

Chapter 2

THE PALAKKAD DISTRICT: AN OVERVIEW

The Palakkad District is located between north latitude 10° 20' and 11° 14' and east longitudes 76° 20 ' and 76° 54' The district is bounded by Malappuram and Nilgiri districts on the north, Coimbatore district on the east, Trichur district on the south and Malappuram and Trichur districts on the west Palakkad has an area of 4,480 sq. Kms and ranks fourth in Kerala state in regard of area The district headquarter is located at Palakkad. Recently, the district Palghat has been renamed as Palakkad

Divergent views are existing regarding the origin of the name Palakkad One view is that it has been derived from the traditional Tamil classifications of land on the basis of soil formations and physical features The forest regions were called *Kurinjī* The regions covered by bushes and hilly jungles were classified as *Mullai* Places which “were for the most part desert regions hardly fit for raising food crops and were in many places barren and rocky were called the *Pala* or *Palai* The cultivated area was named *Marutham* land and the coastal tracks were called the *Neyta* land¹ The presumption of a section of scholars therefore is that the name Palakkad originated from the physiographic term *Pala* or *Palai* that denotes the barren and rocky regions combined with the word *Kadu* or forest, meaning thereby the land covered by rocky regions and forests Considering the fertile plains of the district and other physical features of the place, it seems that Palakkad can never come under the traditional classification of *Pala* region A more sensible argument is that the

¹ AchuthaMenon Komattil, *Ancient Kerala* (Trichur,1962),p 16

whole of Palakkad and its suburbs were once covered by thick forests of Pala [*Alsteria Scholaris*] trees; hence the words Pala + Kadu, came to be known as Palakkad.²

The East India company's records mention about a Jainese temple situated in a place named as Palakkad. This important Jainese temple that has stood the ravages of time is situated near modern Palakkad town. Perhaps it is one of the few remaining Jainese temples of Kerala. It is not out of place to presume that the name 'Palakkad' might have originated from the Jainese settlement of this area and from their traditions and language Pali. Probably *Palighat* might be spelt to denote the *Ghat* or place where the language 'Pali' was spoken.³ Any how no authentic record is forthcoming to say clearly the derivation of the name Palakkad.

THE HISTORICAL BACKDROP

The sources of information for the study of the ancient history of this district are epigraphy, numismatics, works of classical geographers and the Sangam literature of Tamil poets, etc. *Keralolpathi* and *Kerala Mahatmyam* contain traditional history of ancient Kerala including this district.

The tradition about the origin of Kerala is connected with the mythical hero Parasurama. According to this legend, Parasurama threw his axe to the Arabian sea and the peice of land called Kerala came up from the sea and this land was divided into 64 *Gramams*.⁴ Some of the *Gramams* [villages] mentioned in this tradition find place in this district. Whatever might be the historical veracity of this tradition, it is clear that the territorial divisions mentioned therein continued to exist from the ancient to the modern

² C K Kareem, *Kerala District Gazetteer-Palghat*, Government of Kerala, (Trivandrum, 1976) p 1

³ *Ibid*, p 3

⁴ *Ibid*, p 54

periods in some form or the other. These territorial divisions consisted of *nadus*, *desams*, *taras*, and *cherries*, etc.

The self-governing popular assemblies in these divisions were called *NattuKuttams*, *Desa Kuttams*, and *Tara Kuttams*. *Taras* were virtually independent of the *Naduvazhis* and *Desavazhis* [local rulers], who in their turn enjoyed sovereignty over the territories they held. At a time when monarchical despotism showed signs of tyranny these territorial assemblies acted as an effective check. *Tara kuttam* was the organization of *Nair's* [Kshatrias of Kerala]

Adrain Van Rheede, the Dutch Governor of Cochin [1673-1677], made it very clear when he wrote "No King of Malabar has power to make contracts, which are prejudicial to the interests of land lords, noble men or Nairs. Such king would run the risk of being expelled or rejected by his subjects." So these *Naduvazhis*, *Desavazhis* or even the major sovereigns did not possess unfettered royal authority.

