

HISTORY

Cochin was originally known as Perumpadappu Nad after a village in the Ponnani Taluk of Malabar. The name Cochin was given to the town that came into existence after the formation of the harbour in 1341. Later, the country in the immediate vicinity of the town and finally, the whole territory under the ruling family, Perumpadappu Swaroopam, came to be known as Cochin. Neither in the earlier notices of Malabar nor in the accounts of Pliny (AD 23-79), Ptolemy, Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Marco Polo (AD 1290-93) nor Ibn Batuta do we find any mention of a place named Cochin. The first mention of Cochin is made sixty years after the formation of the harbour by Ma Huan, a Chinese Mohammedan, and later by the Italian traveller Nicolo Conti (AD 1440). These writers, as well as those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, variously called the town Cocym, Cochym, Cochin, Cochi etc. Though believed to be a corruption of the Sanskrit 'go sri', meaning prosperous with cows, the word Cochin's first portion definitely is the Malayalam word kochu meaning small or young. The town is called Balapuri in the Kerala Mahatmyam and other Sanskrit works. Nicolo Conti (15th century) and Fra Paoline in the 17th century say that it was called Kochchi after the river connecting the backwaters and the sea. Some historians believe that Cochin is a modified form of the word Cochazhi, which in Malayalam means small sea. According to some accounts, traders from the court of the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan gave Cochin the name of their homeland. Still another theory is that Cochin is derived from the word Kaci meaning harbour. According to yet another scholar, the place name Cochin is derived from the term Cocha, which is a transfiguration of the Biblical term Cohen.

Prehistory and Archaeology of Cochin

Archaeologically, although Cochin is rich in proto-historic and historic relics, the pre-history of Cochin has always remained a mystery. There has been no clear evidence of Stone Age man inhabiting these regions. H.D. Sankalia has remarked that this absence in paleoliths may be because no search has been made for it or else because of truly geographical reasons. When the neighbouring states of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka have yielded evidence of palaeolithic sites, it is difficult to accept that prehistoric man did not set foot in Kerala.

Vennala is an important site where a Neolithic axe has been found. Cochin forms the central part of the Megalithic belt of Kerala. The most important prehistoric monuments belonging to the Neolithic age seen in the area are dolmens and menhirs containing relics such as bones, stones and other implements, pottery and beads. However, compared to the neighbouring districts of Trichur and Kottayam they are not extensively found here. One of the sites where dolmens are found is Vadattupara in Malayattur Reserve. Compared to the other commonly found dolmens in the neighbouring regions, the dolmens found here are much smaller and cruder in shape. A menhir has also been found in Tripunithura in Kanayannur Taluk.

Kodanad in Kunnathunad Taluk is another important site where, during the Periyar Canal excavation in 1963, relics of Monolithic culture dating from 200 BC to 1st century AD were found. Terracotta male figurines with beard and female forms in worshipping posture along with elephant tusks, potsherds with engravings etc. were found at this site.

Very little is known about the history of Cochin prior to the arrival of the Portuguese as neither inscriptions nor literary works throw much light. Cochin is not even mentioned in any of the earlier foreign notices of Malabar. Neither in the accounts of Pliny, Ptolemy, Marco Polo or Ibn Batuta do we find any mention, though they give detailed accounts of places situated to the north and south of Cochin. Though it is generally believed that Cochin port was formed only as late as 1341 there is also the possibility of its existence as a small harbour even earlier. In 1341 the heavy floods that took place in the Periyar River silted up Cranganore Harbour (Kodungallur). Useless for purposes of trade, this decline in the importance of Cranganore led to Cochin's rise into prominence and commercial supremacy. The Cochin royal family is much more ancient. The ruler of Cochin State following the break-up of Kulasekhara (1102 AD) was

a king whose authority was confined to Cochin and adjoining areas. The Cochin ruler from the Perumpadappu family was the descendant of the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram in the maternal line. They were based at Chitrakudam in Perumpadappu Village till the end of the 13th century.

