

The Advent of the Portuguese



Church of St. Francis, Cochin. In it are the remains of Vasco-de-Gama

The Portuguese landed at Calicut in 1498 under the leadership of Vasco-de-gama. In pursuance of some quarrel with the Arabs resulting in the seizure of the pepper belonging to the Arabs and the setting fire to the houses of Portuguese, the latter sailed to Cochin where they got a warm reception from Unni Ravi Varma who was then the ruler of Cochin. The Zamorin of Calicut demanded a surrender of the Portuguese criminals to him. The Cochin Raja declined to comply with

this demand on the ground that they were refugees before him. This led to the march of Zamorin's forces in 1503 to Cochin. The first battle fought at Alangud ended in a defeat of the Zamorin's forces. The Zamorin continued his attempts and scored some victories with the help of some quislings in Cochin. But with the aid of the Portuguese army under Portuguese Governor Albuquerque the Zamorin's forces were defeated at a decisive battle at Kumbalangi. During the regime of

Unni Rama Varma and his successors Unni Raman Koil and Veera Kerala Varma a series of battles were fought between the Zamorin and Cochin in almost all of which Cochin assisted by the Portuguese were able to score splendid victories. The defeat of the Edappilly Raja and the Vadakkumkoor Raja who assisted the Zamorin against Cochin deserves special mention in this connection. But in 1561 the Zamorin succeeded in securing the secret assassination of Veera Kerala Varma through his own courtiers.

From 1565 to 1615

Although no clear trend of history is available regarding the events from 1565 to 1615, it is known that two rulers, Ravi Varma and Veera Kerala Varma continued to fight the Zamorin with success. The most important event during the regime of Veera Kerala Varma is said to be the capture of Mathilakam from the Chief Ittikumara Menon who was siding with Zamorin against Cochin. This Raja built a fort at Thiruvanchikkulam and organised a strong Navy.

The Dutch in Cochin

The advent of the Dutch in Cochin opens another eventful chapter in Cochin History. On the demise of Sree Rama Varma in 1656, an adoption to the throne became necessary. The Portuguese advised the adoption to be made from a separate *thavazhi*, the Vettathunadu family. This infuriated the *senior thavazhi* from which Veera Kerala Varma sought the assistance of the Dutch. The Dutch took advantage of this and came to Cochin to fight the Raja and support the claims of Veera Kerala Varma. In a series of battles the Dutch came out victorious. Pallipport, Vypeen and Ernakulam were conquered by the Dutch. The Cochin Fort happened to be the only stronghold of the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese. This Fort was finally attack-

ed by the Dutch and in 1663 the Portuguese and the Cochin Raja Sree Rama Varma were compelled to surrender. As a result, Sree Rama Varma fled from Cochin and Sree Kerala Varma was installed as the Raja of Cochin. The Portuguese power also ended with this. One of the terms of the agreement between Veera Kerala Varma and the Dutch was that all the Portuguese possessions should be handed over to the Dutch. This was accordingly done. Although Sree Kerala Varma ascended the throne with the help of the Dutch, in a short time he found himself absolutely in the clutches of the Dutch. The agreement between him and the Dutch had practically made him subservient to the Dutch. The monopoly trade in pepper and spices was given to the Dutch. The right for the administration of justice among the native Christians of the coastal areas also vested with the Dutch. The Dutch influence over the Raja developed to such an extent that even in the appointment of the Diwan the Raja was not given a free hand. Though Sree Veera Kerala Varma tried his best to escape from the clutches of the Dutch he could not succeed in his object. Successors of Veera Kerala Varma also found themselves at the mercy of the Dutch. It was not until 1698 that the original agreement with the Dutch was modified on slightly favourable terms to the Cochin Raja. During the time of Sree Rama Varma (1701 to 1722) an attempt was made to make the Dutch fight the Zamorin. In this the Cochin Raja gradually succeeded. A series of battles between the Dutch and the Zamorin ensued. But here again in the battles of Chettuvaya and Oorakam the Zamorin was defeated and Dutch continued to be in power.

