

Tisser

hand to heart

ARTISANS TRUST

CRAFT MAPPING INITIATIVE · PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry: A Journey Through Crafts

கைவினைப் பாதையில்

A commune-by-commune map of the state's living handloom and handicraft traditions — their makers, materials, geographies and legal protections. Twenty-seven entries across fourteen communes. A first edition, and an open one.



FIRST EDITION VOLUME I · THE MAP WORKING DRAFT

What is in this volume

This volume maps craft by geography. A second volume, planned, will map it by maker — named artisans, workshops and co-operatives, with contact routes for buyers, designers and researchers.

01	How to read this map	03	02	Method, and its limits	04
	The card, the codes, the colours			What was counted, what was left out	
03	The state at a glance	05	04	The craft map	06
	Twenty-seven entries, nine material families			Clusters plotted against the state	
05	The commune atlas	07	06	The GI register	08
	All fourteen communes, by entry count			Two protected handicrafts	
07	Two decades of protection	09	08	The craft year	10
	And what is still unprotected			Why demand follows the calendar	
09	Where the value goes	11	–	The state	12
	Six links, two leaks			Terrain, dynasties, communities, materials	
	· Landscapes, west to east	13		· What each period left behind	14
	· Who carries the craft	15		· Nothing travels far before it is made	16
I	Puducherry	17	II	Karaikal	23
	293 km ² · Tamil · in Tamil Nadu			161 km ² · Tamil · in Tamil Nadu	
III	Yanam	25	IV	Mahé	28
	30 km ² · Telugu · in Andhra Pradesh			9 km ² · Malayalam · in Kerala	
A	Photography brief	32	B	Add to this map	33
	What still needs to be shot			How the next edition gets built	

Every craft is one card

Each entry carries the same eight pieces of information in the same place, so that entries can be compared across six hundred kilometres and a thousand years. Nothing here is ranked: a craft with one surviving family takes exactly as much space on the page as a craft with four thousand workers.



IN CLAY

Villianur Terracotta

வில்லியனூர் மண்பாண்டம்

VILLIANUR COMMUNE (VILLIANUR AND NEARBY VILLAGES)

Kulalar potter families, by their own account working the clay here for more than twenty generations

Green clay sifted clear of stone, then mixed to a fixed proportion — about a fifth clay, two fifths thennal and two fifths fine sand, savudu — kneaded and left to cure. Bodies are moulded in parts and the detail cut by hand with bamboo tools. Pieces dry for about twelve hours, fire for around half an hour over husk, wood powder and saanam, and cool under sand. The range runs from a Ganesha an inch high to a six-foot horse built in sections to be taken apart and reassembled, and the technique will carry a figure to thirty feet. It is one of two geographical indications in the whole territory.

GI 201 **KULALAR POTTERS**

● HOLDING

▲ A finished entry, at printed size.

01 Band

The material family — loom, print, needle, metal, wood, clay, fibre, pigment, leather, paper, stone, glass.

03 Panel

Original illustration made for this edition, in the region's palette. Every one is a live photo slot.

05 Makers

The community, workshop or settlement that carries the skill.

07 Status

Legal protection, cluster recognition, and flags — including Field-check.

02 Name

In English, with the local name below it. Both are searchable terms.

04 Place

Commune, or the belt a craft crosses. Not a boundary claim.

06 Note

Technique, history and the one thing worth knowing about this craft.

08 Vitality

How close this craft is to ending, read from cluster size, age and market.

The 4 regions

Colour follows the four enclaves, because that is what this territory is — four pieces in three states, 1,500 km apart.



Puducherry

293 km² · Tamil · in Tamil Nadu



Yanam

30 km² · Telugu · in Andhra Pradesh



Karaikal

161 km² · Tamil · in Tamil Nadu



Mahé

9 km² · Malayalam · in Kerala

The vitality reading

An editorial judgement, not a census. It is printed so that it can be argued with — and corrected.



Thriving

Growing cluster, young entrants, working market.



At risk

Falling numbers; skill still transmissible.



Holding

Stable numbers, ageing workforce, thin margins.



Critical

A handful of practitioners. One generation from silence.

Two flags to watch for

GI 000 — a registered geographical indication, with its application number at the Chennai registry. **Field-check** — an entry compiled from secondary sources, not yet confirmed on the ground; twenty entries carry it. They are printed rather than dropped, because omission is how crafts vanish from the record.

What was counted, and what was left out

What counts as a craft here

A skill that shapes material by hand, transmitted within a community or a workshop rather than through a syllabus, and still practised by someone in Puducherry today. That definition lets in quarry carving and gold-foil beating, and keeps out revived hobby practice with no inherited line.

Where the entries come from

Three layers. The GI Registry's state list, which is authoritative but narrow. State ODOP, handloom and handicraft cluster records, which are broader but commercial in framing. And published documentation — craft council surveys, museum and university records, and reporting on individual clusters.

What this document cannot yet claim

It has no artisan headcount. Loom censuses, cluster registers and co-operative rolls disagree with each other and with the ground, and publishing a wrong number is worse than publishing none. It has no verified list of living practitioners — that is Volume II.

The known gaps

This is the thinnest evidence base in the series and the volume does not pretend otherwise. Puducherry's own enclave is reasonably well described — two GI files, a Crafts Council, a craft walk, an archaeological site. For Karaikal, Yanam and Mahé there is almost nothing: the territory's own Crafts Council names one craft in one of the three. Twenty-one of this volume's entries carry a field-check flag, which is the highest proportion in the series, and that is the finding rather than a caveat.

An honest caution about maps

The outlines and region shapes in this volume are drawn for legibility, not for survey accuracy. Cluster pins mark craft towns, not administrative boundaries. No inference about any border should be drawn from this document.

On naming

The territory's units are communes rather than districts, and this volume maps them as such. Four of them are also the four regions: Yanam and Mahé are single communes. The Registry spells Thirukkanur as Tirukanur and Mahé without its accent; crafts are listed under the spelling their makers use, with the register's spelling kept in the GI table.

Sources for the legal status

GI application numbers and dates in this volume are taken from the Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai, and from the published state registration lists. Where an application number is not published for a registration, the entry shows a dash rather than a guess.

Twenty-seven entries, nine material families

27

craft entries mapped in this first edition, across 14 communes

2

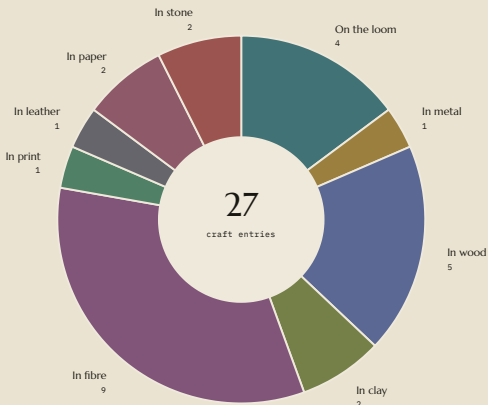
geographical indications in the entire territory — both handicrafts, both filed on the same day by the same organisation, from villages eight kilometres apart.

21

entries read as at risk or critical — more than half of everything on this map

20

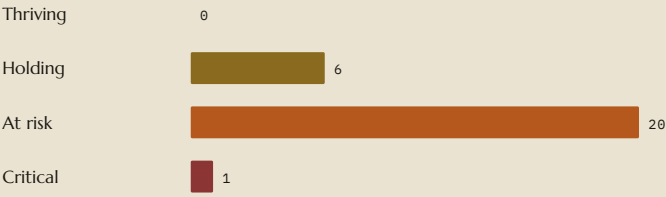
entries still awaiting a field visit before they can be called confirmed



What the shape of the wheel says

Two geographical indications in the whole territory, both handicrafts, both filed on the same day by the same body. The wheel below is therefore a picture of what is made; the register is a picture of who applied.