The representatives of the popular assemblies of this traditional territorial divisions met once in twelve years at Tirunavai to elect a *Rakshapurusha* or protector. The *Rakshapurusha* considered it his avowed duty not to deviate from the traditions and customs of the country and not to disturb the then existing social order. In accordance with this tradition, the *Rakshapurusha* used to give his assent for the continuance of the hereditary *Naduvazhis* and *Desavazhis* in their respective places. This system thus continued for a long time, but then dissensions arose among the representatives who failed to choose unanimously a *Rakshapurusha*.⁵ This rift was patched up by the elders who evolved a formula that would be agreeable to all. Accordingly, it was decided to invite a

⁵ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras, through the Countries of Mysore, Carnatic and Malabar* (London, 1807), vol 2, p 447

member from any of the neighbouring ruling dynasties to look after their affairs. Thus the well known *Perumal* era was inaugurated. Each *Perumal* was expected to rule over a period of twelve years. Tradition says that there were twelve such *Perumals*. But the last *Perumal*, Cheraman Perumal, who is said to have ruled for three such terms at last divided the kingdom among his chieftains. Thus the country was divided into a number of royal dynasties and principalities.

The Nedumpurayur Dynasty

The earliest dynasty known to have ruled over Palakkad region was the *Nedumpurayur Swarupam*. Different versions are existing about the origin of this dynasty. The Palakkad *Rajahs*, it is believed, are the offsprings of *Namboodiri Brahmins* and *Kshatriya* women. They were called by the titles *Vadakke Naikkans* and *Thekke Naikkans* ⁶

Another story about the origin of this dynasty is that it originated from an illicit relation of a *Kshatriya* prince with a low caste woman. The story is that once in the unmemorable past, the land around Palakkad consisted of thick forests covered by hilly granite heaps, where human habitation was impossible. It is said that four big elephants of *Raja* of Cochin once ran amuck into the forests of the 'Kuthiran' hills. The *Raja* sent his soldiers with mahouts in search of these elephants, but in vain. At last one of the princes of the Cochin Royal family entered in to the thick forest with four Nair soldiers. He got the assistance of some hill tribes and with their help regained the lost elephants. The prince and *Nairs* returned to the *Raja* of *Perumpadapu* and were received with great jubilation. But the prince himself felt bad as his heart was weighed down with grief. The members of the

⁶ Refer *Report on Conditions of Palakkad* by Thomas Warden (Kozhikode Archives, 1801)

Kshtriya Royal house found to their dismay that this prince was deeply in love with a tribal girl with whose help he obtained the assistance of the hill tribes. This resulted in the excommunication of the prince. He returned to the hill, where he got married to the tribal girl. With the help of the tribals who rallied round him with all sincerity and enthusiasm, the *Raja* established a royal dynasty and extended his sway over these uninhibited regions. The wisdom and statesmanship in him, combined with the courage and dedication of the *jungle* heroes, released a new lease of life, among them. It is believed that this prince was the founder of the dynasty of *Palghatcherry*.⁷

The story about the origin of the *Nedumpurayur* dynasty has been given in one of the *Grandhavaries* [old book] as follows: Palakkad was termed in Tamil as *paranad* and *parakkad* because of the presence of the granite hills covered with thick forest all over the district. It is from this term the name, Palakkad was derived. *Paranad* was pronounced in Tamils *porainad* from first to third century A.D. The ruler of *porainad* was called *poraian*. During the second century A.D., *Porain Perumtevi* the only prince who remained in this dynasty was married to Anduvan Cheral son of Cheraman Palyana: Chakravarthy. When their son Cholavakkavungo became the Chera Emperor, *Porainad* was integrated into his empire. The successors of Cholavakkavungo took the title *Cheran Iramural* in commemoration of the union of these two royal families. With the lapse of time, the two titles *Cheraman* and *Poraian* became synonymous. The title *Poraian* was not followed after *Chenkor Poraian* who was the immediate predecessor of the famous Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. This was due to the influence of the Pallavas of Kanchi, who were the patrons of the Sanskrit language. The constant contact with the Pallavas by the

⁷ Kareem, n2 p 57

Cheras made them change their names of Dravidian origin into Sanskrit. Thus the name *Kothai Iravi* was changed into *Goda Ravi* . But the name *Porainad* was not completely abandoned The name *Nedumporaiyur* was mentioned in the royal grants of *Goda Ravi Varman*, and other *Chera* emperors⁸ These records call them *Naduvazhi* or *Nadu Udayavars*. *Nedumporaiyur* is situated near Palakkad where there is an ancient temple in which there are many inscriptions