In the 13th and 14th centuries the Zamorins who had become the masters of a vast dominion in northern and central Kerala, posed a serious threat to the Perumpadappu Swaroopam. Due to this the headquarters was shifted to Cochin around 1405 AD. Accounts of Ma Huan, a Chinese Muslim attached to the suite of Cheng Ho the envoy of Emperor Yong Lo, who visited Cochin in 1409 AD, mentions that the king or the ruler is of solar race and a sincere believer in Buddhism. His account gives details about the types of clothes, houses, classes of men, trade etc. Another account of this time is that of Nicolo Conti, an Italian traveller who visited Cochin in 1440 AD.

Conflict between Cochin and Calicut

By the beginning of the 15th century the Zamorin had grown in power and prestige and acquired suzerainty over the ruler of Cochin. The Zamorin's possession of Cranganore, steadfast ally in the ruler of Edappally, and internal strife among the members of the Perumpadappu Swaroopam were the factors that provided him with a decisive advantage over the Cochin ruler.

Towards the close of the 15th century the internal dissensions in the Perumpadappu Swaroopam gave an opportunity to the Zamorin to interfere in its affairs and effect further territorial conquests. On the eve of the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala, Cochin was a small principality dependent on Calicut. Its ruler was Zamorin's partisan, a member of the Mootha Thavazhi. The Anchikaimals or the five nobles who held sway over Ernakulam and neighbouring territories on the coast also proclaimed their allegiance to the Zamorin and repudiated the authority of the Cochin Raja.

The Portuguese Period

It was during this time that the Portuguese Admiral, Pedro Alveraz Cabral, landed at Cochin on 24 December 1500. The Cochin Raja, Unni Godavarma, received his emissaries with great warmth and friendliness. A treaty of friendship was signed. The Portuguese were allowed to build a factory at Cochin and the Portuguese promised to add Calicut to the Cochin Raja's dominions. At Cabral's suggestion, a few leading Nairs were taken as hostages in the ships but to the Raja's displeasure Cabral left in panic at the sight of the Calicut fleet. Anxious to get Portuguese assistance he took no reprisals against the Portuguese left on shore. Joao Da Nova, the next Portuguese captain who was received with warmth, had to face the hostility of the Zamorin. The indignant Portuguese King sent Vasco Da Gama next and after bombarding Calicut and annihilating the Arab merchants, he arrived at Cochin on 7 November 1502. Alarmed at the Portuguese commercial triumphs at Cochin, the Zamorin in anger at the Cochin Raja's refusal to heed his ultimatum, marched into the heart of the Cochin Kingdom at the head of a large army. The war between Calicut and Cochin began on 1 March 1503. Cochin Raja was soon forced to take refuge in a temple at Vypeen. The Zamorin ordered the town of Cochin to be burnt and went to blockade the island of Vypeen. However, on account of the monsoon setting in, he raised the blockade and after fortifying Cochin with a ditch and rampart and leaving a strong force there, departed for Calicut. He intended to renew the blockade after the Onam festival in August. The arrival of a small Portuguese fleet under Francisco De Albuquerque alarmed the Calicut army at Cochin and they soon left the city in panic. The ruler of Cochin was then conducted triumphantly to Cochin and re-established in the possession of his kingdom.

After this the Portuguese extracted concessions from the Raja who entered into a treaty with the Anchikaimals, who repudiated their allegiance to Zamorin. The Portuguese also obtained permission from the Raja to erect a fort at Cochin for the protection

of the Portuguese factory. A convenient spot close to the edge of the river was chosen and the foundation stone laid on 27 September 1503. The Raja supplied all the materials and workers for the work. The fort was a square structure of 183 yards surrounded by a deep moat. The fort, when completed, was christened Manuel Kotta or Fort Manuel after the reigning king of Portugal. The two Albuquerque's sailed from India in 1504, leaving Duarte Pacheco with about 150 Portuguese and 300 native soldiers and some vessels to defend Cochin. The Zamorin once again tried to regain Cochin but his attempts were thwarted by the Portuguese when, after 5 months of war, the Zamorin was forced to return. The Raja, Unni Rama Koil II, continued to rule with Portuguese help. From now onwards a convention was in force for about a century and a half that the succession to the throne of Cochin should be confined to the Elaya Thavazhi branch.

