

INSTALLATION CEREMONY

Early History

NO record has been found that could furnish information as to how the installation ceremony came to be celebrated at Mattancheri and what the circumstances were that led to its being performed there. It is stated that soon after the State came under the influence of the Portuguese, an installation took place in 1505 with great pomp and ceremony and that the then Regent—Rama Varma—was crowned with a crown of gold set with jewels in recognition of the glorious and gallant resistance against the Zamorin's invading forces.

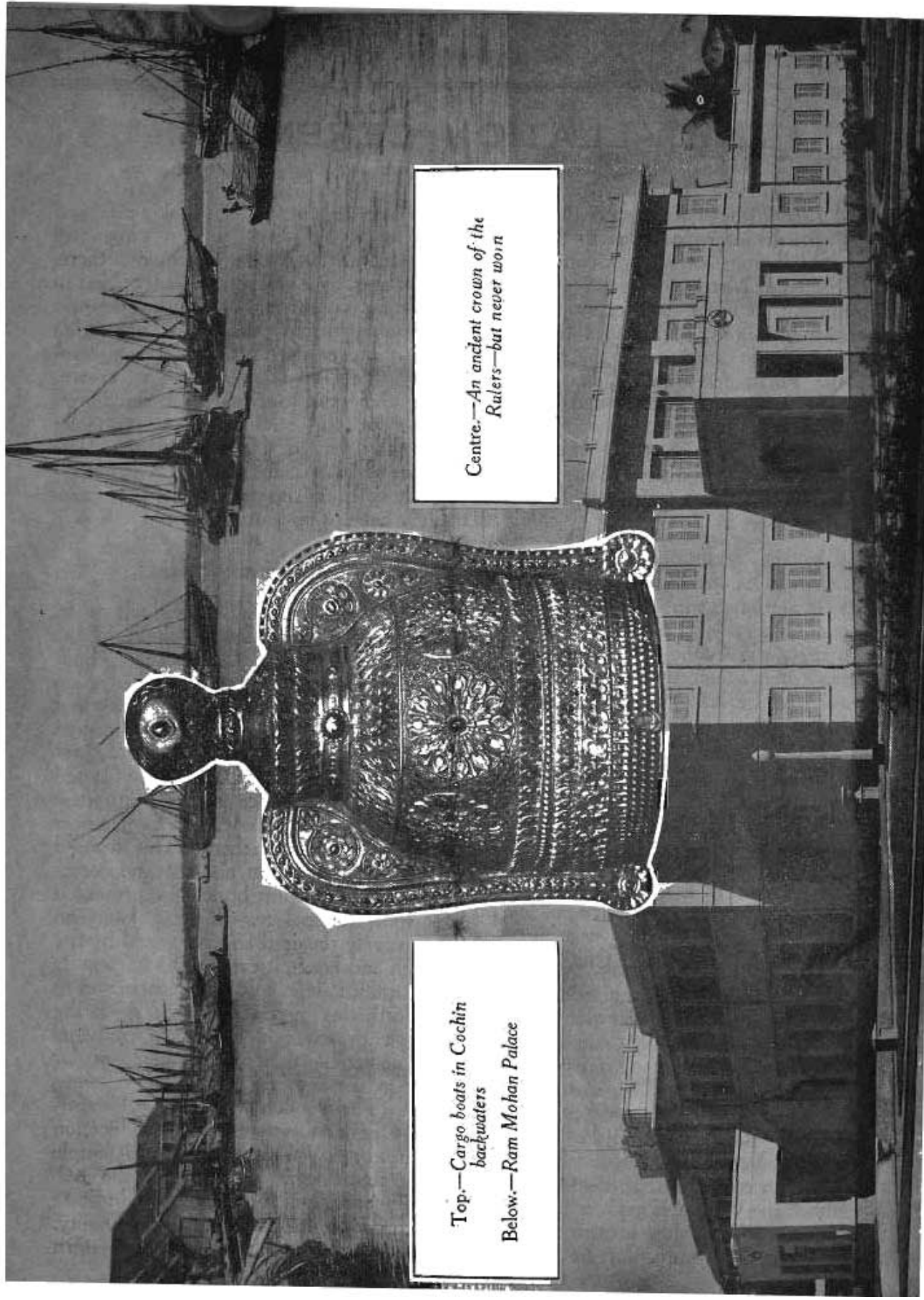
After the decline of the Portuguese power in India and the final capitulation of their settlement in Cochin in 1663 the Dutch General installed Veera Kerala Varma Raja in Cochin and presented him with a crown which bore the arms of the Dutch East India Company. It is probable that this installation followed a precedent sanctified by usage and custom. The details of an installation ceremony are given in *Grandhavaris*. In one of them it is stated that *ari ittu vazcha* (the ceremony of commencing the rule or reign of a Raja by throwing raw rice by a particular Brahmin) is to be performed at Thiruvanchikulam and *kiritam vachu vazcha* (the ceremony of wearing the crown) is to be celebrated at Chithrakutam.