Vitality across all entries



Indicative vitality, assigned from cluster size, age profile and market access. To be validated in the field survey round.

Two filings, one address

Villianur terracotta and Thirukkanur papier mâché were both filed on **22 March 2010** by the Pondicherry Crafts Foundation, of Villianur, and both certified on **18 August 2011**. They are the territory's complete register.

Three enclaves hold nothing

Karaikal is 161 km² with a handloom belt, a korai mat trade and a major pilgrimage temple. Yanam is 30 km² in the Godavari delta. Mahé is 9 km² inside the densest Theyyam country in India. Between them: **no registrations**.

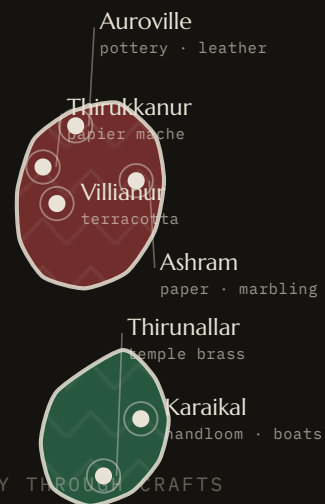
The mechanism, in miniature

A register records applications. Applications need an organisation — someone to assemble a specification, prove the territory and carry the file for a year. Puducherry has one such body, in one village, and the map of what is protected is the map of where it sits.



Where craft actually sits

Eight principal clusters across four enclaves in three states. Positions are true. Each enclave is drawn at its own scale — ×4.5 Puducherry, ×5 Karaikal, ×14 Yanam, ×26 Mahé — because at a single scale Mahé's nine square kilometres would be a dot you could not see.



All fourteen communes, arranged as they sit

A schematic grid, not a survey map: each commune is one tile, placed in roughly its geographical position, coloured by region, and carrying the number of entries that name it in this edition. A craft practised across a belt is counted once in every commune it names, so the tiles total more than 27. Low numbers mark thin documentation at least as often as they mark thin craft. Every commune on this grid carries at least one entry.

Puducherry புதுச்சேரி entries 3	Oulgaret உழவர்கரை entry 1	Villianur வில்லியனூர் entries 5	Ariyankuppam அரியங்குப்பம் entries 2	Bahour பாகூர் entries 3
Mannadipet மண்ணாடிப்பட்டு entries 3	Nettapakkam நெட்டப்பாக்கம் entries 3	Karaikal காரைக்கால் entries 2	Kottucherry கோட்டுச்சேரி entry 1	Neravy நெரவி entries 2
Nedungadu நெடுங்காடு entry 1	Thirunallar திருநள்ளாறு entries 2	Yanam யானா entries 3	Mahé மாஹி entries 4	

Two protected handicrafts

APP.	GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION	PLACE	REGISTERED	SCOPE
201	Villianur Terracotta Works	Villianur, Puducherry	2011-12	Puducherry
202	Thirukanur Papier Mache Craft	Thirukkanur, Puducherry	2011-12	Puducherry

Registered in other classes

What a GI does, and does not, do

A geographical indication is a collective right. It cannot be owned by one workshop; it is held by a registered body on behalf of everyone producing to the specification inside the named territory. It stops a mill elsewhere using the name. It does not set a price, it does not find a buyer, and it does not pay for clay.

What Puducherry shows, more clearly than any larger state can, is the step before all of that: somebody has to apply. Two crafts here were protected because one organisation existed to protect them. Everything else in the territory is in the position every craft is in before anyone takes an interest.

Significant crafts with no protection

These are practised, documented and commercially significant, and hold no geographical indication of their own.

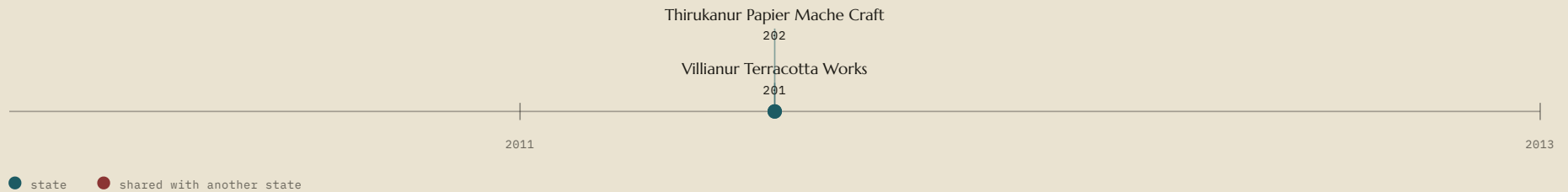
Korai mat weaving	Bahour · Kottucherry · Neravy The sedge mat of the Kaveri and Gingee deltas, split, dyed and woven on a frame. Made on both sides of the territory line and registered on neither.
Karaikal handloom	Karaikal · Thirunallar Cotton weaving shared with Thanjavur and Nagapattinam across the border. The second largest enclave holds no registration of any kind.
Thirunallar temple brass	Thirunallar Lamps, vessels and votives for one of the most visited Saniswaran temples in the south. A pilgrim economy with a craft attached and no filing.
Yanam coir and fishing gear	Yanam Husk, rope, net and the delta boat, in a thirty-square-kilometre enclave with no published craft description beyond one reference to stone.
Mahé coir, boats and weaving	Mahé Nine square kilometres inside Kannur. What is made here is what Malabar makes, and none of it is recorded as Mahé's.
Theyyam ornament around Mahé	Mahé and the Kannur villages around it Headgear, ornament and face paint for several hundred ritual forms. The shrine villages do not stop at the line; the register does.

With a register of two, the unprotected list is effectively the whole territory.

One day of filing, and fifteen years of nothing

The shortest timeline in the series

Two points, and they are the same point: both applications went in on 22 March 2010 and both were certified on 18 August 2011. Nothing has been filed before or since. For comparison, Kerala filed thirteen crafts and twenty-eight foods over the same two decades, and Andhra filed sixteen crafts.



What went in

Villianur terracotta, application 201, and Thirukkanur papier mâché, 202 — consecutive numbers, because they were handed in together. Both are registered to the Pondicherry Crafts Foundation of Villianur, whose president, a terracotta craftsman, received the Padma Shri in 2020.

What this proves

That the instrument works when somebody drives it. Two crafts in a small territory were specified, evidenced, filed and granted — which is more than several much larger states managed in the same period for crafts of equal standing.