During the 9th century, the relation of the *Chera* rulers with the *Cholas* was cordial There were matrimonial alliances and political agreements between them On the contrary, the *Cholas* and *Rashtrakutas* were enemies during this period Due to this enmity the *Rashtrakutas* instigated the *Kongu* rulers to invade the *Chera* country During the second year of the accession of Goda Ravi, the Chera king , probably in 980 A D, the *Kongu* army entered Chittur through Velanthavalam. But the army was defeated by Nedumporayur with the help of Ernad, Valluvanad and perumpadappu [Cochin] rulers

Though the *Raja* of Palakkad [Nedumporaiyur] defeated his enemy, he had been forced to give some portions of his territory as presents to the rulers who helped him The *Raja* of Perumpadappu [Cochin], who had come to his rescue in his fight against the *Kongus*, was given the present Chittur taluk Thenkurussi, Vilayan, Chattannur and Kaithala villages were given to Valluva Konathiri. The *Zamorin* of Kozhikode received Koduvayur village⁹ Chittur, which was given to the *Raja* of Cochin continued to be detained by him till the formation of modern Palakkad district of Kerala after independence

⁸ Ibid, p 61

⁹ Ibid, p 63

The Ancient System of Government

In the ancient system of government village [*desam*] was the lowest unit of the political system. The head man of the village was called the *Desavazhi*. Another unit of the political system was *Nadu* or district with its ruler *Naduvazhi*.¹⁰ Thus under the Great *Rajas* were *Naduvazhis* or the *Desavazhis* - the Nayar of the *Nadu* or *Desam*. The *Nadu* or *Desam* constituted so many *Taras* or *Nayar* village communities. For every *Tara* there was a '*Kuttam*' or 'Assembly of Elders' [*Karanavas*]. In each *Tara* were certain '*Taravads*' [chief house] and each *Taravad* house sent one male representative to the '*Tara Kuttam*'. Several *Tara Kuttams* formed the '*Nattukuttam*'. These *Tarakuttams* and *Nattukuttams* provided the army for the *Rajas* or Kings when they were called upon for the same.

In this ancient system of government, each *Nadu* was ruled by a *Raja* or *Udayavan*, while as the head of the whole territory there was a *Perumal* or Emperor. Cherman Perumal, the last of the emperors, was converted to Islam and went to Arabia and died there in 825 A.D. After this, several *Rajas* ruled over their *Nadus* without any paramount power over them. In short, the political organization revolved round the *Raja*, the *Nattukuttam*, the *Tara kuttam* and the *Taravad*.

Tarur Swarupam

After the dissolution of the *Chera* Empire, the tributaries became sovereign *Swaroopams*. Kerala was thus divided into a number of small principalities. As a result, *Udayavars* or *Naduvazhis* became independent rulers. Thus *Nedumpurayurnad* became *Tharavur* or *Tarur Swarupam*. *Tarur* is situated about 10 km away from the modern Alathur taluk headquarters.

¹⁰ Ibid, p 64

The country was divided into three divisions under *Tarur Swarupam* with an army of 8000 Nair soldiers, Tenmalapuram 3000 Nairs, Naduvattom 3000 Nairs and Vandamalapuram 2000 Nairs. This family is also called *Shekkury* family and the *Rajas* were called *Shekkury Rajas*. During the 13th century, the Palakkad royal family had no male heir to succeed to the throne and only two *Tampurattis* or princes of the royal blood remained. These princes took shelter in the *Perumpadappu Swarupam* where they won over two members of the Cochin dynasty as their life long partners. The succession of *Tarur Swarupam* was thus sought through these alliances. During this period, the relation between the *Raja of Perumpadappu* and *Tarur Swarupam* was very cordial. In the war between *Zamorin* of Kozhikode and the *Raja of Cochin*, Palakkad supported Cochin.