There is an interesting episode connected with the coronation ceremony. In the war between Cochin and Zamorin many villages in north Cochin were conquered by Zamorin. One of them was Chithrakutam situated in Perumpadappu Village where the Rajas used to be crowned. Raja Rama Varma who reigned from 1698 to 1722, having been disappointed at getting back the Village, is said to have taken a solemn oath on his accession to the musnad that he would not be crowned

anywhere except at Chithrakutam and that he would never wear a crown till he went through the ceremony there. Unfortunately Cochin never succeeded in regaining possession of Perumpadappu and Rama Varma's successors respecting his oath never after performed the ceremony nor did they wear a crown. The choice of Cochin must have been made for the celebration of ceremony after the loss of Chithrakutam. The Palace at Mattancheri has figured prominently as being the palace where the ceremony has been performed.

Mattancheri Palace

The Palace at Mattancheri where the rulers of the State are installed on the musnad is, according to Baldeus, "built with bricks and mortar after the European way with apartments very spacious and lofty". It is a palace of quaint design built by the Portuguese in 1555 and presented to the Raja of Cochin. It is stated that the imprudence of a Portuguese officer led to the plunder of a temple near the palace at Mattancheri. This aroused the Raja's indignation, and that the Portuguese to pacify him built and presented to him the palace. It was later on extensively repaired and renovated by the Dutch and hence it came to be known as the Dutch Palace. It was constructed to suit orthodox needs and modes of life though presence of European elements are detectable. It is a quadrangular building divided into long and spacious halls. The wooden ceilings reveal excellent, expert craftsmanship. The location of the Pazhayannur Bhagavathi temple in the central court yard and of the two temples of Vishnu in the premises indicate the composite faith of the Ruling Family. A lamp kept always lighted in the western