Albuquerque (1509-1515) reversed several policies of his predecessors. He also entered into a treaty with the Zamorin of Calicut. During this time the headquarters of the Portuguese Government of India was transferred from Cochin to Goa in 1510. Before he left, he made an abortive attempt to convert the Raja to Christianity. His immediate successors were incompetent. The only important development of the period was an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Cochin Raja to attack Calicut (1521). On his visit to India in 1524, Vasco Da Gama, who was appointed as Viceroy, visited Cochin. During the Portuguese period, notable events were the war with Vadakkumkoor, the building of Mattancherry Palace during Veera Kerala Varma's reign (1537-65) the building of the Jew Town and the convention of the Synod of Diamper during Kesava Rama Varma's reign (1565-1601). In the latter half of the 16th century, two foreign travellers, Caesar Frederick and Ralph Fitch, visited Cochin. Another Englishman, Sir Thomas Herbert, described Cochin on the eve of Dutch capture as the chief place the Portuguese have in the Indies where they carried on trade in spices, drugs and all other merchandise.

The causes for the decline of Portuguese in Kerala, which began soon after the time of Albuquerque, were both internal and external like the intermarriages, forcible conversions, religious persecution etc.

Dutch conquest of Cochin on 7 January 1663

The Dutch East India Company began to despatch ships to India from 1595 onwards and after many encounters with the Portuguese and their allies they succeeded in establishing their power in several places in India. Under Admiral Van Goens, Quilon was captured in December 1658. Veera Kerala Varma, the senior member of the Mootha Thavazhi branch of the Cochin royal family appealed to the Dutch for help against the ruling family of Cochin. While he had the Zamorin and the chiefs of Vadakkumkoor, Thekkumkoor and Edappally as his allies, the ruling Raja had the support of the princes of Chempakasseri, Parur and Valluvanad as well as that of the Portuguese. The Dutch decided to interfere and Van Der Meyden landed at Njarakkal with a Dutch fleet and after taking over the fortress of Pallippuram handed it over to the Zamorin. On their way back to Colombo, Paliath Achan, the leading nobleman of Cochin and the minister of the Vettat princes boarded Van Goen's ship and sought Dutch protection. Accordingly a treaty was concluded on March 12, 1661 by which Achan placed himself under Dutch protection and undertook to serve them faithfully.

According to the Batavia Council's decision to renew the campaign on the Malabar Coast in 1661, a Dutch fleet was despatched to Cochin under the command of Admiral Van Goens. It captured Quilon on 7th December and laid siege to the Cranganore fort on 3 January 1662. Finally they landed troops at Vypeen. They built a fort called New Orange and bombarded

Cochin from there. A battle was fought in front of the Mattancherry Palace and Cochin forces were forced to withdraw with heavy loss in men and material. Van Goens compelled Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi to recognise her deposed nephew as the King of Cochin. In the meantime, the Dutch converged on Portuguese Cochin from three directions. The siege of Cochin lasted for nearly two months. Though the prospects of Dutch success seemed bleak initially, in the end, with the help of the Anchikaimals, the Dutch occupied Ernakulam. Though the Portuguese still held out in Cochin, soon they fell short of provisions with the result that the Dutch General stormed the Cochin Fort assisted by the troops of Veera Kerala Varma and the Paliath Achan. The attack that lasted for 8 days and nights resulted in the victory of the Dutch. Having established themselves as the masters of Cochin, the Dutch made it their headquarters in Keralam.

During this period, Cochin Fort was reduced to about one-third of its original size. A small Pentagon Fort was built. After the conquest of Cochin the Dutch installed Veera Kerala Varma, Chazhur adoptee into the Mootha Thavazhi, as the ruler of Cochin. The first formal treaty between the Raja of Cochin and the Dutch East India Company was concluded on 20 March 1663. Dutch possession of all the territories previously held by the Portuguese, protection of Cochin State from foreign aggression, erection of fortresses, Dutch monopoly of the import trade in opium etc. were some of its terms.

Mysorean Invasion

Though Haider had invaded Malabar in 1766 it had not affected Cochin. But when Haider's army descended again on Malabar in 1773, Cochin wasn't spared. The Cochin Raja had to pay a lakh of Ikkeri Pagodas (4 lakh rupees) as subsidy to Mysore. In September 1776 the Mysore forces under Sirdar Khan marched into Cochin and occupied Trichur. The Raja was forced to become a tributary of Mysore and to pay a nuzzar of 1 lakh of Pagodas and 4 elephants and annual tribute of 30,000 Pagodas. Haider accorded to Cochin a special position in his empire. Meanwhile Rama Varma (1775-1790) had succeeded Raja Kerala Varma (1760-1775) and Sakthan Thampuran had become the virtual ruler of the State in 1769. The hereditary Prime Ministership of Cochin also came to an end during this period.

