CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY OF ERSTWHILE COCHIN STATE

The state of Cochin ceased to exist as a separate entity after Independence. First, it became a part of Travancore – Cochin state in 1949 due to the integration of Indian states and the Central part of the present Kerala state from 1956 with the formation of linguistic state. Yet the imprints the erstwhile Cochin State has left on our cultural life has already became part of history and will be remembered with gratitude for years to come.

According to the legendary accounts of Keralolpatti. Almost all the royal dynasties of Kerala trace their origin to Ceramān Perumāl, who abdicated the throne entrusting the responsibility to his descendents. Mahodayapuram was his capital. The kings of Kochi trace their origin to Mahodayapura, loosely translated in Malayalam as perumpadappu. We have several references in literary works to the early history of Kochi.

The Royal family of Kochi came into political prominence in the beginning of the 16th century; but it has its origin as an independent principality from the time of the fall of the Kulaśekhara Empire. The traditional view is that the Perumāl before leaving divided the land and
 entrusted each piece with his confidents. The sons of his sister inherited Kochi also referred to as Perumpadappu Svarūpam or Bālya country.

The Bālya country and its capital Bhūtivāhini are described in Mayūrasandesā. The Bālya country is identified with the Perumpadappu principalty and Bhūtivahini with vellārapilli, the seat of the Perumpadappu family for a long time.

Māṭṛdatta, the author of Kāmasandesā speaks of a Rāmavarma of Kochi twice in the poem. The King is said to have abolished the toll system with regard to Kaveri River.

This incident is not found recorded in the official documents. Some arrangements regarding the tolls made between the King of Kochi and the Portuguese, about 80 years after the advent of the latter in Kochi, are found mentioned in the historical records.

Kāmasandesā also refers to the construction of a beatiful palace in Trissur by King Rāmavarma. The residents of the rulers of Kochi at the Trissur in the 16th Century and the existence of an old palace of medieval structure in the heart of the town are recorded in history. But the name of the King who constructed the palace is not referred to there. By the evidence gathered from the poem, it can be concluded that the palace was built by Rāmavarma.
This Rāmavarma can be identified with Kesava Rāmavarma (1565-1601 A.D.) the most celebrated ruler of Kochi during the period of the Portuguese settlement. He was the patron of many poets and men of letters.

In the historical records a palace is mentioned as built by the Portuguese at Mattārñceri by about 1555 A.D., and presented to the ruler of Kochi. Since then, for about two centuries, it was the seat of the kings of Kochi. More than a hundred years later, at about 1663 A.D., the palace underwent repair and renovation at the hands of the Dutch. Therefore, the palace referred to in the poem on the West Coast may be the famous Dutch Palace.

MĀTAKṢITĪBHṚT:

In Cakorasandesa, the king of Kochi is referred to as ‘Mātaḳṣitībhṛt’. It is stated that the king of Kochi, who is an intimate friend, of the king of Tiruvitamkur, is residing at Cennamangalam entrusting all his responsibilities to the hands of the clever and able minister.
MĀTAKSITIPA:

The ruler of Kochi is mentioned as Mātaksitipa in Cakorasandesā while describing Trissur. The Brahmins residing there extol the glory of the king. The date of composition of the poem is 1789 A.D. The ruler of Kochi during that period was Rāmavarma (1790 – 1805 A.D.) well known as Šaktan Tampurān. He was an able administrator, diplomat and statesman. The reign of the King was an important epoch in the history of Kochi. The king of Kochi referred to might be this Rāma Varma Šaktan Tampurān.

MĀTABHŪDEVARĀJA:

In Viprasandesā, while describing Tripunithura, it is stated that the king of Kochi resides in the palace therein. His brother, who is very fond of Brahmins, is also with him. The ladies of the royal family walking spontaneously around the temple at Tripunithura are also described in the poem.

The author of the poem, Rāma Varma Koccuṇi Tampurān of the Kotuṇhallūr palace, flourished from 1858 – 1926 A.D. the king of Kochi is described in the poem as a living monarch. There is a king of Kochi who ruled between 1895 – 1914. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and
patron of learning. He was popularly known as Rājarṣi. He started the Sanskrit College at Tripunithura and instituted there the annual conference of Scholars. The King mentioned in the poem might be the same Rāma Varma, the ruler of Kochi. The king described in Cātaka sandeśa of Māntitta Kuṇṇu Nampūtiri is also identified with this Rājarṣi Rāma Varma of Kochi.

The brother of the Kochi king referred to there may be the Rāma Varma who died at Madras. He lived during 1853 – 1932. The poet has written another work praising him, entitled Rāma Varma Kāvya.