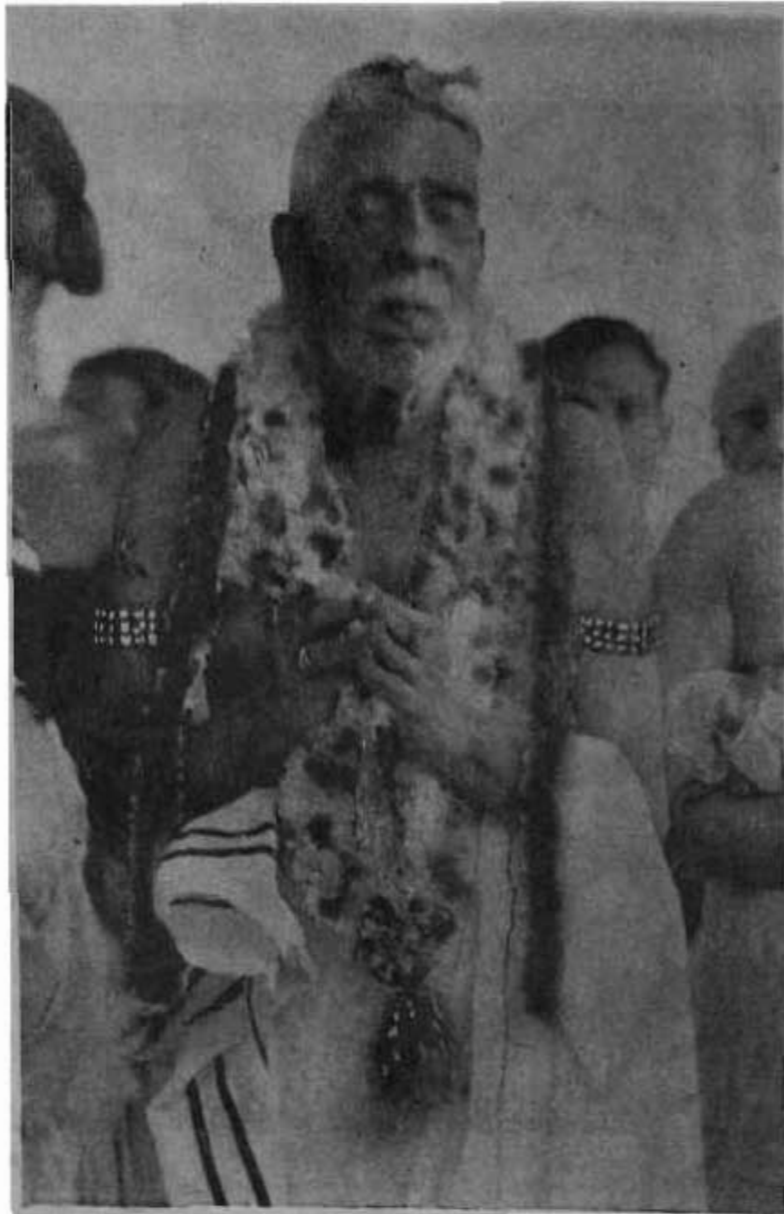


Centre.—An ancient crown of the
Rulers—but never worn

Top.—Cargo boats in Cochin
backwaters
Below.—Ram Mohan Palace

wing of the Palace perpetuates the memory of that defiant warrior king "Saktan" Thampuran. The palace is famous as the home of the Cochin murals.

The ceremonies connected with the installation of the Ruler are partly religious and partly political. The religious ceremonies connected with the installation of



H. H. The Maharaja offering prayers in the temple

H. H. Sri Ravi Varma were performed on the 7th November in the ancient and historic palace at Mattancheri. His Highness arrived at the western gate of the palace on that day at 8-50 a.m. and was received by the Diwan Mr. A. F. W. Dixon, Mr. T. K. Nayar, Minister,

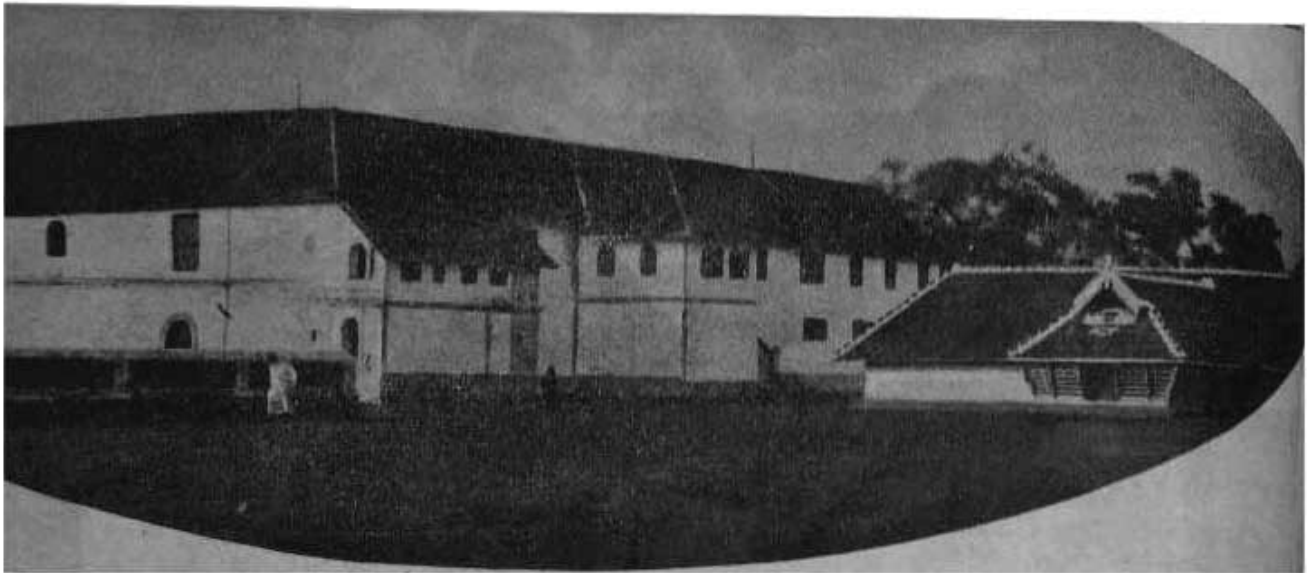
Mr. Thomas Manjuran, Chief Justice, Rama Varmha Thampuran, Secretary to Government and other officials. The procession that escorted His Highness was formed on the lines laid down by custom and precedent. The Muslims of 3 streets of Kochangadi led the procession,