Cochin was left unmolested in the early years of the reign of Tippu Sultan, who succeeded Haider Ali. The alliance with the Cochin Raja was seen as an important factor in achieving his ambition of conquering Travancore. Though the Raja offered to act as a mediator, he refused to meet Tippu Sultan when he was summoned in 1789 and this turned Tippu Sultan into a determined enemy of Cochin. Tippu made a proposal to purchase Cochin, Cranganore and Azhikotta from the Dutch but the Dutch and Travancore had entered into negotiations and the sale of these forts to Travancore was effected with great speed. Tippu who took strong objection to this drew the attention of British Madras Government to it but his demands weren't met. He soon sent his army and demolished the Travancore lines and Travancore and Cochin lay at the invaders mercy. The British Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, sent a British contingent under Colonel Hartley to help the Travancore army. He also started negotiations with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Mahrattas for a joint attack on Seringapatam. Alarmed at these developments Tippu withdrew from the scene. With this the drama of the Mysorean invasion came to an end.

Genealogy of the Royal Family

Details about the Cochin royal families before the advent of the Portuguese are not very clear, though there are references to some of their names in some books. It is said that one Veera Kerala Varma, the son of Cheraman Perumal's sister was the first ruler.

Details of the rulers are given below in chronological order.

Unni Raman Koyil I (? - 1503)

He was the ruler when the Portuguese Naval Commander, Cabral, reached Cochin on December 24 1500 and was received with all honours when the latter called on the Maharaja at the Calvathy Palace. The Zamorin of Calicut attacked Cochin and in the fierce fighting the nephew and two other Princes died. He abdicated the throne in 1503 in favour of the fourth in the line of succession. He passed away in 1510. Diogo de Couto has recorded his name as Unni Godavarma Koyil.

Unni Raman Koyil II (1503-1537)

During his time the Portuguese laid the foundations of their fort in Cochin. In 1505, India's first Portuguese Viceroy, Francisco De Almeyda, reached Cochin and presented a golden crown from the King of Portugal to him. After Unni Raman Koyil I passed away in 1510, instead of resigning and becoming Perum Padappu Mooppil according to the tradition, he, with the help of the Portuguese continued as the Maharaja. During his time it was established that only the younger havazhi could be crowned. He passed away in 1537.

Veera Kerala Varma (1537-65)

Also known as Gangadhara Veera Keralan, during his time, St. Xavier came to Cochin (1542). The Portuguese Governor looted Palluruthy Temple in 1549. In 1555 the Portuguese built the Mattancherry Palace and presented it to the ruler (however, as the Dutch rebuilt the palace later, it got the name Dutch Palace). Moorish assassins in the employ of the Vadakkumkoor Raja assassinated him on the 10th of February 1565.

Kesava Rama Varma (1565-1601)

He is the most famous ruler during of the Portuguese era. It was during his time (1567) that Jews settled in Cochin and built the Jew Town near the Palace. He gave and to the Konkis in Mattancherry for establishing Thirumala Devaswom. Don Alexis de Meneses, who was the Archbishop of Goa in 1599, came to Cochin and convened the Synod of Diamper during his rule.

Mazhamangalam Narayanan Namboodiri and Balakavi were poets at his court. Ulloor opines that the Maharaja was the author of the beautiful poem Rasakreeda.

He was deeply interested in pilgrimages and on the 27th of Kanni in the Malayalam year 776 he performed the Thulapurushadanam. He passed away on 3rd May 1601 at Kasi, here he had gone on pilgrimage.

Veera Kerala Varma (1601-15)

It was during his time that the first British ship reached India (1609). During his reign Muringoor Thavazhi ran out of successors and permission was given to the eldest member to adopt the second eldest member (Goda Varman) from Elaya Thavazhi. Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri was a member of his court. It was during this time that Gosrinagaravarnam and Veera Keralamprasasthi were written by Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri, who was a member of the royal.

