

COCHIN TALUK.

By C. Kunhi Kannan.

Cochin was formerly a small place on the bank of a river, but in the year 1341 A.D., certain changes took place in the large backwater between the sea and the Western Ghauts, and whether from cyclone winds, or earthquake, or other cause not now traceable, the island of Vypeen was formed—a circumstance commemorated by an era of its own known as Putuvaippu or Putuveppu, meaning “new deposit.” The traditions of Cochin show that violent and uncertain changes have always been experienced in this neighbourhood in exceptional south-west monsoons. All along this portion of the coast important changes are quoted. Islands and lakes have been formed; towns and harbours have risen and had their day of prosperity, but have now so completely retired that, after the comparatively small interval of five centuries their former sites and names are not recognizable. Cochin itself was built in the tenth year after Vasco da Gama arrived on the coast, and its advantages

being very apparent, the large colonies of white and black Jews and other important portions of the community quitted Cranganore, which from time immemorial had been the headquarters of trade and the most convenient harbour north of Quilon.

Cochin, which lies between Lat. 9° 58' 7" N., Long. 76° 17' E., is bounded on the *north* by the Native State of Cochin and by the backwater, on the *south* by the Cochin State, on the *east* by the river and the Cochin State, and on the *west* by the sea. In extent Cochin taluk, with its outlying pattams, is about 1½ square miles. The population of the town of Cochin in 1881 was 15,698 (8,374 males and 7,324 females) against 13,588 in 1871. The population of 1881 was classified as follows:—

Hindus	..	..	..	4,383
Muhammadans	..	..	..	2,942
Christians	..	..	..	8,360
Others	..	..	..	13
Total ..				15,698

of whom 1,262 were "under instruction," 3,240 "instructed," and 11,196 "illiterate, including not stated." In the census of 1881, there were 2,411 occupied and 467 unoccupied houses, giving an average of 6.5 persons per occupied house. The population of Cochin, with its outlying pattams, was 17,161 in the census of 1881.

The revenue of the Cochin taluk in fasli 1295 (1885–86) was Rs. 14,467.

The Municipal Act was introduced into Cochin in 1866. The receipts of the Municipality during the official year 1885–86 amounted to Rs. 20,479, whilst the charges were Rs. 18,914. The Municipal receipts were chiefly derived from rates on houses and lands, taxes on arts, taxes on vehicles and animals and carts, licences, income from markets, fees, fines, etc.

The expenditure incurred was for public works, education, sanitation and medical service, supervision and management, and miscellaneous.

There are nine Christian churches in the town of Cochin, two Protestant, six Roman Catholic and one Syrian.

And there are two Hindu temples, Ammankovil dedicated to Bhagavati and Janardana Devaswam in Amaravati, belonging to Chetties.

On 31st March 1886 there were 16 schools, middle, primary, aided and unaided, with an attendance of 996 pupils.

The town of Cochin is sub-divided into the following pattams:—

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Kotta. | 8 Tirumala Devaswam. |
| 2 Kottavadu. | 9 Vania Teruvu pattam. |
| 3 Vernede garden or Jatika Valappu. | 10 Valiya Pattayatodu pattam. |
| 4 Mackenzie Valappu. | 11 Cheriya Pattayatodu pattam. |
| 5 Tamaraparamba pattam. | 12 Veliparamba pattam. |
| 6 Odattakal. | 13 Chulikkal pattam. |
| 7 St. John pattam. | 14 Kalveti. |
| | 15 Vypeen. |

The outlying pattams subject to Cochin with particulars of their population, etc., are noted below :—