The Huzur Secretariat was at "At Home" to Mr. A. F. W. DIXON, C.I.E., I.E.



the eve of his departure from the State. The photo was taken on the occasion



The Mattancheri "Dutch Palace"

playing on pipes and drums, followed by nautch girls, Indian Christians playing on violins, pandivadyam, and chenda. Then came villakars, lancers and other paraphernalia. After reaching the temple precincts in the Gandhaka ara (in the Palace) His Highness worshipped at the shrine and afterwards took his seat on a cot spread with a black blanket and white cloth. His Highness then received the nuzzar of a plain gold ring presented by the Naickaruvættil Achan. Then the Mandala Mudaliar made his Thirumulkazhcha. After a bath, donned with State jewels, His Highness worshipped in the Bhagavathi temple, Siva temple and

Vishnu temple and afterwards proceeded in procession to Palliarakavu temple and the Chirakal Palace through the streets decorated with thoranoms, flags, festoons, and ornamental arches. At the Chirakal Palace nuzzar was presented by the headmen of ten nayar families in the State known as "Menons of Cochin".

His Highness then visited Vadakke Madham, Thekke Madham and Metappilliar Madham where customary nuzzars were presented by the priests. His Highness afterwards returned to the Mattancheri Palace. The religious functions came to a close at 12 noon.

The Hill Palace—The Residence of the Maharajas



THE DARBAR

WITH all the oriental pomp and parapharmelia and amidst scenes of splendour and pageantry, the installation Darbar was held at Ernakulam on the 14th November. A distinguished gathering inside the Hall witnessed the ceremony.

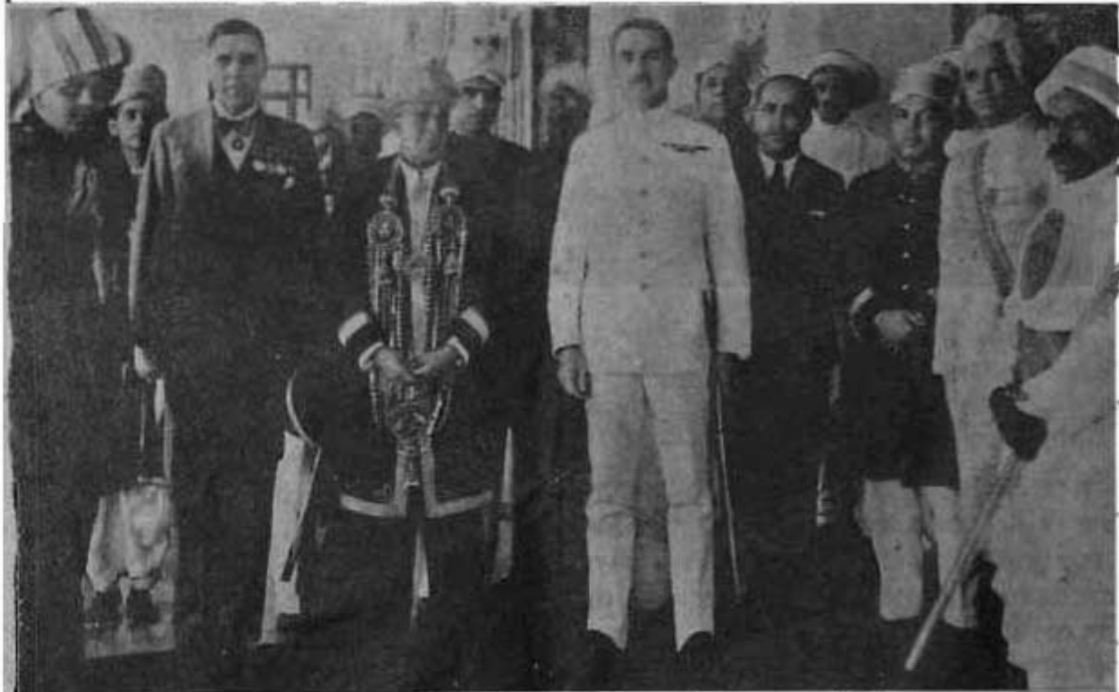
After the party had been assembled and seated His Highness Sri Ravi Varma, Maharaja of Cochin was conducted to the "Musnad" by Mr. H. J. Todd, Resident for the Madras States. The Resident then read the following proclamation.