On 22nd Kanni in the Malayalam year 790 he killed Ittikumara Menon and captured the Mathilakam. On 15th April 1615 he passed away.

Ravi Varma (1615-24)

His reign was unremarkable. On the 30th of September 1624 he passed away.

Veera Kerala Varma (1624-37)

Mathilakam Angadi was captured during his reign. On the 11th of July 1937 he passed away at Cochin.

Goda Varma (1637-45)

During his reign Muringoor Thavazhi was merged with Elaya Thavazhi. Adoption was made to Elaya Thavazhi from the Mootha Thavazhi and the Palluruthy Thavazhi. Ulloor has recorded that the Maharaja was the younger brother of the earlier ruler, Veera Kerala Varma.

Veera Rayira Varma (1645-46)

Ulloor has recorded that he was the brother of Veera Kerala Varma and Goda Varma who ruled before 1645. He passed away in the Malayalam year 821 on the 2nd of Karkkidakom. After his death the Elaya Thavazhi ceased to have any male members.

Veera Kerala Varma (1645-50)

He was adopted from the Palluruthy Thavazhi. As mentioned earlier, during the reign of Goda Varma (1637-1645) when there were no male members in the Elaya Thavazhi, male members were adopted from the Mootha Thavazhi and the Palluruthy Thavazhi. When there were internal conflicts between the adoptees from the two havazhis, the Portuguese helped the Palluruthy Thavazhi and VeeraKerala Varma, who was adopted from there, was crowned the Maharaja superceding Rama Varma from the Mootha Thavazhi. The members of the Mootha Thavazhi were then exiled. With the help of the Zamorin, Rama Varma and his brother tried to capture the throne, but did not succeed.

Veera Kerala Varma granted Thirumala Devaswom Sanketam to the Konkini's of Mattancherry and gave civil and criminal rights inside the Sanketam to them. He passed away in 1650. He adopted a Prince from Chazhiyur.

Rama Varma (1650-56)

He was adopted from Chazhiyur. He passed away in 1656.

Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi (1656-58)

When Rama Varma passed away, Valiyamma Thampuran took over as Regent. Actually, the Portuguese crowned her the Queen to keep the members of the Mootha Thavazhi at bay. Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi is the only female who ruled Cochin. The Rani's real name is not known, Gangadhara Lakshmi being a title.

At the instance of the Portuguese, the Rani adopted five male children from Vettath and Ayiroor. It is mentioned in Padappattu that the eldest Prince's name was Unni Rama Varma. He was crowned as the Maharaja in 1658 when the Rani gave up the throne.

Rama Varma (1658-62)

He was the eldest among those adopted from Vettath. Veera Kerala Varma, who belonged to the Mootha Thavazhi, had left the country after they were denied the right to rule the country. He joined with the Chazhiyur Thavazhi and tried to recapture the country but failed. From Chazhiyur the Mootha Thavazhi adopted a prince with the name of Veera Kerala Varma. Veera Kerala Varma of the deposed Mootha Thavazhi and Veera Kerala Varma who was adopted from

Chazhiyur went to Colombo seeking Dutch help and under the leadership of Dutch Commander van Goens reached Quilon on 7th December 1661 and captured the Portuguese Fort. In January 1662 they captured Cranganore Fort. Following this van Goens entered Mattancherry. The Maharaja, Rama Varma, and Veera Kerala Varma (adopted from Chazhiyur) were killed in a battle in front of the Mattancherry Palace. Henrick van Rhee de captured Gangadhara Lakshmi as a prisoner. However, Goda Varma who was next in the line of succession was at Ernakulam and escaped harm.

Goda Varma (1662-63)

Goda Varma became the Maharaja when Rama Varma was killed. On 7th January 1663 the Dutch captured Cochin Fort. The next day Goda Varma surrendered to the Dutch. With the end of his rule, the Portuguese era in Cochin's history came to an end.