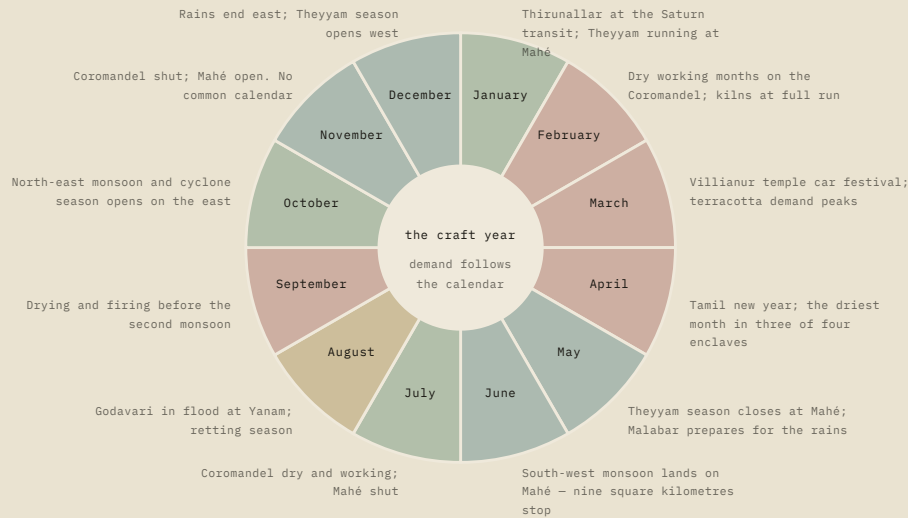
And what it cannot do

Reach anywhere its applicant does not. Karaikal is 150 km away, Yanam a thousand, Mahé six hundred. No body in those three enclaves has filed, and the register is silent about all three — which looks exactly like an absence of craft and is not one.

Demand follows the calendar, not the market



Four enclaves, three monsoon regimes. Puducherry and Karaikal are Coromandel coast: the north-east monsoon soaks them from October to December and the cyclone season runs with it. Yanam sits in the Godavari delta and takes both monsoons. Mahé is Malabar, where the south-west monsoon lands in June and dumps three thousand millimetres. A territory this small has no common craft calendar at all, which is itself worth printing.



Two coasts, opposite seasons

When Mahé's looms and coir yards are shut down by the south-west monsoon in July, Puducherry and Karaikal are in their driest working months. When the Coromandel shuts for the north-east monsoon in November, Mahé is open. No scheme designed for one works for the other.

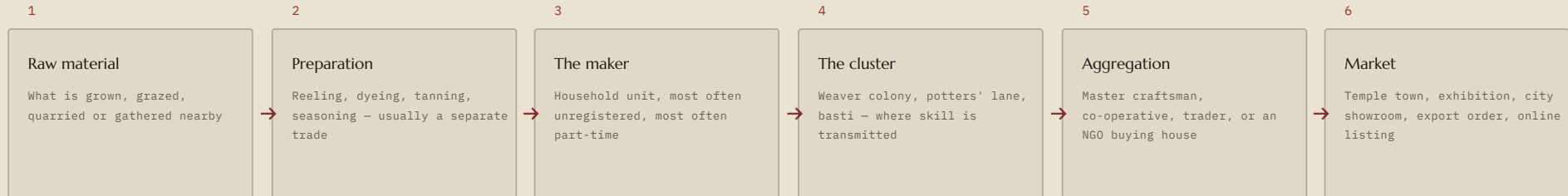
Cyclones take the east

Puducherry, Karaikal and Yanam all sit on a cyclone coast. Thane in 2011 and the 2004 tsunami both reshaped the boat trades here, and a severe landfall can take a season's drying stock and a workshop roof in one night.

Festivals set the orders

Villianur's temple car festival, Thirunallar's Saturn transit, and the Theyyam season around Mahé between December and May are the three dates that actually move craft in this territory, and no two of them are in the same state.

Six links, and the two places value leaks out



Where value leaks: between 2 and 3 (raw material cost), and between 5 and 6 (the margin the maker never sees).

Every intervention in this document – GI, ODOP, cluster funding – is an attempt to shorten the distance between 3 and 6.

The raw material squeeze

Gold, silver, coloured stone, natural indigo and good quarry stone have all risen faster than the price a finished object commands. When a printer switches from madder to a synthetic, the craft has not been abandoned — it has been priced out of its own specification.

The margin the maker never sees

Between the cluster and the shelf sit anywhere from one to four intermediaries. In a tourist economy a fifth appears: the shop that pays a commission to whoever brought the customer through the door.

What actually shortens the chain

Direct selling at fairs. Producer companies that hold their own stock. Authorised-user registers under a GI. Workshop visits and craft tourism at the cluster itself. None of these is a subsidy; all of them are structure.

The state · before the four regions

Puducherry

புதுச்சேரி

WHY CRAFT SITS WHERE IT SITS

492 km² in four enclaves across three states · 14 communes · 1.6 million people · 1,500 km from Mahé to Yanam — and a craft map that is not evenly spread across any of them. This chapter sets out the three forces that put each craft where it is: the ground it is made from, the courts that paid for it, and the communities that carry it.

TERRAIN

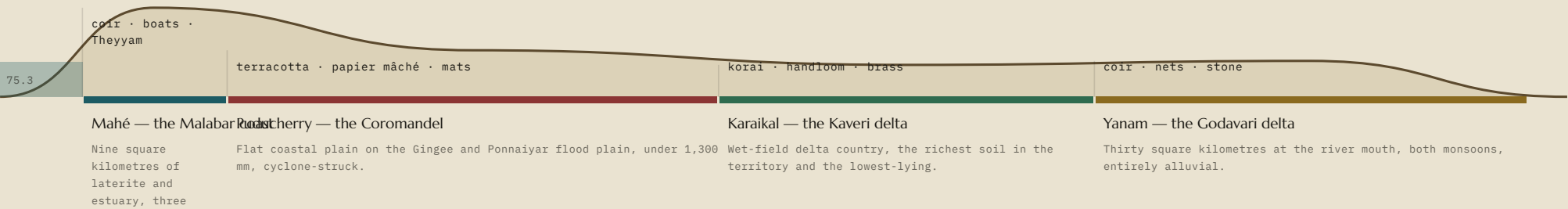
DYNASTIES

COMMUNITIES

MATERIALS

Four landscapes, west to east

Three of the four enclaves sit on river delta or flood plain, which is why clay, sedge and palmyra are the shared crafts across a thousand kilometres. The fourth, Mahé, is laterite and estuary on the opposite coast and shares nothing with them but a government.



Mahé, on the Malabar coast

Yanam, in the Godavari delta

Alluvium, three times over

Pudukcherry sits on the Gingee and Ponnaiyar flood plain, Karaikal in the Kaveri delta and Yanam in the Godavari delta. All three are flat, wet, clay country — which is why terracotta, korai sedge and palmyra are the common crafts across them even though they are a thousand kilometres apart.

And then Mahé

Nine square kilometres of laterite and estuary on the Malabar coast, with the Western Ghats twenty kilometres behind it. It shares no geology, no monsoon, no language and no craft with the other three.

What the sea brought

Arikamedu was working beads, glass and shell and probably dyeing muslin for the Roman trade from about the second century BC. French administration from 1674 left a joinery tradition and a street plan. Both are craft history that arrived by boat.

What each period left behind

Almost every court craft in this volume can be dated to the founding or the ending of a patron. Courts commission, courts fall, and the workshops stay — which is why Puducherry holds so many techniques whose original customer no longer exists.