"WHEREAS His Highness Sir Sri Kerala Varma, G.C.I.E., the late Maharaja of Cochin, departed this life at Trippunittura on the 13th October 1943,

corresponding to the 27th Kanni 1119 M.E., his brother, the Elaya Raja, RAVI VARMA, who has been recognised by His Excellency the Viceroy on behalf of His Imperial Majesty the King Emperor as lawful heir and successor, is accordingly proclaimed Maharaja of Cochin and the inhabitants of Cochin are hereby directed to acknowledge and obey him as the Maharaja and Ruler of the State.

Given under my hand at Ernakulam this the Fourteenth day of November in the year of Our Lord One thousand nine hundred and forty three."

After the reading of the proclamation the Resident conveyed to H. H. the Maharaja the following message from His Excellency the Viceroy.



H. H. The Maharaja, the Resident for the Madras States, the Diwan and officers—after the Darbar

"I am commanded by His Excellency the Viceroy to convey to you his sincere congratulations on this auspicious occasion and to express the hope that your rule may be long and prosperous.

And I should like to add my congratulations and very sincere good wishes.

Your Highness has been called to this high office at what must surely be the most critical time in the history of mankind: at a time when not only the courage of man is being tested but when the very fitness for survival of the things man believed in is being put to the test.

We have a right to feel some satisfaction at the way we have stood the test so far : but we know there are still stern trials ahead. We have a right to feel hopeful of the final result only if our efforts are redoubled without relaxation or complacency.

The Cochin State has been privileged to play a not inconsiderable part in this great trial and I feel confident that under

your wise guidance supported by the loyal and spontaneous co-operation of a grateful people, without which, I need hardly remind Your Highness, your individual effort can be of little avail, the Cochin State will continue to play a worthy part in the common effort not only to achieve victory but in the still graver task of achieving a just and lasting peace. May God keep you strong and steadfast in that purpose."



The Darbar Hall, Ernakulam

His Highness then made the following reply.—

"Mr. Resident, I am grateful to you for the kind message of good wishes and congratulations which you have conveyed to me on this occasion on behalf of His Excellency the Crown Representative. Please convey my sincere thanks to His Excellency. I take this opportunity of expressing to His Excellency my devotion and loyalty to His Majesty the King Emperor.

I have been called to this ancient Gadi at a momentous time in the world's history. I request you to assure His Excellency that in the great struggle in

which the United Nations are engaged the resources of my State are at the disposal of His Majesty the King.

It is a source of great satisfaction to me that this State has already made a contribution to the common cause, which, in proportion to its size, is, I believe, second to none in India. The contribution in respect of personal service under the Crown is particularly noteworthy, so, to mark the occasion of my Installation I propose to donate a sum of 1 lakh of rupees to the Cochin State Military Benevolent Fund, now being

launched, for the benefit of ex-Servicemen from this State, in the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, and the Cochin State Forces.

My subjects have been and are undergoing trials and suffering due to food shortage, but their spirit is undaunted, and you may assure His Excellency that this State will not slacken its efforts until final victory is achieved. Earnestly praying God Almighty for the speedy victory of the United Nations in their noble fight against the forces of evil, I once more thank you for your

kind message of good wishes and congratulations."

After the reply, the proclamation (in Malayalam) was read to the troops outside the Darbar Hall by Rama Varmha Tampuran, Secretary to Government, on behalf of the Diwan of Cochin. The Darbar came to a close after the presentation of "ather and pan" to the Resident and other invitees to the Darbar.

In commemoration of the installation fourteen convicts were released from the Central Jail.

THE INSTALLATION DARBAR

[RAO SAHIB K. ACHYUTA MENON, B.A., B.L.]