The Zamorin Conquest of Palakkad

The landing of Vasco Da Gama on the shores of Kappad twisted the history of Kerala. The fight between the *Zamorin* and the Portuguese made the Portuguese General to turn to Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar Empire for help against the *Zamorin*. The *Raja* sent an army under the leadership of Ramapayya and Devapayya. This army was assisted by *Tarur* soldiers, who were an ally of the *Raja* of Cochin. On hearing the arrival of the Vijayanagar soldiers and the devastation done to the country by them, the *Zamorin* marched against the invaders. A severe fight ensued continuously for three days. Finally, the *Zamorin* emerged victorious in this decisive battle. The Vijayanagar army ran pell-mell. The *Zamorin* pulled down the *Tarur* palace fort. After this event, there are no records available to construct a political history of this dynasty till 1732.

Zamorin conquered the territories of Valluvakonathiri and Palakkad *Raja* many times during the first half of the 18th century. At all times, the *Zamorin* was successful in

obtaining war indemnity and demanding allegiance from these *Rajas*. In his extremity, the Palakkad *Raja* requested help from Mysore to repeal the attack of his enemy the *Zamorin* in the year 1732¹¹ This was repeated in 1735 But in the year 1737, Mysoreans attacked his out posts and raided his territory ¹² The enmity between the neighbouring states of Mysore and Palakkad continued for some time

In 1757 *Zamorin* sent an army under Chenchery Namboothiri to Palakkad After destroying Tenmalapuram, one of the three divisions of the kingdom of Palakkad, he marched towards Yakarakadavu A severe fight ensued between the *Zamorin's* army and the Palakkad *Raja* More than five thousand people were dead in the fight, Chenchery crossed the river and conquered the fort of Chokanathapuram When Thiruvallathur Kaikathiri negotiated peace, it was agreed upon that one fifth of the revenue would be paid for the expenses of the *Zamorin* as war indemnity Unable to withstand the continued hostility and attack of the *Zamorin*, Palakkad *Raja* sent his emissaries to Mysore with an appeal to render military help against the menace of the *Zamorin* The Dalava of Mysore ordered Haider Ali who was the Faujdar of Dindigal, to render military help to the *Raja* of Palakkad Hearing of this military help from Mysore, Chenchery retreated towards the west During this time, the *Zamorin* had also troubles with the Dutch and the *Raja* of Cochin Haider Ali, who was seeking an opportunity to enter into Kerala politics and also trying to enhance his sway over neighbouring places, readily responded to the request of Kombi Achan, the *Raja* of Palakkad He sent his brother in law Maqdam Ali with an army of two thousand horses and five thousand infantry and guns to assist him

¹¹ Refer *Tellicherry Consultations*, vol 5, nos 257-58, Tamilnad Archives, nos 1725-52, p 42

¹² *Ibid*, vol 10, nos 66-70, p 52

These forces aided by the Palakkad Nairs carried their arms as far as the sea coast. The *Zamorin* forces retreated. The *Zamorin* sued for peace. He agreed to restore his Palakkad conquest and also promised to pay a war indemnity of 12 lakhs. Maqdam saheb returned satisfied with the agreement.¹³

Haider Assists the Palakkad King

When the Mysore army returned home, the *Zamorin* sent his men for collecting one fifth of the revenue from the territory of the *Raja* of Palakkad stipulated in an agreement between himself and the *Raja* of Palakkad. The *Zamorin* attacked the forts of Palakkad *Raja* and occupied a number of Edams where he peopled them with his own men. This was in January 31, 1761. This precipitated a crisis when a number of Achans were killed.¹⁴

Meanwhile, there were changes in the political setup of Mysore. Haider became the virtual ruler of that state. He agreed to help the *Raja* of Palakkad to retain his lost territory from the *Zamorin*. Three separate agreements were entered into between the *Raja* of Palakkad and Haider on this account. Accordingly, Haider sent another army to Palakkad. Hearing of the arrival of the Mysorean army, the *Zamorin* evacuated from the conquered territory. Hereafter the Palakkad royal family became a tributary to Mysore. They agreed to pay annually a sum of 12 thousand *fanams* to the Mysore ruler.

