



Krishnan Nambiar Mizhavu Kalari

(Regd. Public Charitable Trust - No. 582/07/IV)

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BLUE PRINT OF THE PROJECT

Name of the Project: An intensive research to rediscover the making of Clay Mizhavu, involving documentation, presentation and preservation under the Scheme "Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India" is conceived and designed to suit with the objectives of the above scheme.

Researching and rediscovering the making of Clay Mizhavu involving documentation, presentation and preservation

Conceived and run by:

KRISHNAN NAMBIAR MIZHAVU KALARI
IV / 13, NAMBIAR MADHAM, CHATHAKUDAM, VALLACHIRA P.O.
THRISSUR, KERALA PIN: 680 562

Sanction Letter No :28-6/ICH- Scheme/38 2013-14 1663 dated 06.05.2014

Brief introduction of the project:

The project envisages an intensive research to rediscover the making of Clay Mizhavu, which involves systematic documentation, presentation, dissemination of knowledge and preservation of the same.

A **mizhavu** is a big copper drum played as an accompanying percussion instrument in the Kutiyattam and Koothu, performing arts of Kerala. It is played by the Ambalavasi Nambiar community. After 1965, when started a mizhavu repertory in Kerala Kalamandalam, mizhavu break the cast barrier and nowadays anyone can play mizhavu in kutiyattam, nangiarkoothu, chakyarkoothu & mizhavuthayambaka.

The drum is played only with hands. The Sanskrit name of nambiar "Pānivāda" ('pāni' means *hands* and 'vāda' comes from the verb 'vādanam' meaning *playing*, altogether meaning the one who plays with hands) comes from this reason.

Mizhavu is treated as a "Brahmacharya" and it is considered as sacred. It is used to accompany the holy ritualistic temple performance of Koodiyattam and Koothu. Only Ambalavasi Nambiar community members are allowed to play it inside temples or Koothambalams still.

In ancient time, when the art was practiced to its core with all divinity, our forefathers were using Clay Mizhavu – a percussion instrument fully made of clay. Mizhavu is one of the oldest percussion instruments and is an integral part of the performing temple arts of Kerala like Koothu, Kutiyattam and Nangiarkoothu. Though it is used as an accompaniment to the performing temple arts of Kerala, its deep and majestic sound makes it ideal for solo percussion symphony also.



It is a large pot-shaped vessel made of clay or copper with the mouth covered with stretched hide, this instrument is unique in producing a vibrant tone enriched with classical rhythm and purity. In the olden days Mizhavu was made out of clay, but these days it is mostly made of copper. This is because we lost the ancient knowledge of making clay Mizhavu. Though we could see clay Mizhavu preserved over centuries, the rare clay combination of making it is unknown to all.

Objectives of the research, data creation or documentation of the project:

Krishnan Nambiar Mizhavu Kalari conceived this project to rediscover this divine and quite natural process of making clay Mizhavu, thus rediscovering and preserving a cultural heritage.

Implementation of the project:

The project was presented with the following phases of implementation:

1. Identifying the clay Mizhavu preserved at various places like temples, Museums and private places
2. Holding intensive discussions – both formal and informal - with scholars / clay artists etc.
3. Conducting intensive research and document the discussions, views and conclusions.
4. Planning and executing the actual making after identifying skilled persons
5. Conducting seminars and discussions
6. Evaluating and testing the accuracy of making
7. Documenting the complete process of making clay Mizhavu to preserve it for next generation.

Time frame of the project:

The project was presented with a time frame of 12 months from the date of commencement with 10th March 2015 as the date of completion.

Geographical indications:

Southern, central and northern districts of Kerala

Photos (preliminary level) related to the project/art form:

Sent along with hard copy of this blue print.

Conclusion of the project as envisioned:

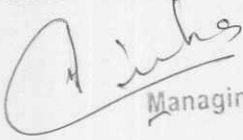
The scope of the project was restricted to the preliminary research (first two phases and a portion of the second phase) due to budget constraints. However Krishnan Nambiar Mizhavu Kalari was able to complete these phases with all such constraints. During the initial phases the research team met, discussed and interviewed scholars,



senior Mizhavu artists (Gurus), potters / clay artists, devaswam officials and academicians. Team visited temples and other places to see the clay Mizhavu and try to identify / rediscover the process of making. The entire preliminary work undertaken including the interactions so far has been properly documented and preserved for future references.

V.K. Hariharan
IV/13, Nambiar Madham
Chathakudam, Vallachira P.O.
Thrissur, PIN : 680 562

For Krishnan Nambiar Mizhavu Kalari

For 
Managing Trustee



CLAY MIZHAVU PROJECT – FIRST REPORT

First Report of Project Sanctioned under the Scheme for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) & Diverse Cultural Traditions of India

As part of the project initiatives, the following details have been collected on Clay Mizhavu (Mizhavu, fully made by using clay), which are currently available in Northern and Southern parts of Kerala: -

Clay Mizhavu in Northern Kerala: -

1. Payyannoor Sri Subramanya Swamy temple

This Mizhavu was originally from Karivellur temple and during that time it was used for Koothu and Kutiyattam by strictly following the Shoda Kriya Rituals. It was broken due to mouldiness and hence was discarded from temple. It is now being kept safe at the residence of Sri T.V Padmanabhan Unninamboothirippadu at Payyanur.

(photos and videos attached)

2. Madaikkavu Temple

It is a Famous temple which is located at Payyanur – kannur route (via pazhayangadi).