Names.	Number of houses.	Population.		Number of churches.	Remarks.
		MALES.	FEMALES.		
1 Tumboji pattam ..	15	30	34		Near Alleppy, about 30 miles south of Cochin.
2 Attalakkad pattam ..	2	3	2		About 6 miles north of No. 1.
3 Kettur pattam ..	7	19	19		About 12 miles east of No. 2.
4 Manakkodatt pattam ..	21	37	47	1	About 8 miles north of No. 2.
5 Tekkeparampunkara pattam ..	4	13	10		Close to No. 6 in the south.
6 Antony Fernandez pattam ..	1	4	2		About 4 miles south-west of No. 7.
7 Mundamveli pattam ..	54	119	125	1	About a mile east of No. 8.
8 Domingo Fernandez Palakkal pattam ..	11	28	26		About half a mile east of Nos. 9 and 10.
9 Teiveppu pattam ..	35	77	79	1	South of No. 11 and adjacent to it.
10 Santiyava pattam ..	40	90	94	2	Do. do.
11 St. Louis pattam ..	5	15	17		About half a mile south of No. 12.
12 Belicho Rodrigues pattam ..	1	2	3		About 2 miles south of No. 13.
13 Duvadatt Louis pattam ..	47	116	120	1	South of Nos. 14 and 15, and contiguous to them.
14 Sondikkal Guvankur Silva pattam ..	1	2	2		West of No. 15 and adjacent to it.
15 Hendrick Silva pattam ..	42	161	168		About 3 miles south of Cochin.
16 Baman Turutta pattam ..	10	24	20		About 3 miles north-east.
17 Palipot hospital paramba ..	7	28	21		About 15 miles north of Cochin.

The town of Cochin, which is situated on the southern side of the entrance of the most considerable river in Malabar, is a place of consequence as a naval depot. The place was noted formerly for ship building and several ships were built here for merchants of Bombay, measuring from 600 to 1,000 tons. The land in the back of Cochin is all low. Facing Cochin to the north lies the island of Vypeen formed, as already noted, in A.D. 1341. The many old granite Dutch buildings give a picturesque appearance to the town.

Tradition asserts that St. Thomas, the apostle, extended his labours to Cochin in A.D. 52 leaving behind him the colony of Christians now called Nassaranis. It is further said that in the first year of the Christian era the Jews settled on the site of their present colony. Afterwards they established their headquarters at Cranganore (Kodungallur), where they remained until driven away in the sixteenth century by the Zamorin's Mappillas. From copper plates still extant it is put beyond doubt that the Jewish and Syrian churches were firmly established in Cochin State by the eighth and ninth centuries.

In 1530, St. Francis Xavier preached here and made many converts. In 1557, the society of Jesus published at Cochin the first book printed in India. In 1585 Cochin appears to have been visited by the English traveller, Ralph Fitch, who with a band of adventurers came by the way of Alleppo, Bagdad and the Persian Gulf to India.

In 1663 the town and fort were captured from the Portuguese by the Dutch, and the English retired to Ponnani. The Dutch greatly improved the place and its trade, building substantial houses after the European fashion, and erecting quays, etc. In 1778, Adrian Van Moens completely altered the fort providing it with new ditches and building seven strong bastions.

In 1806 the English blew up the cathedral, destroying at the same time some of the quays, the best houses in the place and the fort. In 1814 Cochin was formally ceded to the English by treaty.

The Protestant church (formerly the principal chapel of the Franciscan monastery, which escaped the general destruction above referred to) is a plain massive building with a nave 142 feet long by 51 feet broad. Its exact age is uncertain; but from inscriptions on the floor it certainly existed before 1546, and is therefore the oldest European church in India, except perhaps the Calicut church. It contains some curious old Portuguese and Dutch tombstones. The facade of the church was surmounted by an ornamental bronze cross and a weather-cock, 6 feet high, which could be perceived some 10 miles off at sea; but in 1865 these were pulled down. The building occupied as the Deputy Collector's office was formerly the Roman Catholic convent.

The Custom house is situated on the boundary limits of British and native Cochin. The chief native quarters are Calvetti bazaar, peopled by Mappillas, and Amaravati, inhabited by chettis and goldsmiths.

In 1796 a fiscal (Dutch Superintendent of Police, Justice of the Peace and Attorney-General in criminal cases), a criminal and civil court and a court of appeal were constituted at Cochin. The college for the guardianship of orphans and minors (a Dutch institution answering to the Court of Wards), a separate orphan-house, an hospital for lepers at Palliport, and a matrimonial college were also continued. In 1800, Cochin was placed under the Malabar Commissioners; in 1801, the Cochin Commission was abolished and it was placed under the principal Collector of Malabar.

The establishment at Cochin was afterwards reduced to that of a Principal Sadr Amin and Joint-Magistrate and of a Tahsildar-Magistrate. The hospital at Palliport, 15 miles north of Cochin, is still maintained.

