Malabar to the Gulf countries and Ceylon.*

### Collection Contains

1. Digitized rare manuscripts
2. Videos of art forms, rituals, customs, lifecycle events etc.
3. Videos of Mosques, Islamic architecture, food, medicine, dress etc.
4. Photographs of early migrants to the Gulf and Ceylon.
5. Audio files of old MappilaPattu

### Web-based Catalogue

A web-based catalogue has already been prepared for the paper, audio, video and sound collections of the Digital Archives with abstract and index of items in the collection.

Digitization is the best method for the preservation of the archival data and it allows putting less strain on the original document. Dr. Jasimudeen, Librarian at St Stephen's College, Uzhavoor and Dr. Midhun C Sekhar, Museum Manger coordinated the final work. Postgraduate (Library Science) students from Feroke College, Kozhikkodu, St Stephen's College, Uzhavoor and S B College Changanassery participated in the workshop.



### Agreement with the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC)

The number of hop-on hop-off boats that ferry visitors to historic destinations in the Muziris region is about to increase. Muziris Heritage Project entering into a pact with the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC) for procuring five more water vessels including a rescue boat. The total cost of procuring the fiber boats (FRP) is ₹3.30 crore and, an agreement in this regard was signed in the presents of Adv. V.R. Sunilkumar MLA on 27th January by P M Nowshad (MD Muziris Heritage Project) and N Prasanth IAS, the Managing Director of KSINC. The KSINC is engaged in constructing FRP boats for numerous agencies, including Kerala Tourism, DTPCs, KTDC, and the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, apart from those in other States,” said Mr. Prasanth. KSINC Technical Manager Anoopkumar, Commercial Manger Cyril Abraham, Muziris Heritage Project Marketing Manager Ibrahim Zabin C Biju and Finance Manager Sony Roy were present.



### Logo launch; Muziris Paddle

The fourth edition of the Muziris Paddle, jointly organized by Kerala Tourism, Muziris Heritage Project, and Jellyfish Water-sports expects Kayakers, stand-up paddlers, and sailors from India and abroad to paddle along the National Waterway 3 on February 12 and 13,2021. The event logo was launched by Sri Kadakampally Surendran, Co-operation, Tourism and Dewaswom Minister. Rani George IAS, Tourism Secretary, P. M. Nowshad, Managing Director, Muziris Heritage Projects and Jelly fish officials were present in the function. The minister said 'The Muziris Paddle 2021' that kicks off from the Amphitheatre near Kottappuram Market will travel through the Periyar and enter the National Waterway 3 near Munambam.

Muziris Paddle' will also spread a message on 'River/Lake conservation and keeping it plastic-free.



### Pathinettaram Kovilakam

Thalappoli Festival at Sree Kurumba Bhagavathy Temple, Kodungallur is in the month of Makaram (January–February). The four-day Thalappoli commences from the evening of Makara Sankranthi with religious rituals. Procession with richly caparisoned elephants has performed the accompaniment of Pancha Vadyam, Pancharimelam, Paandimelam, etc. Women carrying traditional oil lamps accompany this procession, which is called Thalappoli. On the 4th day, the procession starts from Pathinettaram (summer palace of the Cochin princely state). On the way back, the ritual Parayeduppu is also performed and is known as Pathinettaram Para. Considering the historical and religious importance of the building Muziris heritage project has taken PathinettaramKovilakam as a protected monument as part of its conservation program. The project has taken a great effort to preserve both intangible and tangible elements of the age-old Pattinettaram Kovilakalam.



### Voice of Muziris

#### Approved Muziris Ambassador (AMA);

An extensive training program for locally recruited guides was organized under the Muziris Heritage Project. Project MD inaugurated the event and detailed on how the project has benefited the local community and the trickledown effect of Muziris, he added, “We employ a lot of local labour so there is direct employment. The local community is also benefited from tourism infrastructure development like roads, street lights, toilet blocks, boat jetties. We hope that each and every one of you who have been trained will be able to bring the voice of the Muziris Heritage Project to the world”. As part of the five-day program, the first phase started with a boat trip

from the Kottapuram waterfront. Ibrahim Sabin, Marketing Manager, Muziris Heritage Project, inaugurated the event. Dr. Sreevidhya V, Department of History Christ College, Irinjalakkuda has given classes on History of social reformers, freedom fighters and writers lived in the Muziris region. P. R Rajesh, Senior guide, Kerala Tourism delivered a lecture on types of tourism products, Nature of escorting and tour guiding, T R Prem Kumar, Moozhikkulamsala on intangible cultural heritage, and Reema M.S detailed on Excavated sites and Site Museums. Dr.Midhun C Sekhar coordinated training lectures and given classes on Muziris Heritage Project and project museums.

### Visit of Tourism Officials



On January 27, 2020, the Muziris Heritage Project invited 16 tourism officials from the Kerala Tourism Department to visit the heritage sites to understand how the heritage conservation project contributes to present-day Kerala tourism. Joint Directors, Deputy Directors and other staffs from Trivandrum, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Alappuzha were in the group. Museum Manager Dr Midhun C Sekhar and the guide Rasseena Beevi narrated snippets of the history of the region, myths, legends and reality. The heritage tour program inaugurated by Mr. Ibrahim Zebin, Marketing Manager, Muziris Projects Ltd. Mr P M Nowshad, Managing Director, Muziris Projects Ltd met the group and had a meeting regarding the ongoing and upcoming projects of Muziris in the evening session.

### 50 Crore Allotted for the Spice Route Heritage Project.

An amount of Rs 117 crore has been allocated for the infrastructure development of tourism centres. Through the budget, the government aims to revitalize the tourism sector which is seriously affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Top priority is being given to Muziris Spice Route Heritage project. A total of Rs 50 crore is allocated for Muziris, Alappuzha, Ponnani & Travancore Heritage Projects.

## MATERIAL CULTURE IN MUZIRIS



### INTAGLIO

Museum: Pattanam Children Museum  
 Name of Object: Intaglio  
 Material: Stone/ Carnelian  
 Size: 1.5 x 1.0 cm.

#### Site Description:

The artefact is recovered from the archaeological site called Pattanam (N. Lat. 10°09.434'; E. Long. 76°12.587'), located in Vadakkekara village of Paravur Taluk in the Ernakulam District in Kerala, India.

#### Artifact Description:

The figure is etched on one side of a thin oval-shaped slightly curved carnelian stone. The figure is placed vertically on the oval piece. It was recovered from the sediment-debris layer at a depth of 130 – 140 cm. It can be dated back to the early centuries CE on the Stratigraphical basis. The human figure etched on it with striking perfection is the Greek Goddess Tyche or the Roman Goddess Fortuna.