Cātakasandeśa mentions the palace Tripunithura as ‘Kanakagiri’ which is the famous hill palace at Tripunithura known as ‘Kanakakkunnu Kottaram’ (Kanaka = gold, Kunnu = hill, Kottaram – Palace) in Malayalam.

Perumpadappu merged with the Elayathavazhi and came in relation with Tripunithura in the 17th century. Thereafter pūrṇatrayiṣa became the family deity of Cochin Kings. Cochin royal family had good relations with some Nampūtiri families. They are:

Kaṇippayyoor Mana of Kunnaṃkulam, Kilimangalattu mana, Ottur Mana of Vellangallur and Pallippurattu mana of Chottānikkara.
MINISTERS OF KOCHI:

While describing Cennamangalam, Cātakasandeśa speaks of pāliyam family, the members of which were the hereditary ministers of Kochi. The Pāliyam family has its ancestral seat at cennamangalam. They too were patrons of literature and there was a big collection of rare manuscripts in Pāliyam Library. The Keralolpatti states that the Ceraman perumāl, while constructing the perumpatappu principality gave the king of Kochi 42 ministers and that Paliyat Accan was the chief among them.

Cātakasandeśa of a Nampūtiri Brāhmin of Malabar refers to a minister, who was a clever diplomat and an intimate friend of the Tiruvitamkur and Kochi kings. The king of Kochi bestowed on him all the responsibilities of the government. Ullur S. Parameswaran Iyer, identifies this minister with the Paliyat Komi Accan, a highly patriotic and able minister of Kochi.

Paliyat Komi Accan, the most outstanding among the members of the family was the Prime Minister of Kochi since 1756. He played a key role in the affairs of Kochi state for more than quarter of century. He crippled the power of the feudal barons and established a centralized administration in Kochi. The hereditary Prime Ministership came to an end after his death in 1779 A.D.
The minister of Kochi called Rajagopala is mentioned in Cātakasandesa of Māntitta Kunju Nampūtiri. He can be identified with P. Rajagopalocari, the diwan of Kochi, during the period 1896 – 1901. It was during his time that a Chief Court with a Chief Justice and two judges was set up for Kochi and the railway line from Shornur to Ernakulam was completed.

Genealogy of Cochin rulers:

We have recorded documents regarding the Kings of Kochi only from the end of 18th century. The genealogy is given below:

1790-1805 : Rāma Varma
1805 – 1809 : Rāma Varma
1809 – 1837 : Kerala Varma
1837 – 1844 : Rāma Varma
1844 – 1851 : Rāma Varma
1851 – 1853 : Kerala Varma
1853 – 1864 : Rāma Varma
1864 – 1888 : Rāma Varma
1888 – 1895 : Kerala Varma
1895 – 1914 : Rāma Varma
1914 – 1932 : Rāma Varma
1932 – 1941 : Rāma Varma
1941 – 1943 : Rāma Varma
1943 – 1946 : Kerala Varma
1946 – 1948 : Ravi Varma
1948 – 1949 : Rāma Varma

The last king was Rāma Varma Parīkṣit. The state merged in the Travancore – Cochin State in 1949. Later it became part of Kerala State from November 1956.

ROYAL PATRONAGE TO ART AND LITERATURE

Many of the kings of Kochi were great patron of literature, and they themselves were also accomplished scholars who made the original contributions to Sanskrit literature.

Some scholars believe that the Manukulādityas referred to by Narayanakavi in his Sītaharaṇa kāvya is a King belonging to Cochin Royal family. If this is true Narayana is the earliest poet patronised by the Cochin kings. But scholars are not unanimous in their opinion on the reference in the poem to Trissur since Manukulāditya is believed to be a contemporary of the Cera King Bhaskararavivarman of 10th A.D.
Viṭanidra Bhāṇa refers to the King Rāmavarman on the author's patrons. K.R. Pishaoti had identified him with the hero of Sīva Vilāsakāvyā of Damodaragupta since he too is the son of Lakshmi. This Bhāṇa written before the shifting of the capital from Mahodayapuram to Kochi, may belong to 14th A.D. 30

Next important ruler of the Kochi family is the Vīra Kerala Varman who ruled over Kochi from 1561 to 1656. He patronized Nīlakantha the author of Tenkailanathodayam, a Malayalam campū. His successor (1565 – 1601) Rama Varma Patronized the Mazhamangalam family. The beautiful Kāvya Rāsakrīḍa is written by king Rāmavarma 31. In Gosree Geneology king Rāmavarma is called Keśava Rāma Varma. Balakavi wrote two dramas and a commentary on Yogavāsiṣṭha. At the instance of the king he wrote the play Ratnaketūdaya. The poet in another play, Rāmavarmavilāsa has chosen his patron as the hero. Balakavi's native place is North Arcot District in Tamil Nadu.