2nd c. BC – 8th c. AD	 Arikamedu	Beads, glass and shell are worked four kilometres from the modern town, and two walled tanks there were probably used to dye muslin for export. Roman amphorae, Arretine ware and lamps come	beads · glass · dye
1674–1954	 The French administration	Pondichéry is established in 1674, Mahé taken in 1725, Karaikal in 1739, Yanam in 1750. Four unconnected pieces are bound into one administration by trade and war, and stay bound after	four enclaves
18th–19th c.	 Cloth, and then the mill	The settlements trade Coromandel cotton out of Pondichéry. In 1898 the Anglo-French Textile Mill opens and becomes the territory's largest employer for most of a century, before closing.	cotton · mill
1926–1960s	 The Ashram builds craft units	The Sri Aurobindo Ashram sets up production departments – handmade paper, marbling on paper and silk, incense, perfume, hand embroidery. A craft economy is founded rather than inherited, and	paper · marbling
1968–today	 Auroville's clusters	Pottery, leather, weaving, ceramics and lighting units grow up in the villages around Auroville – Alankuppam, Sanjeevi Nagar, Kottakarai, Irumbai – employing local workers on export-standard	studio and cluster
2004–2011	 Tsunami, and the only filings	The 2004 tsunami takes the fishing coasts of Puducherry and Karaikal; fibreglass replaces plank in the rebuilding. In March 2010 the Pondicherry Crafts Foundation files two applications. They	the register, complete

Craft here is carried by communities, not by individuals

Puducherry's craft communities are the Tamil ones — Kulalar potters, sthaphathi stone carvers, weaver societies, fishing-village boatwrights — with two additions no other volume in this series has. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram built production units for paper, marbling and incense in the twentieth century, and Auroville built craft clusters for pottery, leather and weaving from the 1970s. Neither is an inherited occupation; both employ local people, both have lasted, and both would struggle to meet the definition of tradition a geographical indication requires.

Twenty generations

The Kulalar families at Villianur date their work here at more than twenty generations. It is the only craft lineage in this territory with a published claim of that kind, and it is one of the two that hold a registration.

Two founded economies

Ashram paper and marbling, and the Auroville potteries and leather units, were made rather than inherited. They are among the healthiest craft workplaces in this volume, which is a finding about institutions, not about tradition.

And three enclaves of nobody

No published survey of craft communities in Karaikal, Yanam or Mahé appears to exist. Every entry in those three chapters is marked for field check, because there is almost nothing to check them against.

A note on naming

Community names are recorded here as they are used by the communities themselves and in craft documentation. They are listed to show who holds a skill, and for no other purpose. Several groups appear under more than one craft; several crafts are worked by more than one group.

Inherited occupations

Kulalar	the Villianur potters — twenty generations by their own count
Sthaphathi	granite image and pillar work at Villianur and Thengathittu
Fishing-village boatwrights	Veerampattinam, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahé

Founded, not inherited

Ashram production units	handmade paper, marbling, incense — from the 1920s
Auroville clusters	pottery, leather, weaving — Alankuppam, Kottakarai, Irumbai, Sanjeevi Nagar
Pondicherry Crafts Foundation	the body that holds both GIs, and trained tsunami-affected and disabled artisans

Across the line

Malayan · Vannan · Velan	Theyyam households around Mahé, in Kannur district and out of it
Delta weaving societies	Karaikal's looms and Thanjavur's, the same trade
Godavari coir households	Yanam and the Kakinada villages, one economy

Nothing here travels far before it is made

From the clay

● Green clay

→ 20% of the Villianur body

● Thennal

→ 40% – the tempering earth

● Savudu (fine sand)

→ the remaining 40%

● Husk, wood powder, saanam

→ the half-hour firing, cooled under sand

From paper and pigment

● Paper pulp

→ mashed, with chalk, limestone and starch

● Rag

→ the Ashram's handmade sheet

● Floated pigment

→ marbling – one pass, no repeat

● Lacquer, with a gold tint

→ the Thirukkanur finish

From the fields and the shore

● Korai sedge

→ cut from the tank margins, split and dyed

● Palmyra leaf

→ boxes, fans, winnows, mats

● Coconut husk and shell

→ coir at Yanam and Mahé, bowls at Villianur

● Shell

→ the beach trade – and Arikamedu's beads, two

Brought in

● Granite

→ from the surrounding state, in all four enclaves

● Teak and rosewood

→ the Boulevard joinery and the boats

● Tanned leather

→ bought in for the Auroville units

● Fibreglass

→ what replaced plank after 2004

Every craft in this volume begins as something grown, grazed, quarried or gathered within a few hours of where it is made. That is the whole argument for mapping craft geographically.

What the clay needs

Villianur's body is mixed to a fixed proportion — roughly 20% green clay, 40% thennal, 40% fine sand — and fired for about half an hour over husk and wood powder, then cooled under sand. It is one of the few recipes in this series the makers have published themselves, because the GI file required it.

What has been substituted

Fibreglass for plank on all three east-coast fishing shores, accelerated by the 2004 tsunami rebuilding. Enamel and poster colour for natural pigment on the papier mâché. Imported leather for local hide in the Auroville units.

What crosses the border

Korai sedge, palmyra leaf, coconut husk and granite all come from the surrounding state, not from the territory. A 492 km² administration cannot supply its own craft materials, which is worth remembering before reading any boundary on this map as meaningful.

Region 1 of 04

Puducherry

புதுச்சேரி

293 KM² • TAMIL • IN TAMIL NADU

The largest enclave, the only one with a craft register, and the one with the oldest documented workshop site in this series.

Four kilometres down the Cuddalore road from the town is Arikamedu, where beads, glass and shell were worked and muslin was probably dyed for export to Rome from about the second century BC. Nothing of that trade survives as a living craft, but the clay does: Villianur's Kulalar potters hold one of the territory's two geographical indications and Thirukkanur's papier mâché workshops the other. Around them sit two twentieth-century craft economies that no other volume in this series has — the Sri Aurobindo Ashram's paper, marbling and incense units, and Auroville's pottery, leather and weaving clusters.

PUDUCHERRY	OULGARET	VILLIANUR	ARIYANKUPPAM	BAHOUR
MANNADIPET	NETTAPAKKAM			



IN CLAY

Villianur Terracotta

வில்லியனூர் மண்பாண்டம்

VILLIANUR COMMUNE (VILLIANUR AND NEARBY VILLAGES)

Kulalar potter families, by their own account working the clay here for more than twenty generations

Green clay sifted clear of stone, then mixed to a fixed proportion — about a fifth clay, two fifths thennal and two fifths fine sand, savudu — kneaded and left to cure. Bodies are moulded in parts and the detail cut by hand with bamboo tools. Pieces dry for about twelve hours, fire for around half an hour over husk, wood powder and saanam, and cool under sand. The range runs from a Ganesha an inch high to a six-foot horse built in sections to be taken apart and reassembled, and the technique will carry a figure to thirty feet. It is one of two geographical indications in the whole territory.

GI 201 KULALAR POTTERS

● HOLDING



IN PAPER

Thirukkanur Papier Mache

திருக்கனூர் காகிதக் கூழ்

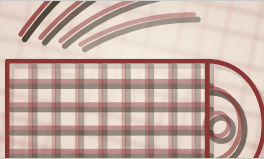
VILLIANUR COMMUNE (THIRUKKANUR)

Workshops around Thirukkanur, trained and organised through the Pondicherry Crafts Foundation

Paper mashed to pulp, bound with chalk, limestone and starch powders, moulded to shape, then sketched, lacquered and polished in bright natural colour with a gold tint the applicants trace to a Persian line. Dolls and figures mostly. Its geographical indication was filed on the same day as Villianur's, by the same organisation, from the same address, and certified on the same day — which is the single most informative fact about this territory's register.

GI 202 FILED THE SAME DAY

● AT RISK



IN FIBRE

Korai Mat Weaving

கோரைப் பாய்

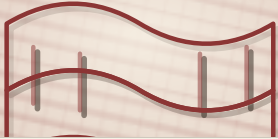
BAHOUR · NETTAPAKKAM COMMUNES

Weaving households in the wet-field villages, largely women

Korai sedge cut from the tank margins, split, sun-dried, dyed and woven on a simple frame into sleeping and prayer mats. The same grass and the same weave run straight across into Tamil Nadu, where Pattamadai's finer version holds a registration of its own. This side of the line has none.