The *Zamorin*, who agreed on a war indemnity of 12 lakhs to Maqdam Ali, could not pay a simple pie and intrigued against Haider Ali with Deva Raj who was then the *Dalawa* of Mysore. As was agreed upon between the two, Devaraj recalled the army under Maqdam Ali and directed the *Zamorin* to pay only 3 lakhs of rupees to Haider Ali and the rest to

¹³ Kareem, n 2 p 74

¹⁴ Ibid, p 74

him The political situation of Mysore changed rapidly. Soon after this agreement, Devaraj died. In the crisis that followed, Haidar became the virtual ruler of Mysore in the year 1761. The *Zamorin* hoped that the internal dissensions and political crisis evident in Mysore would save him from giving the stipulated amount agreed upon between himself and Maqduum Ali. When his hands were free from the internal and external troubles after assuming power in Mysore, he turned his attention towards Malabar to settle his old claim with the *Zamorin*. The *Raja* of Palakkad was also informed to the effect. Haider reached Mangalore in the month of January 1766 and began his march towards Malabar.

Haider, after occupying Chirackal, marched against the principality of Kadathunad where, for the first time, he faced an organized and serious opposition. But he easily dispelled the Malayali forces and made a triumphant entry into the *Zamorin's* territory. He sent his *vakkils* to the *Zamorin* with the demand of clearing the old debt of war indemnity. The *Zamorin* came to an agreement with Haider and returned to his place. But *Zamorin* committed suicide by setting fire to his palace.

The arrival of Mysorean army under Haidar Ali and his great success over the Malayali princes were reported to the *Raja* of Palakkad and Coimbatore. The news was received with great jubilation by these rulers. The *Raja* went to the *Nawab* and followed him to Mankara through Ponnani from Kozhikode. Haider made certain administrative arrangements in consultation with the elder princes of the *Edams*. Then Haider Ali returned to Coimbatore, where he occupied the palace of the *Raja* of the place in order to watch his new conquest.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid, p 77

By June 1766, Kottayam and Kadattanad princes had retaken many places from Haider with the help of the English and the *Raja* of Travancore. Haider Ali defeated this combined forces after returning from coimbatore. Haider Ali, after suppressing this rebellion, made up his mind to construct a fort at Palakkad," which is lying in the centre of the gap in the line of *Ghats*

This fort was judiciously chosen as a defence post and depot to facilitate communications with the newly subdued provinces". When the erection of the fort was in execution, Haider Ali's attention was drawn to Mysore where the Nizam and the Marathas supported by the English threatened his kingdom. Therefore, Haider Ali left Malabar for Mysore

The southern division of Malabar was directly under the control of the Mysorean officers even when the *Zamorin* and others except the *Raja* of Chirackal were reinstated to their ancient territory on agreement of paying tribute. Palakkad portion of Malabar became a nerve center of all activities of Mysoreans. The *Raja* of Palakkad and the *Raja* of Cannanore were considered as Haider's faithful allies

Anglo-Mysore Wars

With the help of the fugitive rebel *Rajas* of Malabar, English attacked the Cannanore fort after 1774. But the combined forces of the local *Rajas* and the English were repelled with heavy loss by Ali Raja of Cannanore. Realizing that the capture of the place was not an easy task the scheme was finally abandoned ¹⁶ Thus, the course of the first Anglo-Mysore war turned rapidly in favour of Haider Ali.

¹⁶ W Logan, *Malabar Manual* vol 3 (Madras, 1887) p 415

In the second Anglo-Mysore war, Malabar province of Mysore became one of the important theaters of war. The English attacked Mahe. Haidar gave orders to the *Raja* of Chirackal and his tributaries to fight against the English defending the French settlement at Mahe. But by November 1779, the English who captured Mahe, evacuated it and concentrated their forces in Tellicherry for the defence of that town. Sirdar Khan was sent to Malabar with a Mysore force to lay siege of Tellicherry settlement. After a protracted siege of 18 months, Sirdar Khan was defeated by Major Abington on February 8, 1782. Hearing this loss Haidar sent Maqum Ali to the Malabar coast. In the battle on April eight 1782, Ali was killed and a good part of the army was destroyed.

Haidar ordered his son Tipu to proceed to the west coast to retrieve the situations when he heard of the disaster. Tipu marched with a division of his army at an incredible speed to oppose the invaders. Though the English detachment reached Palakkad on October 19, Col Hamberstone finding the place much stronger than he expected very prudently determined to retreat. When Tipu reached Palakkad, he found that the enemy had retreated. Without loss of time Tipu pursued the English "incessantly harassed and cannonaded", and a large part of Tipu's cavalry, who had preceded the enemy, captured much of their baggage and provisions. But they escaped from Tipu and took a safe position in the Ponnani town.