(photos and videos attached)

Here we have seen a Mizhavu which was twice the size of the Mizhavu present at the Payyannoor temple and is still used in the koothu conducted at the temple. The residents around the temple could not say much about the Antiquity of the Mizhavu, though we had an intensive survey there.

3. Muzhakkunnu Mridanga Saileswari Temple

The Deity here is Goddess Durga, belonging to the Kizhakkekovilakam Thannippilly Tharavadu of the King of Kottayam.

At the middle of the three kovilakoms there exists a Deity called '**Mizhavil Bhagavathy**'. The epic says that the Idol was Self Evolved from a Mizhavu which came running down from Harischandrakodi, a place near Pularimal, this idol was later covered in 'Panchaloham' and was installed in a shrine considering the same as Durga Devi.

It is a practice here to have Nivedyam at the 'Moolasthanam' thrice a day.

(photos and videos attached)

4. Perumba Mahavishnu Temple

Perumba Mahavishnu Temple is situated near Kurumathoor Illom at Pokkund, in Thalipparampa- Irutti route.



Here we have seen two big mizhavu which made from clay and when enquired to the inhabitants nearby we came to know that for about 75 years there were no Koothu /Kutiyattam performances at the temple.

5. Vakamoli Vishnu Temple (varahamoorthi)

To reach here we need to alight at the "Vakamoli" stop on Arikulam-Anchampodi route (From Koyilandi). The temple belongs to Pazhayamadom Illom.

Here we have seen a very beautiful mizhavu of 8.5 feet width and 3.5 feet height. It is decorated on the outside with lines which appears to be similar to some form of artwork. When enquired with the neighbourhood, it came to our knowledge that many people there have fond memories of koothu held at the temple.

Mr. Hariharan V.K., Kalamandalam Rajeev together with a Photographer/Videographer visited all these five temples and gathered information.

Clay Mizhavu in Northern Kerala: -

The following are the places in Southern Kerala having Clay Mizhavu :-

1. Vettikaval Ganapathy Temple
2. Neyyattinkara Thiruvattar Shiva Temple
3. Kanyakumari Bhagavathi Temple
4. Shucheendram
5. Mukhathala Vishnu Temple

1. Vettikavala Ganapathy Temple

Vettikaval Ganapathy Temple is situated at about 8 km in the route towards Punalur from Kottarakkara. The temple has a monumental clay Mizhavu with mizhavana.

Currently Koothu is not being staged here.

(Photos and Videos attached)

2. Kottarakara Museum

Here we have seen a Panchamukha mizhavu (a mizhavu with five faces) made out of clay and also a copper mizhavu.

(Photos and Videos attached)

3. Neyyattinkara Thiruvattar Temple

The temple premises here resemble that of Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple of Thiruvananthapuram. It is said that during the olden days various Kshetraakalas (Temple arts) were performed at the five Mandapas situated outside the temple premise.



It was not possible to enter the temple or to inspect the historical document available there as the temple was currently under the purview of Tamil Nadu Government. Entry without prior approval is being prohibited.

On enquiry, the nearby inhabitants informed that koothu is still performed by Artists who usually comes from north.

We have compiled all the above information and further, on 20/07/2017 collected more information by conducting an interview with Sri. Kalamandalam Ishwaranunni who is a Professor at The Kerala Kalamandalam and a renowned Mizhavu teacher.

(Interview video is available)

Further, Mr. Hariharan and Mr. Rajeev interviewed Dr. Jyotilal T.G, a Scholar who resides at Erumapetty Thrissur. Dr Jothilal is the head of the Sculpture department at Kalady Sri Shankaracharya Sanskrit University.

Along with that Mr. Hariharan and Mr. Rajeev also interviewed Sri. AppuKuttan a Sculptor at Pathramangalam. He informed that there were mainly four different varieties of clay which were usually used for the production of Mizhavu. He described how adding sand to the clay increases the strength of the mizhavu and also about adding red soil which in turn affects the colour of the Mizhavu.

Mr. Hariharan along with, Mr. Rajeev Mr. and Mr. Jayaraj interviewed Mr. Appu, a clay pot maker from Cheruthuruthy (Shornur). They deliberated on the procedures of making of "Ghatam" and "Tabla" and also about the process of making the Ghatam smoother with the help of egg whites. Mr. Appu opined that that clay from river is better for making izhavu as it is stickier compared to the ordinary clay. He also intimated his interest towards Mizhavu making.

(Video of interview available)

That day itself the team went to Kulapulli near to Shornur to meet Sri. Onakkoor Gopinathan Nambiar, a Mizhavu artist who still plays clay Mizhavu at places like Madaikavu Temple. The information's received from him was indeed very useful.

(Video of interview available)

The team then collected more information by meeting up with Padmasree Kalamadalam Narayanan Nambiar a renowned Mizhavu artist residing at Lakkidi, Ottapalam. From him the team was able to collect vital information regarding the history of Mizhavu. He also pointed out the usage of the sap of kulamavu plant along with the clay used for making mizhavu.

(Video of interview available)

To summarise:

- To collect all these information the team has interviewed three Mizhavu artists and one scholar in sculpture (Have paid fee to all four of them)
- Interviewed two clay sculptors (paid fee)
- Personally visited all the above-mentioned places
- Expenses related to travel stay food and photo/video were properly accounted for.

Regards ^{For KRISHNAN NAMBIAR MIZHAVU KALARI}

Hariharan V.K.

MANAGING TRUSTEE





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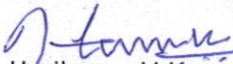
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