FIELD-CHECK NO GI

● AT RISK



ON THE LOOM

Puducherry Handloom

புதுச்சேரி கைத்தறி

OULGARET · VILLIANUR COMMUNES

Weaver cooperative societies in and around Oulgaret

Cotton saree and dress material woven through societies, in a territory whose largest industrial employer for a century was the Anglo-French Textile Mill — which closed. What is left is the handloom end, competing with the Tamil Nadu clusters a few kilometres away under the same conditions and a different government.

FIELD-CHECK COOPERATIVE BELT

● AT RISK



IN PAPER

Ashram Handmade Paper

கையால் செய்த காகிதம்

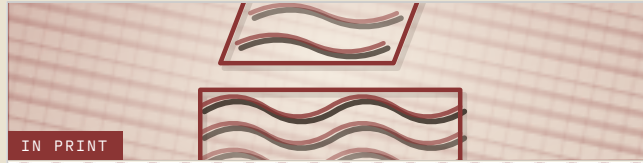
PUDUCHERRY COMMUNE (SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM UNITS)

The Ashram's own production units, staffed by residents and local workers

Rag pulped, sheeted by hand on a mould and deckle, pressed, dried and finished — in a workshop set up as part of an ashram economy rather than inherited from a caste occupation. It is one of the very few crafts in this series that was deliberately founded in the twentieth century and is still running, and it survives for the reason most of the inherited ones do not: a standing institution with staff, a bank account and a shop.

FOUNDED 20TH C. NO GI

HOLDING



IN PRINT

Ashram Marbling

மார்பிளிங்

PUDUCHERRY COMMUNE (SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM UNITS)

Ashram marbling units; the trade here is unusually well documented because it is institutional

Pigment floated on a thickened bath, combed into a pattern and lifted onto paper or silk in a single pass, so no two sheets repeat. Marbling is not an Indian tradition; it came here through the Ashram's own Franco-Indian circuit in the twentieth century and has been made continuously since. Listed because a craft map that only records what is inherited will miss half of what a place like this actually makes.

PAPER AND SILK NO GI

HOLDING



IN CLAY

Auroville Glazed Pottery

பீங்கான் பானை

MANNADIPET COMMUNE (KOTTAKARAI · ALANKUPPAM)

Studio potteries and their trainees, several of them running formal apprenticeships

High-fired glazed stoneware, thrown and glazed to studio standards, in workshops set up from the 1970s onward. Golden Bridge and the potteries around it have trained a significant share of India's studio ceramicists. It sits a few kilometres from Villianur's unglazed village terracotta and the two have almost nothing to do with each other, which is a fair picture of this enclave.

STUDIO CRAFT NO GI

HOLDING



IN LEATHER

Auroville Leather Craft

தோல் பொருட்கள்

MANNADIPET · NETTAPAKKAM COMMUNES (ALANKUPPAM · SANJEEVI NAGAR)

Small units in the Auroville-adjacent villages, employing local workers

Vegetable-tanned bags, sandals, belts and bindings, made to export standards in village units rather than in a factory. The leather is bought in; the making is local. It is the clearest case in this volume of craft as employment rather than craft as inheritance.

CLUSTER CRAFT NO GI

HOLDING



ON THE LOOM

Auroville Hand Weaving

கைத்தறி நெசவு

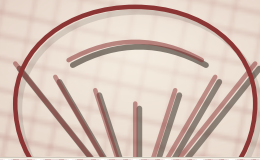
MANNADIPET COMMUNE (IRUMBAI • KOTTAKARAI)

Weaving units attached to the Auroville craft clusters

Cotton and silk furnishing and dress cloth woven on frame looms for a design-led market. It does not claim a lineage and does not need one, which is exactly why it would be hard to register — a geographical indication needs a tradition in a territory, and this is a workshop in a village.

CLUSTER CRAFT NO GI

● HOLDING



IN FIBRE

Seashell Craft

சிப்பி வேலை

ARIYANKUPPAM COMMUNE (VEERAMPATTINAM • THE COAST)

Fishing-village households and seafront stalls

Shell cut, drilled, strung and glued into lamps, boxes, curtains and ornaments for the beach trade. It is a tourist craft and makes no claim otherwise. Four kilometres away at Arikamedu, shell was being worked into beads for export two thousand years ago; the continuity is of material, not of trade.

FIELD-CHECK TOURIST MARKET

● AT RISK



IN WOOD

Coconut Shell Craft

தேங்காய் ஓடு

VILLIANUR • BAHOUR COMMUNES

Small workshops and household units

Shell cut, cleaned, turned and polished into bowls, ladles, lamps and ornaments. Kerala holds a statewide geographical indication for the brass-inlaid version of exactly this craft; the Puducherry workshops making it unadorned hold nothing, and nobody has suggested they should.

FIELD-CHECK HOUSEHOLD CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN STONE

Puducherry Stone Carving

கல் சிற்பம்

VILLIANUR COMMUNE (VILLIANUR • THENGATHITTU)

Sthapathi families working temple and domestic commissions

Granite images, pillars and domestic stonework in the Tamil sthapathi tradition, worked to the same canon as Mamallapuram up the coast. The territory's own Crafts Council names stone at Villianur and Thengathittu, and at Yanam — which makes it the only craft the Council lists in two enclaves.

FIELD-CHECK TEMPLE WORK

● AT RISK



IN WOOD

Catamaran and Vallam Building

கட்டுமரம்

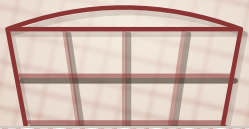
ARIYANKUPPAM COMMUNE (VEERAMPATTINAM · THE FISHING COAST)

Fishing-village boatwrights

The lashed-log kattumaram and the plank-built vallam, made and repaired on the beach by the men who fish from them. Fibreglass hulls have taken most of the new-build market because they last longer; they also cannot be repaired by their owner, which is the trade-off nobody records.

FIELD-CHECK WORKING CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN FIBRE

Palmyra and Panai Craft

பனை ஓலை

BAHOUR · NETTAPAKKAM COMMUNES

Palmyra-tapping and labouring households, largely women

Palmyra leaf split and plaited into boxes, fans, baskets, mats and the containers a tapping household needs. The cheapest craft in the volume to learn and the hardest to earn from, which is why it survives: the raw material is free.

FIELD-CHECK HOUSEHOLD CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN WOOD

Colonial Joinery and Furniture

மரத் தளவாடம்

PUDUCHERRY COMMUNE (WHITE TOWN · BOULEVARD)

Carpentry workshops serving the heritage quarter

Louvred shutters, fanlights, four-poster beds and the deep verandah furniture of the French town, in teak and rosewood — a nineteenth-century hybrid of French proportion and Tamil joinery that exists almost nowhere else. The live trade is restoration: the conservation of the Boulevard town is what keeps the joiners working.