Veera Kerala Varma (1663-87)

The Dutch era in the history of Cochin began with his reign. Veera Kerala Varma of the Mootha Thavazhi passed away on the ship he was coming back from Colombo. The Dutch crowned the prince who was with him as the Maharaja (adopted into the Mootha Thavazhi from Chazhiyur). A gold crown with the insignia of the Dutch East India Company engraved on one side was made. Veera Kerala Varma was crowned with it by the Dutch Commander van Goens with great fanfare. An agreement made in 1679 banned princes from interfering in the affairs of the Government. Van Rhee de presented the third volume of Hortus Malabaricus to the Maharaja.

Rani Gangadhara Lakshmi became seriously ill in 1664 and passed away in 1665. She was 100 years old at that time. The Dutch and Veera Kerala Varma signed four agreements in 1663, 1665, 1681 and 1684.

The Maharaja passed away at Trichur on the 11th of the month Kumbham in the Malayalam year 862, (February 1687).

Rama Varma (1687-93)

He was the last Maharaja of the Mootha Thavazhi. In 1689 six princes and four princesses were adopted from Chazhiyur. He passed away on the 19th August 1693. Ravi Varma (1693-97) He was the eldest of the princes adopted from Chazhiyur in 1689. He had suzerainty over the temples of Tiruvalla, Haripad and Kuttamperur to the south of Cochin. He passed away in November 1697 while at Tiruvalla to sort out disputes regarding conduct of poojas at the Tiruvalla Temple.

Rama Varma (1697-1701)

He was the second eldest among the princes adopted from Chazhiyur in 1689. He signed the fifth agreement with the Dutch in 1698. According to it, he was given the right to have a share from the sea taxes. He passed away in 1701 at Irinjalakuda.

Rama Varma (1701-21)

He was the third in line among the princes adopted from Chazhiyur. He was the most famous Maharaja of the Dutch era. Though the Dutch did not trust him, they had high regard for his political and administrative skills.

In 1715 two princes and a princess were adopted from Chazhiyur. It is said that they were the Maharaja's own nephews and niece. Originally, the Perumpadappu Maharajas ascended the throne and were crowned at Chitrakudam at Vanneri in Perumpadappu. But after it was captured by the Zamorin this was not possible. At the beginning of his rule, this Maharaja had taken an oath that his crowning ceremony will be held only at Chitrakudam. However, he could not do it. In honour of their predecessor's oath that could not be achieved, subsequent Maharajas of Cochin did not wear a crown.

With the help of the Dutch, Rama Varma recaptured many places from the Zamorin. It is said that he was very cunning and fond of wars. At the ripe old age of seventy he passed away at Trichur in 1721.

Ravi Varma (1721-31)

Vischer Padre has written that Rama Varma hated Ravi Varma. From this it can be assumed that Ravi Varma was not one of the princes adopted in 1715, as those adopted then were reportedly Rama Varma's own nephews and niece of whom he was very fond.

He had some misunderstandings with Paliath Achan and Achan was dismissed. However, later, the younger generation of Paliyam reconciled the differences. He passed away in 1731 at Irinjalakuda.

Rama Varma (1731-46)

He was the last prince adopted from Chazhiyur in 1689. According to the agreement with the Dutch he was forced to wage war against Travancore. But because of the intolerable misdeeds of the Dutch he withdrew from the war. He passed away at Kareekkatt in January 1746.

Veera Kerala Varma (1746-49)

He was one of the two princes adopted from Chazhiyur in 1715. It was during his reign that the Dutch were defeated in the war against Travancore at Kulacchil. He passed away at Tripunithura in January 1749.

Rama Varma (1749-60)

He was the eldest son of Ikkavu Thampuran who was the daughter of one of the princesses adopted from Chazhiyur in 1689.

During his reign Travancore attacked Cochin State from the south and Zamorin from the north. The 1753 agreement between the Dutch and Travancore adversely affected Cochin. Help from the Dutch also stopped. He passed away in August 1760 at Cochin and was cremated at Tripunithura.

Veera Kerala Varma (1760-75)

He was the second son of Ikkavu Thampuran and the younger brother of Rama Varma. This Maharaja was the direct uncle of Sakthan Thampuran according to Puthezath Raman Menon. But this is most likely not correct. The Dutch Commander of Cochin wrote a letter to Batavia (in Indonesia – the then headquarters of the Dutch East India Company) in 1761, in which he has written that the Maharaja of Cochin had passed away and that his brother, Veera Keralam, had succeeded him.