Marthanda Varma and Cochin

Travancore rose in power and influence during its great ruler Marthanda Varma who, being a great soldier and

statesman, launched an ambitious policy of aggression against the neighbouring kingdoms. In 1731 he conquered Quilon. Alarmed at the meteoric rise of Marthanda Varma the rulers of Kayamkulam, Puzhakkad, Vadakkumkooer and Cochin entered into a pact against Travancore. The ruler of Quilon who was a prisoner in Travancore somehow escaped from the prison and re-organised his forces with the assistance of Kayamkulam. Marthanda Varma proceeded to fight the joint forces of Quilon and Kayamkulam. In the battle which ensued the Raja of Kayamkulam was killed and his brother sued for peace. The Dutch also were defeated in their attempt to stem the rise of Travancore. Subsequently, on the request of Chazhur Thampans, Marthanda Varma proceeded against Cochin. At Alwaye the forces of Travancore and Cochin met and Cochin sustained a defeat. In the treaty which ensued Cochin had to surrender Karapuram. Marthanda Varma next attacked Chembakassery. The Cochin Raja sent a contingent to help Chembakassery. This infuriated Marthanda Varma. In 1753 in the battle of Ambalapuzha Marthanda Varma's forces scored a great victory and several Cochin Chiefs were taken prisoners. In 1754, again, Marthanda Varma's forces invaded Cochin. The Palaces of Kanayannur, Kureekad, etc., were set fire to. The Travancore Army captured Mamala, Udayamperoor, Kandannad and Kunnathunad and Travancore Army camped at Arookutty. Though the Cochin Raja sought the help of the Dutch, it was not forthcoming. At this critical juncture a treaty was concluded between Travancore and Cochin on the mediation of Paliath Valia Achan who was then prisoner at Trivandrum. But the end of one trouble saw the beginning of another. The Zamorin renewed his invasion of Cochin once again and launched a simultaneous attack on several places in Cochin. Alangad and Parur were taken possession of by Zamorin's forces. The Zamorin post-

ed his armies at Alwaye, Verapoly, Manjunnal, Trichur, Myranam, etc. The Chief of Ennamavoo joined hands with the Zamorin. Several prominent chiefs in other parts of Cochin also sided with the Zamorin. In 1760 the Raja of Cochin, Rama Varma died. His successor Rama Varma entered into a treaty with Travancore to the effect that Travancore will help Cochin in driving away Zamorin's forces and Cochin will give Alangad and Parur to Travancore for the services thus rendered. Marthanda Varma of Travancore, accordingly deputed a strong army under the leadership of Dilani. This army had a series of successes against Zamorin's forces who were driven from one place to another. Decisive battles were fought at Cranganur and Chelakkara. The Zamorin realised the strength of his opponents and sued for peace in 1763. In the treaty which ensued Zamorin agreed to give Rs. 1,50,000 to Travancore as damages, to be on friendly terms with Travancore and not to molest Cochin any more. Thus, though Marthanda Varma began with the invasion of Cochin, it was he who finally saved Cochin from falling a prey to the Zamorin.

Hyder Ali and Tippu vs. Saktan Thampuran

The rise of Hyder Ali in Mysore sounded the death-knell of the Zamorin. The first march of Hyder's forces into Zamorin's territories resulted in a treaty whereby the Zamorin agreed to pay a cess to Mysore. The non-payment of the cess infuriated Hyder who marched his forces against Zamorin. The Zamorin knowing that he had no chance of success against Hyder committed suicide. Hyder thus became the undisputed master of Zamorin's territories. The representative of Hyder in Malabar required the Cochin Raja to pay Rs. 4 lakhs per annum to Mysore. The Raja had no other go but to agree to this. In 1769, Saktan Thampuran began to handle the reigns of



Tippu camped in the Maharaja's Palace, Trichur for some time. The flag staff planted by him near the Palace has now been covered by a banyan tree

administration in Cochin. His diplomatic dealings with Hyder brought back to Cochin Kandanisteri, Arthat, Anjoor, Kattakambal, Kadavalloor, Korattikara, etc. Tippu who succeeded Hyder in 1782 was an ambitious conqueror. His idea was to bring the whole of Kerala under his rule. On certain pretexts Tippu marched his forces against Travancore. By this time the Cochin Raja entered into an alliance with the British. Big forts were built at Cranganur, Ayakotta and several other places. But Tippu broke open the forts. In the battle which ensued Travancore scored a victory. Tippu lost his men and materials and also broke his leg. He was, therefore, forced to retreat. In 1790 again Tippu marched on Travancore. This time he would have met with success but for the unprecedented floods in the Periyar and the unexpected attack on Sreenagar by the British. Tippu had, therefore, to return to the rescue of Sreenagar. In 1792, a treaty was entered into between the British and Tippu according to which Malabar became a Bri-

tish possession. A commission was appointed to decide the claims of Travancore and Cochin. Though Cochin preferred a claim for Kavalappara, Thenmala, Malappuram, Chettuvayi, Cranganur, Vahneri, Parur, Kunnathunadu and Alangad, only Cranganur was given back to Cochin. The last remnants of Dutch power in Cochin also disappeared in 1795 when Napoleon conquered Holland and the Dutch government decided to hand over their possessions in Kerala to the British to avoid their fall into French hands. These events opened a new chapter for Cochin as thereafter, Cochin had no fear of aggression from outside and the rulers of Cochin could concentrate on the internal administration of the State.