FIELD-CHECK REPAIR TRADE

● AT RISK

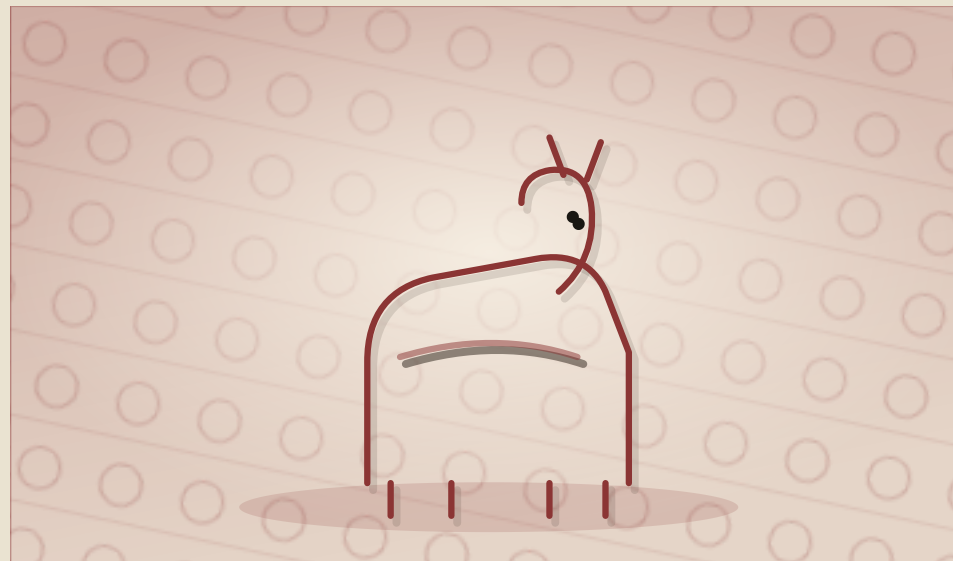
A recipe the register made public

Almost every craft in this series guards its proportions. Aranmula's alloy is a family secret. Navalgund's weavers keep their technique deliberately closed. Villianur's clay body, by contrast, is published — because filing a geographical indication required it to be.

The body is roughly **one fifth green clay, two fifths thennal and two fifths fine sand** — savudu — sifted clear of stone, kneaded and left to cure. Bodies are moulded in parts; the detail is cut by hand with bamboo tools. Pieces dry about twelve hours, fire for around half an hour over husk, wood powder and saanam, and cool buried in sand.

What that proportion buys is scale. The range runs from a Ganesha an inch high to a **six-foot horse built in sections** that comes apart and reassembles, and the technique will carry a figure to thirty feet. A village terracotta that can be built that large and still fire evenly is not a common thing.

The Kulalar families here put their work at more than twenty generations. The specification that a GI file demanded — materials, proportions, firing, tools, territory — is now a public document, which is the quiet second benefit of registration and the one nobody argues for.



1

Sifted and proportioned

Green clay, thennal and savudu sand mixed to a fixed ratio, kneaded and left to cure.

2

Moulded in parts

Body sections cast, then assembled — which is how a six-foot horse can be fired at all.

3

Cut with bamboo

Curves, eyes and ornament worked in by hand with bamboo tools before the piece dries.

4

Fired, and cooled under sand

About half an hour over husk, wood powder and saanam, then buried in sand to come down slowly.

What a file leaves behind

A written specification. Whatever else the registration did or did not achieve, the recipe is now on the public record and will outlast any one workshop.

Who holds it

The Pondicherry Crafts Foundation, of Villianur — the same body that holds the papier mâché registration and that has trained tsunami-affected and disabled artisans.

And the limit

One body, one village. The territory's other three enclaves have no equivalent, and therefore no file and no public specification of anything.

Region 2 of 04

Karaikal

காரைக்கால்

161 KM² · TAMIL · IN TAMIL NADU

A hundred and fifty kilometres south of Puducherry, in the Kaveri delta, holding a temple town, a working fishing coast and no registration at all.

Karaikal is delta country: korai grass in the wet fields, a handloom tradition shared with Thanjavur and Nagapattinam across the border, and the Saniswaran temple at Thirunallar, which draws enough pilgrims to keep a brass and votive trade running. It is the second largest piece of the territory and holds nothing on the register. The crafts are the same ones the Tamil Nadu districts around it have; the administration is not.

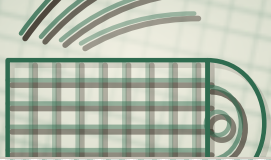
KARAIKAL

KOTTUCHERRY

NERAVY

NEDUNGADU

THIRUNALLAR



IN FIBRE

Karaikal Korai Mats

காரைக்கால் கோரைப் பாய்

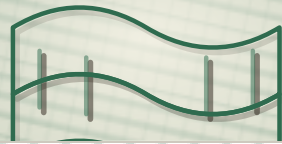
KOTTUCHERRY · NERAVY COMMUNES

Weaving households in the delta villages, largely women

The Kaveri delta's sedge mat, grown in the wet fields, split fine, dyed and woven. Karaikal's version is the same craft as Pattamadai's in Tirunelveli and Thanjavur's across the border. Those are inside a state with an active registration programme; this one is in a union territory that has filed twice in its history.

FIELD-CHECK NO GI

● AT RISK



ON THE LOOM

Karaikal Handloom

காரைக்கால் கைத்தறி

KARAIKAL · THIRUNALLAR COMMUNES

Weaver cooperative societies in the Karaikal communes

Cotton saree, dhoti and towelling, woven through societies on the same pattern as the Thanjavur and Nagapattinam clusters that surround the enclave on three sides. Nothing distinguishes the cloth from its neighbours' except the government that registers the society.

FIELD-CHECK SHARED TRADITION

● AT RISK



IN METAL

Thirunallar Temple Brass

திருநள்ளாறு பித்தளை

THIRUNALLAR COMMUNE

Casting and finishing workshops serving the temple and its pilgrims

Lamps, vessels, bells and votive figures for the Saniswaran temple, one of the most visited Saturn shrines in the south. Like Dharmapuri in Telangana and Bhadrachalam in Andhra, this is a craft held up entirely by one institution's ritual calendar — which is stable until it is not.

FIELD-CHECK PILGRIM ECONOMY

● AT RISK



IN WOOD

Karaikal Boat Building

படகு கட்டுதல்

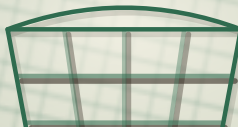
KARAIKAL · NERAVY COMMUNES (THE COAST)

Boatwrights in the fishing hamlets north and south of Karaikal port

Plank-built fishing craft for the Bay of Bengal, made and repaired on the shore. The 2004 tsunami took this coast hard and the rebuilding that followed brought in fibreglass at scale, which changed what a boatwright does more than any market force had in a century.

FIELD-CHECK WORKING CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN FIBRE

Nedungadu Palm Leaf Craft

பனை ஓலைப் பொருட்கள்

NEDUNGADU COMMUNE

Palmyra-working households, largely women

Leaf boxes, fans, winnows and the mats a delta household uses. Listed because it is certainly made and almost certainly uncounted: no survey of this enclave's crafts appears to have been published.

FIELD-CHECK HOUSEHOLD CRAFT

● AT RISK

Region 3 of 04

Yanam

యానాం

30 KM² · TELUGU · IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Thirty square kilometres at the mouth of the Godavari, a thousand kilometres from the capital it is administered from.

Yanam is a single commune on the Gautami Godavari, surrounded by Kakinada district. Its craft is delta craft — coir from the coconut husk, fishing gear, palmyra leaf — and the territory's own Crafts Council names stone work here, which is the single published reference to a craft in this enclave that this volume could find. Everything in this chapter is marked for field check, because there is almost nothing to check it against.