He was a mild mannered and not very efficient person. The prince next in line of succession was also not possessed of administrative acumen. So, the Dutch Governor in consultation with the Travancore Maharaja unofficially entrusted the administration to the efficient, brave and spirited Sakthan Thampuran in 1769.

In 1766 Cochin became a Samanthal Kingdom of Hyder Ali of Mysore.

Rama Varma (1775-90)

According to legend he was the uncle of Sakthan Thampuran. During this time Sardar Khan captured Cochin and began his stay at Trichur. He passed away following an attack of smallpox at Tripunithura on 16th August 1790.

Rama Varma (1790-1805)

This Maharaja became famous as the Sakthan Thampuran (Powerful Maharaja). He started ruling the State from 1769 onwards itself and after his uncle's death in 1790 formally became the Maharaja. As soon as he started his reign (1790 August) he reached an understanding with Mr. Pouni about the English supremacy over Cochin State. On January 1791 it was officially accepted. With this the English era in the history of Cochin began. He was the most brave, strong and diplomatic Maharaja in the history of Cochin. He passed away in September 1805 at Trichur.

Rama Varma (1805-09)

He was the eldest son of Sakthan Thampuran's aunty (mother's younger sister). Though he was a great Sanskrit scholar, mild mannered and generous he was not very capable. During his time the actual rule was in the hands of Paliath Achan.

He and his brother converted to Madhava Matham and also popularised it. He is the author of Sundarakanda Pana. He passed away in January 1809 at Vellarapilly.

Ravi Varma (1853-64)

He was not efficient or capable like his brother, who preceded him. In 1856 Divan Sankara Varier passed away and Venkittarayar became the Divan. After his dismissal, Thottekatt Sankunni Menon became the Divan. The Maharaja passed away while at Tripunithura in February 1864.

Rama Varma (1864-1888)

He was not in good health and easy going by nature. It was Divan Sankunni Menon who looked after the affairs of the State. In 1879 Sankunni Menon resigned because of poor health. After that his brother Govinda Menon became the Divan. After a long time the Kings of Cochin and Travancore visited each other at Trivandrum and Tripunithura. In 1876 he went to Madras and visited the Prince of Wales, the eldest son of Queen Victoria. The British Government bestowed on him the order of K.C.S.I. (Knight Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India). He built the Puthen Bungalow and Mani Malika of Tripunithura. He passed away while at Tripunithura in August 1888.

Kerala Varma (1888-95)

He was the brother of Rama Varma. He was good in English and was a mild mannered Maharaja. The British Government honoured him with the order of K.C.I.E. when he was the Ilaya Thampuran itself.

In 1890 Govinda Menon resigned from the post of Divan. Following this C. Tiruvenkatacharya became the Divan. Following his death V. Subrahmanya Pillai became the Divan. In 1893 Valiya Thampuran visited Kasi, Gaya and Calcutta. He passed away in September 1895 at Tripunithura.

Rama Varma (1895-1914)

He was a very efficient ruler. In 1897 Divan Subrahmanya Pillai retired. After that P. Rajagopalacharya (1897-1901), L Locke (1901-02), N. Pattabhirama Rao (1902-07), A.R. Banerjee (1907-14) etc. became Divans. British Government honoured the Maharaja with the orders of K.C.S.I., G.C.S.I., and G.C.I.E. It was during his time that the railway line from Shornur to Cochin was built. Because of a difference of opinion with the British Government he gave up the throne. He passed away in 1932 January at Trichur.

Rama Varma (1914-32)

J.W. Bhor (1914-19), T. Vijayaraghavachari (1919-22), P. Narayana Menon (1922-25), T.S. Narayana Iyer (1925-30) and C.G. Herbert (1930-35) became Divans during his period. He passed away at Madras in March 1932.

Rama Varma (1932-41)

In 1935 R.K. Shanmugham Shetty became the Divan. Though the Maharaja was an inefficient ruler, because of the efficiency of Shanmugham Shetty his rule became progressive. The expansion of Cochin harbour was completed and the Ernakulam High Court was opened at this time.

This Maharaja was very much interested in the affairs of the temples and cultural matters. He passed away while at Chowwara in April 1941.