No ruler in Cochin has earned so lasting a reputation as Saktan Thampuran. The deeds of Saktan Thampuran are so great, unique and multifarious that he has become a legendary character in Cochin-History. Saktan Thampuran began to handle the reigns of administration even before he was actually installed. From



Peechi Dam Site

to 10,000 acres of existing wet lands will be given supplemental supply of water when required

d) 20,000 acres of kole lands will be saved from drought during summer months.

The scheme further provides for the Trichur town water supply at the rate of 40 gallons a day per head for an estimated population of one lakh.

Progress of work.—The work involved in this project consists of the construction of a masonry dam across the Manali river at Peechi, the excavation of canals and certain preliminary items.

The Masonry Dam.—The construction of the masonry dam is programmed to be completed in four stages, viz. the completion of the earth work and rock-blasting to approved levels and the raising of the dam to 15'00 by April 1949, the further raising of the dam to plus 190'00 by April 1950 and still further raising to plus 230'00 by April 1951. All the remaining works are scheduled for April 1952. These items are estimated to cost Rs. 54 lakhs. Of the work thus

scheduled till April 1949, earth work, excavation and rockblasting to the value of 2.5 lakhs have been completed and the masonry work just started.

The canal excavation.—This item consists of seven parts. Of these, the excavation of the right bank main canal from the dam site down to 10/2 was scheduled to commence from September 1948 and completed by May 1950. The work is progressing very satisfactorily and may even be completed before the scheduled time.

Another item, the construction of the masonry aqueducts at Mile 6/2 and 7/5 of the right bank canal started in September 1948 and scheduled to be completed by May 1950 is showing good progress and is expected to be over within the scheduled time. The investigation of the left side canal is also nearing completion. The construction of cross drainage works from head down to 10/2 has been scheduled to commence in May 1949 and completed in August 1950. The preparation of the estimates of this work is already over and tenders have

been called for. There are only three more items of work to be taken up. They have been originally scheduled to commence in September 1949 and January 1950. It is, therefore, not time to take up these.

Preliminary works.—Preliminary items like the construction of a temporary wooden bridge across the Manali costing Rs. 40,000, the opening of a metalled approach road to Peechi costing Rs. 55,750 and the construction of quarters for the Engineer's staff at the dam site have been completed. The construction of quarters at 105 Vaniampara Road is already in progress. Another important item of preliminary work is the Electrical Installation. This was programmed to commence in July 1948 and completed in August 1950. This is nearing completion. The work for water supply is also under-way. The laying of 4" pipes is complete, the necessary pumps have been obtained, the pick up dam is put up and the construction of water tanks is nearing completion.

The above picture of progress so far made in this big project would show that the various branches of the work in this direction have progressed according to the schedule and some completed or expected to be completed even before the scheduled period.

No room for Scepticism.—Scepticisms have been expressed in some quarters as to whether this scheme will be completed early and whether the project will actually yield the anticipated benefits. Both these are unfounded. The details of progress

given here will convince anybody that there is not the slightest room for doubt about the completion of this work in time if every thing goes well. Another doubt expressed in certain quarters is whether this scheme will be a success if the North East Monsoon fails. Those who entertain this doubt seem to think that if the North East Monsoon in Thulam fails, the water level of the reservoir will be very low with the result that sufficient water for irrigation purposes will not be available. The following facts will show how unfounded this doubt is. Existing records go to show that the average rain fall in the Peechi area is 115 inches annually. Allowing the same percentage of run-off, evaporation etc. as allowed for similar schemes like the Malampuzha reservoir project of the Madras Government, it is calculated that the reservoir will be full by the middle of Karkadagam and will be overflowing during the second half of Karkadagam and the whole of Chingam. Thus, in the beginning of Kanni the reservoir will be having its maximum capacity. The reservoir, therefore, does not depend upon the North East Monsoon. On the other hand, if that monsoon fails, this reservoir will be able to give supplemental water supply to the existing wet lands, in addition to the supply to the newly converted lands. The reservoir is so designed as not to fail even in one year out of 15 years. On the otherhand, in 10 out of 15 years there will be supply for 10,000 acres of a third crop.