YANAM



IN FIBRE

Yanam Coir and Rope

కొబ్బరి పీచు

YANAM COMMUNE

Household spinners, overwhelmingly women, as across the Godavari delta

Coconut husk retted in delta water, beaten to fibre and spun to rope and yarn. The Godavari districts around Yanam do this at scale and Yanam is part of the same economy; what is not known is how much of it happens inside the thirty square kilometres that are administered from Puducherry.

FIELD-CHECK DELTA CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN FIBRE

Yanam Fishing Gear

చేపల వలలు

YANAM COMMUNE (THE GAUTAMI GODAVARI BANK)

Fishing households on the river and the estuary

Nets knotted and repaired, traps built, and the small river boat made and maintained — the standing craft of every delta settlement on this coast. It is work rather than product, which is why it appears in no craft list anywhere, including this territory's own.

FIELD-CHECK WORKING CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN STONE

Yanam Stone Carving

రాతి శిల్పం

YANAM COMMUNE

Unrecorded; the craft is named but not described

The Crafts Council of Puducherry names stone craft at Yanam alongside Villianur and Thengathittu. That single line is the only published reference to a Yanam craft this volume was able to find. It is printed here exactly as what it is — a lead, not a finding — and establishing what is actually carved here, by whom and in what quantity is the highest documentation priority in the territory.

FIELD-CHECK COUNCIL-LISTED

● AT RISK

One line, in one document

This volume could find exactly one published reference to a craft in Yanam: the Crafts Council of Puducherry's own page, which names stone craft at Villianur, Thengathittu and Yanam. That sentence is the entire documentary record of making in a thirty-square-kilometre enclave of roughly fifty thousand people.

Yanam is a single commune on the Gautami Godavari, wholly surrounded by Kakinada district. The delta around it is one of the densest craft economies in Andhra Pradesh — coir, palmyra, boatbuilding, net making, the lacquer and brass towns a little inland — and Volume VI of this series documents it at length.

None of that documentation covers Yanam, because Yanam is not in Andhra Pradesh. And the Puducherry record does not cover it either, because the institutions that produce that record sit a thousand kilometres away.

This is not an argument that Yanam has no craft. It is close to certain that it has the same craft as the villages across the river. The point is narrower and harder: **an administrative boundary can make a place invisible to every register on both sides of it**, and nobody is responsible for noticing.



1

Ask what is made

A week of household enumeration in one commune. Not a survey instrument — a list of what people actually produce and sell.

2

Photograph it

No useful photographic record of Yanam's crafts appears to be in circulation. That is a day's work to begin fixing.

3

Name the communities

Who works coir, who makes nets, who carves the stone the Council mentions. None of this is written down.

4

Then decide about filing

A registration may or may not be the right instrument. It cannot even be discussed until the first three steps exist.

Why it is invisible

Andhra's craft documentation stops at the state line; Puducherry's institutions are 1,000 km away. Yanam falls between two registers that both think it belongs to the other.

What is almost certainly there

Coir, nets, river boats, palmyra — the standing crafts of every Godavari delta settlement. The surrounding district has them at scale.

The cost of the gap

Every scheme that works through artisan registration — credit, insurance, cluster funding, market access — needs a count. There is no count here to work from.

Region 4 of 04

Mahé

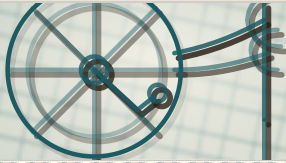
മാഹി

9 KM² • MALAYALAM • IN KERALA

Nine square kilometres on the Malabar coast — the smallest unit in this series by a factor of thirty, sitting inside the densest ritual craft country in India.

Mahé is a strip either side of the Mahé river, entirely enclosed by Kannur district. Kannur is Theyyam country: several hundred ritual forms, each needing headgear, ornament and face paint made by hand, and the shrine villages do not stop at the territory line. Mahé's own craft record is effectively blank — coir, boats and the weaving the Malabar coast does everywhere — which makes it the clearest demonstration in the volume that a register maps administration, not making.

MAHÉ



IN FIBRE

Mahé Coir

കയർ

MAHÉ COMMUNE

Household spinners, as along the whole Malabar coast

Husk retted in the Mahé river and backwater, beaten and spun. Kerala's coir industry, which surrounds this enclave entirely, has a detailed state review running to hundreds of pages. Mahé appears in none of it, because Mahé is not in Kerala.

FIELD-CHECK MALABAR CRAFT

● AT RISK



IN WOOD

Mahé Boat Building

വള്ളം പണി

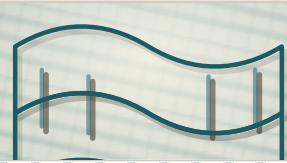
MAHÉ COMMUNE (THE MAHÉ RIVER)

Boatwrights on the river bank

The river and inshore fishing boat of north Malabar, plank-built and repaired in the open. Beypore, forty kilometres south, has a pending geographical indication application and two hundred working craftsmen. Mahé has neither a figure nor a file.

FIELD-CHECK RIVER CRAFT

● AT RISK



ON THE LOOM

Mahé Handloom

കൈത്തറി

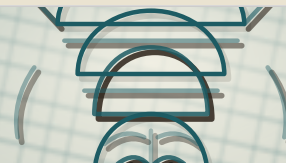
MAHÉ COMMUNE (PALLOOR • PANDAKKAL)

Unestablished; Kannur's weaving belt begins immediately outside the enclave

Kannur district, which encloses Mahé on all land sides, holds a geographical indication for its home furnishings and a weaving tradition that the Basel Mission industrialised in the nineteenth century. Whether any of that ever ran inside the Mahé line, and whether any loom there works now, is unresolved. It is listed as a named gap rather than a going trade.

FIELD-CHECK POSSIBLY ENDED

● CRITICAL



IN FIBRE

Theyyam Ornament at Mahé

തെയ്യം ആഭരണം

MAHÉ COMMUNE AND THE KANNUR VILLAGES AROUND IT

Malayan, Vannan and Velan households attached to shrines in and around the enclave

Several hundred Theyyam forms are performed across north Malabar between December and May, each needing headgear, breast ornament, pleating and face paint made by hand. The shrine villages run continuously across the Mahé boundary. Kerala has not registered this tradition and neither has Puducherry, and the households that make it would be hard pressed to say which register they belong to.

FIELD-CHECK CROSSES THE LINE

● AT RISK

Nine square kilometres, and a season that crosses it

Mahé is the smallest unit in this series by a factor of thirty — nine square kilometres either side of a river, entirely enclosed by Kannur district. Between December and May, several hundred Theyyam performances take place in the villages around it, and the shrine country does not stop at the line.

Each Theyyam form needs its own headgear, breast ornament, waist pleating and face design, made by hand by the performer's own household and made **new for the season**. Volume VIII records this at length as Kerala's largest uncounted craft. The households that do it live on both sides of the Mahé boundary and move across it daily.

Kerala has not registered the tradition. Neither has Puducherry. A family working a shrine two kilometres inside Mahé and a family working one two kilometres outside it are doing identical work under two administrations, and **neither register has a line for either of them**.

Mahé's own record — coir, boats, whatever weaving survives — is effectively blank. Kerala's detailed coir review, which runs to hundreds of pages and counts 135,750 workers, does not include Mahé. Mahé is not in Kerala.



1

The shrine villages

Theyyam country runs continuously through Mahé and out the other side. The performers' households are not organised by territory.

2

The materials

Bamboo, areca spathe, coconut frond, cloth and pigment — all of it from the surrounding Kerala villages.

3

The record

Kerala's craft documentation excludes Mahé by jurisdiction. Puducherry's institutions are six hundred kilometres away.