THE Installation Darbar held at the Darbar Hall, Ernakulam, on the 14th November to mark the auspicious occasion when His Highness the Maharaja of Cochin ascended the time-hallowed and sacred throne of his illustrious ancestors, is the second of its kind to be held at Ernakulam, the capital of the State. The ceremony used to be held for long, at the Palace at Mattancheri, until His Highness, the late lamented Maharaja of revered memory, broke the precedent and made what to the bulk of his devoted subjects was a welcome change. Earlier still, as the forgotten pages of history reveal, the Kiritadharanam or Coronation of the Rulers of Cochin took place at Thiruvanchikulam, or Vanchimanagar, the capital of the Chera monarchs and the Perumals, whose lineal descendants the Rulers of Cochin are. The religious functions connected with the grand ceremony took place in olden times in the temple at Thiruvanchikulam, dedicated

Mahadeva, Lord Siva, the tutelar Deity of the Perumals. It is to this temple that Danvers refers when he writes, "the Zamorin had by this time possessed himself of the Kingdom of upper Cranganur, which was in the possession of the Portuguese and had besides within its walls the pagoda, in which the former Kings of Malabar used to be crowned". The period of the Zamorin's war under reference was 1614 A.D. It is well known that it was with special reference to the temple at Thiruvanchikulam which was in those far-off-days, the leading temple in all Kerala, that the Rulers of Cochin, then called Perumpadappu, assumed on ascending the Gadi the title of "Vira Kerala Gangadhara Thirukoviladhikarikal", a term met with in all official documents and Theetoorams executed by the Maharajas of Cochin up till modern times.

Speaking of Theetoorams or solemn documents executed by His Highness, it

is interesting to note that even today they are engrossed on leaves of the palmyrah, or "Cadjan", a term borrowed from the Malay language. The palmyrah was the tree, sacred to the Chera monarchs. Chera King is often spoken of in the Tamil classics as "he that wears the palmyrah garland". In pre-paper days, for all official correspondence and all accounts in the State, palmyrah leaves were used. It was, if I remember correct, in 1031 M.E., i.e. 1856 A.D. or thereabouts that, by an order of Government, paper began to be used in place of cadjan leaves, in all the offices under Government. The Diwans of this State who come from outside are often mildly surprised at the Cadjan Theetooram handed over to them, in token of their appointment. The practice is thousands of years old and links them with the prime ministers of the Chera monarchs, one of whom under the name of Villavan-Kodai (leader of the land forces) is immortalised in the pages of the famous Tamil classic, the Silappadikaram. The sword handed over to the Diwan even now on assumption of office signifies protection of the weak and punishment to the guilty and is strongly reminiscent of the leadership of the land forces which the prime ministers of the Chera monarchs were invested with.

Invitees to the Darbar could not have failed to notice or enjoy the gracious act of courtesy extended to them by His Highness, in the way of gift of gold covered pan rolls and otto. The practice is however of comparatively recent origin. It originated in 1054 M.E. with the Maharaja who is popularly spoken of as the Maharaja, who demised in the month of Mithunam. Diwan Sankunni Menon, who was an inveterate "diarist" makes a note on this, in his diary for 5th March 1878. "H. H. does not want any more flowers at Darbars and thinks it will be more convenient to give otto and

pan". His Highness' successors, while accepting the change, retained the flowers also.

The release of prisoners on the day of accession has its roots in the dim past. We read in the Silappadikaram supposed to be written in or about 125 A.D. that it was the usual practice to release prisoners even on the King's Birthday, which was then called Perunal. Manifestations of joy on occasions like this are by no means uncommon in other countries. Few, I think, now remember that on the 1st January 1877, the Government of India, in honour of the assumption by Queen Victoria of the title of Empress of India paid the debts of all persons who were in civil custody in India, for sums less than rupees one hundred.

The Installation Darbar still retains many of its sacred traditions and picturesque observances, in spite of the fact that the paraphernalia of modern civilisation have robbed it of much of its oriental pomp and old-world charm. One misses the beautiful Dholies and palanquins, in which the privileged guests for the function, arrived in old days, to the accompaniment of the humming music of the carriers or "boys" as they were then called. One misses also the gaily decorated boats with even more gaily attired rowers, with their primitive paddles racing across the waters in front of the Mattancheri Palace, carrying passengers to and fro, for the ceremony. One misses again the tiger skin shields and the flashing swords of the Officers of State, in days when they had not exchanged steel and buff for velvet and gold; but with all that the ceremony is still full of medieval associations and its observances still carry us in memory, back to the days when our Rulers and their devoted and loyal followers, our ancestors, were busy making Malabar History.