

THE
COCHIN STATE MANUAL.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Situation, boundaries and area—Etymology of the name—Divisions—Towns—Physical aspects—HILLS: Western Ghats—Peaks—THE RIVER SYSTEM: The Alwaye or Periyar—The Chalakudi—Tributaries of the Chalakudi—The Karuvannur—The Ponnani—The Chittur—Minor streams—THE BACK WATER SYSTEM—FRESH WATER LAKES—ISLANDS—THE COAST LINE—PORTS: Cochin—Malipuram and Narakal—Cranganur—THE NARAKAL MUD BANK: Its origin and nature—SOILS—CLIMATE: Rainfall—Humidity—Temperature—Seasons—Winds—Natural calamities, etc.—Effects of the climate—GEOLOGY: Laterite—Minerals—FLORA—FAUNA: Big game—Small game—Domestic animals—Birds—Reptiles—Fishes.

The native State of Cochin (Malayalam *Kocchi*) lies between 9° 48' and 10° 50' N. Latitude and 76° 5' and 76° 58' E. Longitude. It consists of two disconnected parts, the larger of which is bounded on the north by British Malabar, on the east by Malabar, Coimbatore and Travancore, on the south by Travancore and on the west by Malabar and the Arabian Sea. The smaller part, which covers an area of 105 square miles, comprises the chief portion of the Chittur Taluk and is entirely encircled by British territory—Malabar and Coimbatore. There are also similar isolated tracts, but of much smaller extent, which are entirely surrounded by Travancore, *viz.*, Vadavakode, Vellarapilli, Malayattur and Chennamangalam. Cochin, on the other hand, similarly encircles several isolated tracts of British and Travancore territories, and is in many places intermixed with those territories in a variety of manner. The State is thus singularly diversified in its configuration, and its boundary lines extend over a length of 500 miles. The total area of the State is 1417½ square miles. *

GENERAL
DESCRIP-
TION.

Situation,
boundaries
and area.*

* This is the area according to the recent cadastral Survey of the State. According to the Great Trigonometrical Survey the area is 1361½ square miles.

CHAPTER I.
GENERAL
DESCRIP-
TION.

Etymology
of the name.

The State was originally known as Perumpadappu Nad, and the ruling family is still spoken of as Perumpadappu Svarupam. It is so called after the village of the same name * in the Ponnani Taluk of Malabar, which is said to have been the original seat of the family and where the coronation ceremony of the kings of Cochin used to be performed till the middle of the seventeenth century. The family was also known as Madattunkil Svarupam after the name of one of the extinct dynasties of Cochin, a name which now survives only in the language of Malayalam poets. The name Cochin appears to have been given first to the town which came into existence after the formation of the harbour in 1341, afterwards to the country in the immediate vicinity of the town, and finally to the whole territory under the rule of the Perumpadappu Svarupam. † No mention of Cochin is therefore found in the earlier notices of Malabar. Neither Pliny (A. D. 23—79) nor Ptolemy (A. D. 126—161) nor Periplus (3rd century A. D.), neither Marco Polo (A. D. 1290—93) nor Ibn Batuta (A. D. 1342—47) makes any mention of Cochin, though they give accounts, more or less detailed, of places situated to the north and south of it, such as Cape Comorin, Kallada, Cranganur, Kadalundi, etc. The first mention of Cochin, so far as known at present, is made, sixty years after the formation of the harbour, by Ma Huan, a Chinese Mahomedan attached to the suit of Cheng Ho, an envoy of the Emperor Yong-Lo to foreign countries, and the next mention is by the Italian traveller Nicolo Conti (A. D. 1440). These writers and those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries variously call the town Cocym, Cochym, Cochin, Cochi.