Sankaran Nambutiri the famous astrologer and author of Jyotiṣa works in Malayalam; Narayanan Nambutiri the author of well known Mahiṣamangala Bhāṇa (Sanskrit) and Bhāṣānaisadha Campū (Malayalam) and Parameswaran Namputiri the author of Āśaucadīpika – all the three are members of Mazhamangalam family.
Vedāntācārya (16th A.D.) was patronized by king Ravi Varma of Kochi. His work is commentary of Kāvyaparakāśa called Kāvyaparakāśottotijini 32. All the verses given in the commentary of 10th ullasa are in praise of King Ravi Varma of Kochi. So this section is called Ravirajaysobhūṣaṇa.

Next ruler of the Kochi state, Rama Varma (1805 – 1809) was a follower of Mādhva school of Vedanta and wrote a stotra work called Pūrṇatrayīśa stotra about the deity of Tripunithura temple. After that Virakeral Varma was the (1809 – 1828) ruler of Kochi. He was also the follower of Mādhva school and used his influence to popularise it in the state. He wrote many Āttakathas for Kathakali, stotra Kāvya like Pūrṇatrayīśa sātaka 33 and Daśāvatāra Sloka. Vira Kerala Varma attracted several scholars and poets to his court. The poets, Arur Madhavan Atitiri, Kṛsna Karta of Ceranellur, Narayanan Namputiri of Ilayittummama Bhaskara of Mutukkursi were patronised by the King Vira Kerala Varma34.

Rama Varma Maharaja of Kochi (1851 – 1931) is popularly known as Rājarṣi Rāma Varma Tampurān. He is known as the father of modern Kochi. He was a great patron of Sanskrit learning 35. He established a
Sanskrit Pāṭhasāla at Tripunithura in the name of his teacher Śeṣācārya which later developed as the present Sanskrit College.  

Śābdikatilaka Ayyāśāstrikal, Sahṛdayatilaka Ramapiṣāroti, Tārkkikutilaka Mānhitta Kuṭiju Nampūtiri were three great gems in his court.

The greatest contribution of Cochin Royal family to the present century is Parīkṣit Mahāraja. The two scholar – kings, Rājarṣi and Parīkṣit, were mainly responsible for making Tripunithura a centre for Sanskrit learning.

PRINCE AMONG SCHOLARS:

The most interesting factor about the Cochin kings is that they themselves were good poets/ scholars.

King Kerala Varma wrote Pūrṇatrayisa Sataka and nearly 100 attakathas for Kathakali stage. Coming to modern age Rājarṣī wrote two works. In the last ruler Parīkṣit we see the flowering of both these traditions – that of a patron and of a scholar poet.

One of the most outstanding contributions of Cochin Royal family to the cause of Sanskrit is the creation of an endowment for the publication of Sanskrit works – the Ravi Varma Samskṛta Granthāvali.
King Rāvandīrūma Mahārāja constituted it, in 1946 to commemorate his 80th birthday.

These details go to prove that that the Kings of Kochi were erudite scholars dedicated to the cause of Sanskrit learning. Their patronage has contributed much to the present state of enlightenment in this part of the country.

The great Balagangadharatilak after hearing the speech of Rājarṣi in Poona respectfully observed. 'I have heard that there are princes among scholars. It is now that I see a scholar among princes'. This is equally applicable to his nephew – Parīksit Mahārāja also. He was in all respects a Prince among Scholars.
References:


2. Mahā-peru, Udayam-Padappu i.e. Mahodayam – Perumpadappu.


5. There is a lot of controversy regarding the etymology of Kochi, legends say that Bala, Vaiśravaṇas daughter wanted to own a palace on the shores of the sea. To satisfy her Parasurāma, created this place; i.e. Bālya. The word means a small town.


7. याताशुल्कम् सकलबजातामिस्तित गत्र प्रभूतान्
तत् स्थिरस्थायिन्यिः पतिग्रभन्निमनलां वलोऽः
माक्षोरणी गत्र प्रभूमितक्षणम् निर्जने राजवर्मा ॥


9. कार्तिक सोन्यम् दिब्जः पुनर्वते राजदानी समिन्द्रे
17. तद्वासीनं प्रणनतारी सेविंग तापसेनद्वन्
विद्वादारं कर्करसिंवं नेतृतुलयं महानन्तम्
शोणीयस्तद्वन परितासनवर्तित लंसनित


23. Ullur, loc. Cit.


26. The Cochin kings followed the matrilinial system and their official names were – Rāma Varma, Ravi Varma and Kerala Varma.