The present officers of Cochin are a Deputy Collector with the powers of a 1st-class Magistrate and Sub-Judge, a Sheristadar-Magistrate with 2nd-class powers under the Deputy Collector, a Civil Surgeon, a Port officer, an Assistant Superintendent of Sea Customs, and an adhikari with a menon and two peons. There are a Telegraph office, a Post office, a Police station, a jail, and also a travellers' bungalow maintained by the municipality.

The Cochin light-house is on a small mound which formed the bastion of the old fort to the south of the harbour. It is a white laterite column, on which a fixed white catadioptric fourth order light is exhibited 100 feet above the sea level and seen 15 miles off.

This new light-house is 800 yards to the south-west by west of the port flagstaff, where the old light used to be hoisted on the top of the cathedral tower. The best anchorage in the Cochin roads is from $5\frac{1}{2}$ to $6\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms soft ground, 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles off shore.

The stream of tide is very strong and its times of change are very irregular, influenced by the evaporation from, or the fall of rain upon, the immense area of backwater, of which the Cochin river-mouth is the outlet. At the anchorage abreast the bar, the ebb sets west north-west, but the tendency of that tide is to the north-west; its racing over the sand-banks on the northern side of the river entrance always produces heavy breakers there, which a ship's boats should avoid. The bar at the river's mouth is a narrow strip of land having 13 feet on it at low water, but the rise and fall being only 3 feet at spring tides, pilots will only take in vessels drawing less than $14\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The bar is marked by two buoys. The best channel does not always remain at the same spot. There is at times a surf on the bar occasioned by the strong ebb running out against the sea breezes when there is any swell outside.

The river inside is deep 7 to 9 fathoms. Repairs to sailing vessels are executed at Cochin.

The parade ground of Cochin occupies the heart of the town beyond the Protestant church. Near the church is the old Dutch cemetery, a small square spot enclosed within high walls. The new burial ground is a mile and half from the town.

There are several jetties erected on coconut piles along the bank of the river, and the number of Chinese fishing nets, especially in Vypeen, is surprising. There is an interesting Roman Catholic church in the island of Vypeen.

The malady most prominently brought under one's notice at Cochin is elephantiasis.

About a mile and a half from the fort, upon the island of Bolghatti, (Ponhikare) is the British Residency, a good type of a modern bungalow. The rooms, spacious and well furnished, open into a large and airy verandah, whence the view between the trees and over the wide sheets of water in all directions is most agreeable. The grounds are planted with a variety of trees, and covered with turf.

The Raja of Cochin has a palace at Mettancheri near Cochin. It is used on State occasions. Immediately adjoining the palace is the synagogue of the Jews, which has a belfry at one end in which a rude clock, said to be more than 200 years old, regulates their time. The floor of the synagogue is paved with very neat porcelain tiles.

Three miles north-west of the town of Cochin is Narakkal, which owes its importance to a mud bank, which stretches about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles seaward and is 4 miles long. Within this, vessels can run in the worst part of the south-west monsoon when all other ports on the coast are closed.

Two weekly English newspapers, the *Western Star* and the *Cochin Argus*, are published at Cochin, in addition to a Malayalam paper designated the *Kerala Mitram*.

Roads, Canals, etc.—The roads in Cochin lie within the town which is connected with Mattancheri, in native Cochin State, by a road running almost parallel to the river bank leading to Jews' town.

The Calvetti canal is about 6 miles long. Starting from Calvetti it joins the river up at Kallancheri. Owing to silting, through navigation is possible only during monsoons.

The water supply of Cochin is bad and the supply of drinking water is brought by boats from Alwayi, 20 miles from Cochin.

Industry and Manufactures.—The industry of Cochin is now confined to the manufacture of coir mats and cordage and of coconut oil. A peculiar kind of coir-screen, intertwined with cuscus, is largely exported.

Dams and Anicuts.—Extensive protective works were carried on at Cruz Milagre where an opening from the backwater into the sea threatened by diminishing the scour on the Cochin bar to impair the value of the harbour.

Archæology.—There are the ruins of an old church in the Municipal garden. In the backwater near the Master Attendant's jetty are to be seen fragments of stone-pillars, archways, etc.

The ruins of the foundation of the Portuguese fort, first built by Albuquerque are traceable along the sea face.