The word Kocchi is popularly supposed to be a corruption of the Sanskrit *go-sri*, 'prosperous with cows'. This is clearly one of those fanciful derivations of which the Aryan colonists of Southern India have, in their anxiety to give a Sanskrit origin to all Dravidian nomenclature, accumulated such a large stock. The first portion of the name is undoubtedly the Malayalam word *Kocchu*, meaning small or young, but what this

* Nediyrippu Svarupam or the Zamorin's family is similarly named after Nediyrippu, a village in the Ernad Taluk, and Trippapil Svarupam or the Travancore ruling family after Trippapur, a village about five miles to the north of Trivandrum.

† In the treaty with the Dutch, dated 6th April 1698, there is a provision for the prevention of the smuggling of pepper from Kocchi-rajyam and Perumpadappu Nad. At this time, Cochin evidently comprised only the coast tract in the neighbourhood of the town.

word qualifies can only be conjectured. In the *Kerala Mahatmyam* and other recent Sanskrit works, the town is called *Balapuri*, small or young town, but Nicolo Conti writing in the 15th century and Fra Paolino in the 17th say that it was called Kocchi after the small river that flowed by that place, that is, the river that connects the back-water and the sea. I would therefore hazard the conjecture that the word is a contraction of *Kocchazhi*, * the small or new harbour, as distinguished from the large or old Cranganur harbour, which was frequented for centuries by merchants from all parts of the world.

For administrative purposes, Cochin is divided into five Divisions; Taluks, viz., Kanayannur-Cochin, Mukundapuram, Trichur, Talapilli and Chittur. In addition to these, there is also the tiny principality of Cranganur under a Chief paying tribute to Cochin. This principality is financially autonomous, but is in all other respects administered as one of the Taluks of the State. The head quarters of the Taluks are Ernakulam, Irinjalakuda, Trichur, Vadakancheri and Chittur respectively. The five Taluks and Cranganur are further subdivided into 165 revenue villages.

The State was in olden times divided into *Nads* and *Desams* administered by hereditary Chiefs called *Naduvazhis* and *Desavazhis*. These divisions were broken up in the latter half of the 18th century, when the Chiefs were divested of their power, and the State was in 1762—3 divided into ten *Kovilakattumvatalis* or Taluks. The number was reduced to six in 1840 by the amalgamation of the Chelakara and Mullurkara Taluks with Talapilli, Enamakal with Trichur, and Kodasseri with Mukundapuram. By the amalgamation of the Taluks of Kanayannur and Cochin in 1907 a further reduction was made in their number.

The chief towns are Ernakulam, Mattancheri and Trichur. For administrative purposes, Irinjalakuda, Kunnankulam, Chittur and Tattamangalam are also treated as towns. There are no large towns in the State, and only the

Towns.

†Ernakulam	21,901	first two have a population of 20,000.†
Mattancheri	20,061	Towns are of comparatively recent origin
Trichur	15,585	in Cochin as on the West Coast generally,
Irinjalakuda	8,420	and their growth is mainly due to the
Chittur	8,095	influence and example of foreign settlers.
Kunnankulam	7,194	While the people of other parts of India
Tattamangalam	6,222	love to congregate in closely built villages,

* As another instance of a similar contraction may be mentioned Chetva, which was formerly known as Chettuva-azhi.

CHAPTER I. close neighbourhood is repugnant to the genius of the Malayalis, who are averse to living in houses not standing in their own premises. If a cluster of closely built houses is seen anywhere on this Coast, it can at once be understood to be the quarters of non-Malayali Hindus, native Christians or Mahomedans. But for these people, towns that can properly be called such would probably not have sprung up on this side of the ghats.

Physical
aspects.