27. Ramesan Tampuran – Genealogy of Cochin Royal Family.

29. P.K. Kunjuṣṇi Raja, the contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit literature, University of Madras II nd Edn. 1980 P.154.

30. Ibid.

31. Ramesan Tampuran, Genealogy of Kochi family. P. 11


34. Queen Subhadara brought Madhavan Atitiri to Tripunithura for the education of Rāmavarma Yuvarāja of Kochi. Uttaranaiṣadhiya Carita was written under the patronage of the king. He lived in the early half of the 19th century. Kṛsan karta wrote stotra Kavya Citpuresāstuti on the deity of the temple at Chittur near Ernakulam. Narayana lived between 1770 and 1840 A.D. and wrote Uṣāpariṇaya Campu. Bhaskaran of Mutukkuriśi wrote Śṛṅgāratilaka Bhāna under the patronage of Vīra Kerala Varma.

35. I - Rājarṣi Rāmavarma, Introduction to Bālabodhana Dr. K.G. Paulose, Ravi Varma Saṃskṛtagranthāvali – 1990, Tripunithura

36. Sri. Rāma Varma Govt. Sanskrit college was established on 14th January 1914 by H.H. Rāmavarma the Mahāraja of Cochin for the preservation and advancement of the indigenous system of Sanskrit study in its higher branches. Instruction was offered in Nyāya, Vyākaraṇa, Vedānta, Jyotisa and Āyurveda. From its very inception the institution had the privilege to be associated with a galaxy of eminent scholars in the different disciplines of traditional knowledge. Rāma Varma Parīṣit Mahāraja, himself a great scholar, was its patron.

37. The Ravivarma, Granthavali has hitherto published 35 titles. A list of publications is given below – besides there is a quarterly journal started in 1952. It became defunct in 1966. The publication was revived in 1988 as a half yearly Research journal in English and Sanskrit. The editorial note of the first issue reads -

'A quarterly journal, intended for the promotion of sanskrit through the publication of rare manuscripts, was first published by the Sanskrit college, Tripunithura in January 1953 in Ravivarma sanskṛta series. It brought to light many works like the commentary of Arunagirinatha on Raghuvamśa and thee commentary of Raghavananda
on Bhāgavata. (Details of the contents of the back volumes are appended) soon it got wide acceptance among scholars.

But unfortunately, after an uninterrupted life of 14 years it ceased to exist from October 1967.

The Sanskrit College committee constituted by the Govt. of Kerala in May 1987 resolved to revive the publication of the journal. An editorial board was constituted and the work was entrusted to it. It was decided to name the journal Pūrṇatrayī. The first issue numbered as Vol. XVI No. 1 is now released. It will hereafter appear in January and June every year.

Sanskrit, the mother tongue of Indian languages, is struggling for existence in her own home.

We place this first issue of Pūrṇatrayī in your hands in the hope that this journal will play an important role in this battle.'

- K.G. Paulose, Editor.

Pūrṇatrayī completed ten years of its existence and released its Decennial Volume in 1999.

Publications of Ravivarma Sāṃskṛta Granthāvali.

1. Vedānta paribhaṣāsandhraha by Sri Rājarṣi Rāma Varma

2. Pravesaka (Vyākarana) by Thrikkandiyur Acyuta pisaroti with commentary.

4. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with Sanskrit Commentary of Raghavananda muni.


7. *Uparāgavimsati* (jyotisa) with Malayalam commentary.

8. *Dr̥gdr̥ṣṭaviveka* (Vedanta) with Sanksrit Commentary.


12. Uttaraniṣadhyacarita.


14. *Ṣṛṅgāra Tilakam*.

15. Pārvati Kalyāṇa Kāndha.

16. Iswara Vadalawki Kata Vicārah.

17. Subhodini by H.H. Parīkṣit Mahārāja.

22. Laghusidhāntakaumudi – II R Vasudevan Potti.
   III Vasudevan Potti.
23. Scientific Heritage of India – Mathematics
24. Arts of Keralakṣetram Dr. (Mrs) Kapila Vatsyayan
27. Nāṭāṅkuśa – A critique on Dramaturgy – Dr. K.G. Paulose.
29. M.B. Sankaranarayana Sastri.
30. Ujjayini (Sanskrit Translation).
32. Nātya and Yajña – Christopher Byrski.
34. Wholeness of Literacy function – C.D. Narasimhaiah.