Kerala Varma (1941-43)

He was the brother of Valiya Thampuran who passed away while at Madras in March 1932. He was known as 'Midukkan' Thampuran. After Shanmugham Shetty's retirement in 1941, A.F.W. Dixon became the Divan. The Maharaja passed away while at Tripunithura in October 1943.

Ravi Varma (1943-46)

He was the brother of Kerala Varma. George Boug (1943-44) and C.P. Karunakara Menon (1944-47) were the Divans of Cochin during his time. He passed away while at Tripunithura in February 1946.

Kerala Varma (1946-48)

Because of his idea of creating 'Aikya Keralam' by merging British Malabar, Cochin and Travancore into one state, he was known as the 'Aikya Keralam Thampuran'. He passed away while at Ernakulam in 1948.

Rama Varma (1948-64)

He was the last Maharaja of Cochin State. He became famous as Parikshit Thampuran. On 1st July 1949, Cochin and Travancore merged to form Tiru-Cochi State. The Maharaja's rule came to an end with that. He ruled as a Maharaja only for one year. After that he continued as Cochin Valiya Thampuran. He passed away while at Tripunithura in 1964.

The Divans of Cochin

Events leading to the integration of Cochin and Travancore

The anti-British movements all over India under the leadership of Indian National Congress had its echoes in Cochin also. In the late 1930s the District Congress Committee made itself active in the public life of Cochin. In 1938, a scheme of Diarchy was introduced in Cochin. The experiment in Diarchy did not satisfy the progressive sections of the population of Cochin. Hence, in 1941 a new political organisation, the Praja Mandalam, was formed.

In September 1948, Praja Mandalam got a clear majority in the first elected legislature. This was the first election held in India on the basis of universal adult franchise to a legislature. By this time Praja Mandalam had merged with the Indian National Congress and the first Congress ministry assumed office in Cochin with E. Ikkanda Warier as Chief Minister on 20th

September 1948. During the tenure of this ministry, the State of Cochin was merged with Travancore on 1st July 1949 to form the new state 'Travancore- Cochin'.

In June 1812, Col. Munro, the British Resident took the administration of Cochin into his own hands in order to restore order in the State. He was, in fact, the first Divan of Cochin State. In 1818 he was succeeded by Nanjappayya who was succeeded by Seshagiri Rao (1825-1830). Edamana Sankara Menon (1830-35) the next Divan was an unscrupulous administrator. His misappropriation over a lakh of rupees led to criminal proceedings against him and when found guilty, he was sentenced to 5 years rigorous imprisonment. Venkatasubbayya succeeded Sankara Menon in 1835. The administration of Sankara Warier who was the next Divan from 1840 to 1856 marked a new epoch in the history of Cochin. He served four successive Rajas and laid the foundation of a modern administration. Vanuatu Rao (1856-60) was the next Divan but for a short period. Thettikol Sankunni Menon, the son of Sankara Warier, was the Divan of Cochin from 1860 to 1879 under whom public works of all kinds received great fillip. Sankunni Menon was succeeded by his brother Govina Menon (1879-89). The next Divans, C. Tiruvenkatacharya (1889-92) and V. Subramonia Pillai (1892-96), continued the policies of Sankunni Menon. Subrahmanya Pillai retired from Divanship in 1896 and the office was then held successively by P. Rajagopalachari (December 1896 – August 1901), S. Locke (August 1901 - September 1902), N. Pattabhirama Rao (September 1902 - March 1907), A.R. Banerjee (1907-14), J.W. Bhore (1914- 19), T. Vijayaraghavachari (1919-22), P. Narayana Menon (1922-25), T.S. Narayana Iyer (1925-30), C.G. Herbert (1930-35), Shanmugham Shetty (March 1935 - June 1941), Komattil Achyutha Menon (June-October 1941), A.F.W. Dixon (October 1941 - November 1943) and then Sir George Boag (November 1943 – August 1944). He was succeeded by C.P. Karunakara Menon whose period of Divanship saw far-reaching constitutional changes that culminated in the abolition of the age-old Divanship and the establishment of responsible government in Cochin.

In July 1949, during the reign of Rama Varma Parikshit Thampuran, Travancore and Cochin were integrated with the consent of the popular cabinets then functioning in the two States and the State of Travancore and Cochin came into existence.