Small as the State is, it is as singularly diversified in its physical aspects as in its configuration. It is divided into three well-defined parts or zones—the hills, the plains and the sea-board. The hilly or eastern portion, which covers nearly half the extent of the State, is broken by long spurs, extensive ravines, dense forests and tangled jungles, rising terrace by terrace to an elevation of 5,000 feet above the sea level. It is covered almost throughout with magnificent forests of teak and other valuable trees, and exhibits everywhere a splendid luxuriance of foliage and flowers. Stretching westward, in gentler slopes and gradually widening valleys, but broken here and there by isolated low hills, the plains succeed the forest-clad uplands. Intersected by numerous rivers and streams, dotted everywhere with home and farmsteads, and closely cultivated, wherever possible, these plains stretch towards the back-waters in a succession of gentle undulations. Between the back-waters and the sea is the long and narrow stretch of sandy sea-board densely covered with luxuriant cocoanut palms, and in places where there are natural or artificial embankments, large quantities of rice are grown. The sea-board is low and generally swampy, and is, in several parts, liable to be flooded during the monsoon inundations. Detached from these three zones is the isolated tract of the Chittur Taluk situated within the Palghat gap and with meteorological conditions different from those of the rest of the State. This tract is overlooked on either side by the Vadamala and Tenmala ranges, rugged and massive, with the giant Nilagiris and Anamalais towering in the back ground.

HILLS.

Western
Ghats.

That portion of the Western Ghats which forms the eastern belt of the State constitutes its chief mountain system. It is composed of a succession of bluff ridges and conical peaks and presents in general a very irregular outline. Some of these lofty ridges and peaks are almost entirely detached (except near their bases) from the neighbouring heights, falling precipitously and followed towards the west by a succession of hills of gradually diminishing altitude. The chief ranges of hills that form the chain are the Nelliampati

and Pottundi in the Chittur Taluk, the Machad in Talapilli, the Paravattani in Trichur, the Palapilli, Kodasseri and Adirapilli in Mukundapuram and the Malayattur in Kanayannur-Cochin.*

CHAPTER I.
HILLS.

These ranges vary in height from a few hundred feet to about 5,000 feet above the sea level, and among the labyrinth of these ranges, there are some rough elevated tablelands to be found, the chief of which is the Nelliampati plateau with an average elevation of 3,000 feet. Karimalagopuram in the Nelliampati range and Vellani in the Paravattani range are less extensive plateaus, but the former has an average elevation exceeding 4,000 feet above the sea level and is therefore above the fever range. Besides these mountain ranges, there are several isolated hills of varying elevations that lie dotted here and there over the laterite plains. A few of them are well wooded, but most of them are altogether barren.

Nellikotta or Padagiri on the Nelliampaties, which is 5,200 feet high, is the loftiest peak in the State, and Karimalagopuram also has nearly the same altitude. Among the other peaks are Vellachimudi, Valiyavana Ridge, Myanmudi, Valavachan, Mulankunnu, Kuvayali and Vimpalakavala, each a little over 4,000 feet in height, and Pannimudi, Nadukani, Sherunelli, Valiyalavara, Tottivara and Kantalpara, each over 3,000 feet high. The chief peaks of Paravattani are Vellani, Tirumani and Ponmudi; of Machad, Kodikuttiyakunnu; of Kodasseri, Kodasserikoomban and Kumbitanmudi; of Palapilli, Pandimudi, Kuupaucheri and Irulumala; and of Malayattur, Kurisumudi. On the last peak is situated an important Romo-Syrian Church of some antiquity.

Peaks.

Cochin has for its area an extensive river and back-water system. This has contributed in so small measure to the early development of the country, as it afforded an admirably easy and cheap means of communication at an age when wheeled traffic and even pack-bullock traffic were unknown. Owing however to the shortness of the distance between the mountains from which the rivers rise and the sea into which they fall, most of the rivers are little more than jungle streams, and the number of perennial streams, navigable throughout the year, is very limited. The chief rivers are the Alwaye, the Chalakudi, the Karuvannur, the Ponnani and the Chittur.

THE RIVER
SYSTEM.

The Alwaye or Periyar, 142 miles in length and navigable for nearly 60 miles, is really a Travancore river, but where it is at its best, namely between Malayattur and Alwaye, it forms the boundary between Travancore and Cochin

The Alwaye
or Periyar:

* For the division of these ranges for administrative purposes, see Chapter V.