4

The consequence

A craft practised across a line that neither side's register acknowledges — and no obvious body whose job it would be to fix that.

The smallest unit here

9 km², about a thirtieth of the Puducherry enclave and a four-thousandth of Kerala. It is drawn on this volume's map at twenty-six times scale simply to be visible.

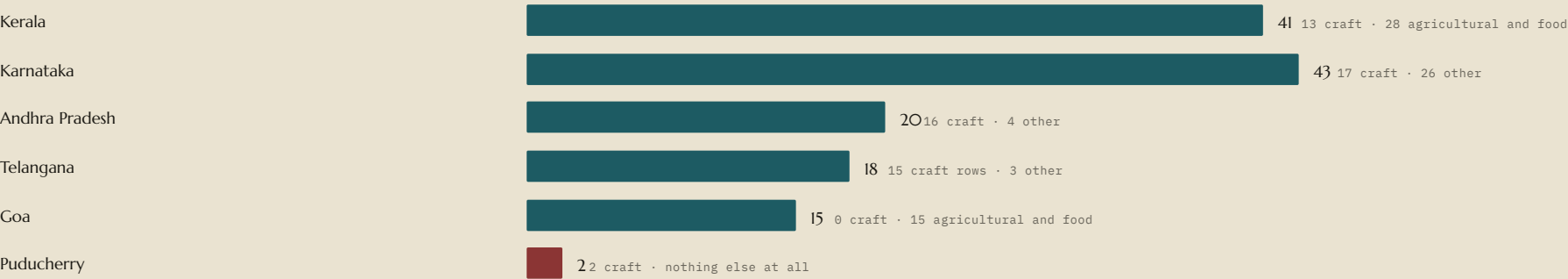
What it shares with its region

Everything: language, monsoon, geology, craft, ritual calendar. What it does not share is a government.

The practical ask

A joint record. The obvious first step is for Kerala's and Puducherry's craft bodies to document the Mahé shrine villages together, which nobody has proposed.

Two filings, and the shape of the whole argument



Total geographical indications held, across the six volumes of this series with a published register. Puducherry's two are the smallest register in the set and the only one that is entirely handicraft.

What the register got right

Both of Puducherry's filings are crafts, both were properly specified, and one of them put a public recipe on the record that will outlast every workshop making it. For a territory of 492 km² with one craft body, that is a creditable use of the instrument.

What it did not reach

Three of four enclaves. Karaikal's korai mats and handloom, Thirunallar's temple brass, Yanam's coir and stone, Mahé's coir, boats and the Theyyam ornament that crosses its boundary. None of it is less deserving than what was filed; none of it had anybody to file.

What a tag cannot do

Travel. A geographical indication is produced by an organisation applying for it, and organisations are local. In a territory whose four pieces are 1,500 km apart, the register maps the applicant, not the craft — and that is true everywhere else too, just harder to see.

Across nine volumes the finding has not moved. Goa protected nothing and is losing crafts. Andhra and Telangana protected almost everything and are losing weavers. Karnataka protected most and turned one craft around. Kerala protected early and then spent twenty years registering rice, while the one craft whose numbers rose — Beypore — has no certificate at all. And Puducherry, at 492 square kilometres, shows the mechanism with nothing else in the frame: **two crafts are protected because one organisation existed to protect them, and three enclaves hold nothing because nobody there applied.** The certificate follows the institution. It is the institution that does the work.

What still needs to be shot

This edition is illustrated with original drawn panels so that it can be read, circulated and costed before the photography budget is committed. Every drawing sits in a live photo slot: put a folder named `photos/` beside this file, name each image after its craft id — `kota-doria.jpg` — and it appears here and in the interactive explorer automatically, with the drawing as the fallback. The explorer exports the full filename list as a spreadsheet. This is the shot list.

Cover and openers

4 region openers need one horizontal hero each: a working hand, not a finished object. Shoot at the printing table, the lathe, the kiln, the pit loom, the quarry face.

Every craft card

One object frame, square, plain mid-grey ground, single soft key light from the left, no props. Consistency across twenty-seven objects matters more than beauty in any one.

Process sequences

Four to seven frames each for a Villianur horse being built in sections, a Thirukkanur figure coming out of its mould, a marbling bath being combed and lifted at the Ashram, and korai sedge being split at Bahour. These four are the volume's highest photographic priority.

Detail macros

The sand-cooled surface of a fresh Villianur firing; the gold tint on a lacquered papier mâché figure; a single pull of marbled paper against its bath pattern; split korai against the light.

The people

Portraits at the workplace, environmental, eye level. Name, age, years at the craft and consent recorded for every single frame — no exceptions, including for children in shot.

The places

The Villianur kilns during the temple car festival week, the Auroville potteries at a firing, Karaikal's boat shore at dawn, the Yanam river bank, and Mahé from the far side of its own river — the last three because no useful photograph of any of them appears to be in circulation.

Credit and consent

Every artisan photographed is credited by name in the caption, and holds a signed release. Two cases here need care. The Theyyam entry around Mahé concerns a ritual in progress and the shrine and the performer's family give permission, not an organiser. And three of the four enclaves have effectively no published craft record, so anyone working from this volume in Karaikal, Yanam or Mahé is doing first documentation — which means asking what people actually make before showing them a list.

Licensing

Commission with full print and digital rights for the trust, and a non-exclusive licence back to the artisan for their own promotion. Artisans should be able to use photographs of their own work.

Specification

Minimum 300 dpi at 200mm on the long edge. Raw retained. Colour-managed to a grey card shot on location — textile and enamel colour is the single most common failure in craft publishing.

This is a first edition, and it is wrong somewhere

Craft mapping is not a publication. It is a register that has to be kept. Twenty-seven entries is a beginning; Puducherry almost certainly holds twice that number, and twenty of the entries here are still marked for field confirmation.

Four things would change the next edition materially, and all four need people outside this office.

1 · Correct an entry

Wrong commune, wrong community, wrong technique, wrong tense — a craft listed as living that has ended, or listed as ended that has not. Corrections are the most valuable contribution.

2 · Add a craft

If it is made by hand, transmitted rather than taught, and still practised, it belongs here — including crafts with no market and no name.

3 · Name a maker

Volume II is the artisan register. A name, a village, a craft and a way to reach them is enough to start a record.

4 · Adopt a commune

Oulgaret, Kottucherry, Nedungadu carry the fewest entries in this edition. Each needs about a week of field survey. Institutions and design schools can take one commune each.

What a good entry looks like

Craft name, in English and the local language · commune and nearest town · community or communities · materials and where they come from · one paragraph on technique · roughly how many households still practise it · whether it is sold, and to whom · your name and how you know.

Who made this, and why

Tisser Artisans Trust was founded in 2015 to work with rural artisans through a value-chain approach — design and product development, producer organisations, market access and fair pricing — with a particular focus on women artisans. It works with a network of artisans across India.

This map exists because that work kept running into the same problem: there was no single register of what a state actually makes, where, and by whom. This is the Puducherry volume of that register.

Standing acknowledgement

Compiled from the public record of the Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai; state ODOP, handloom and handicraft cluster documentation; museum, university and craft survey material; and published reporting on individual clusters. Where sources disagreed, the entry is marked for field check rather than resolved on paper.

All illustration, cartography and diagrams in this volume are original work made for it. The maps are schematic and carry no cartographic authority.



Artisans Trust

Craft mapping initiative · First edition · Working draft
World Trade Center, Mumbai · tisser.in