Tipu on reaching Ponnani encamped in front of the English army and made preparations for an effectual assault. But soon he received the sad news of the death of his father and returned to Seringapatam. He ordered Arshed Beg Khan to take charge of the government of Malabar and to remain on the defensive at Palakkad.

Again the English planned some fresh troubles in Malabar to divert the attention of Tipu from the Carnatic area where they tasted defeat from him. Col Fullerton was

entrusted to carry out this English design. With the support of the *Raja* of Travancore and *Zamorin* he marched to Palaghatcherry and Palaghatcherry surrendered without much resistance. When the English forces retired from Palakkad, it was occupied by their ally the *Zamorin*. But *Zamorin* could not hold it longer. *Zamorin* had run away from the fort in fear of Tipu Sultan. On March 11, 1784 the treaty of Mangalore was signed. The Malabar possessions of Tipu thus emerged once more as a part of his Kingdom.

After this, the Malabar affairs were conducted by the Mysorean officers. The Palakkad fort was garrisoned by the Mysorean army. It was the head quarters of the southern division of Malabar and the nerve centre of the Mysorean activities. Around the Palakkad fort, a large town was developed with flourishing merchants and industrious inhabitants.¹⁷ In the period when Malabar was under the Mysorean occupation, Palakkad played a predominant role in Kerala politics.

Tipu requested the alliance of *Raja* of Travancore and an amicable settlement of all their disputes. *Raja* of Travancore did not accept this offer. Tipu came to Palakkad by the end of October 1789. On December 24, he marched to Travancore and encamped about 4 miles from the lines. In the early hours of April 15 1790, Tipu attacked the lines and with little or no resistance occupied it. The line was completely demolished and the whole Travancore territory lay open before Tipu. One after another, Cranganore, Ayyicottah, Parur and other places fell into the hands of the Mysoreans.

¹⁷ Buchanan, n 5 pp 368-69

The British Rule

Cornwallis declared war against Tipu under the pretext of his attack on the "company's ally and friend" In the first phase of the war itself the whole of Malabar was over run by the English, even though Tipu had won some brilliant victories over his enemy in the Carnatic and his own Kingdom Col. Stuart who was ordered to move to Malabar appeared before the Palakkad fort, the strong hold of the Mysoreans on September 21, 1790 In less than two hours the fort was silenced and before night a practicable breach was effected Before day light, the garrison called out for capitulation

By the end of 1790, the Mysore power in Malabar was practically replaced by the East India company The war ended only in 1792 after the treaty of Seringapatam. The cession of Malabar to the East India company a place of strategic and commercial importance facilitated the English supremacy in India

Under British administration, the district achieved significant progress in various spheres However, the period also witnessed some of the violent disturbances, known as 'Mappila riots'. These outbreaks also took place in various parts of the then Valluvanad, Palakkad and Ponnani *taluks*, major portions of which now form the Palakkad district. According to Malabar District gazetteer, the Mappila outbreaks may be attributed to three main causes - poverty, agrarian discontent and fanaticism.

The Freedom Movement

The Congress Was formed in Malabar in 1910, but it was inactive till the formation of the Home Rule League in 1915. Sri. K P Kesavamenon took active part in the Home Rule League Movement and the organization of Indian National Congress in Palakkad The first National Conference was held in Palakkad in 1916 under the Presidentship of Annie

Basant The second annual conference was held at Calicut in 1917, the third at Tellicherry in 1918 The Ottapalam conference of district Congress committee held on April 23, 1921 was a turning point in the political movement of this district. A large gathering of people affirmed their support to *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation movement at this conference An important feature of this conference was that Muslims and Hindus, land lords and tenants, all joined together against the foreign rule.

Within a period of three months after this conference, the whole Malabar was plunged into the most unfortunate chaotic conditions with the outbreak of the last Malabar revolt of 1921-22 On 22nd August 1921, railway lines were broken at many places, most of the main roads were blocked on the same day, trees were dropped across and bridges and culverts were broken The Inspector General of Police reported that in Pattambi and Pallipuram, a number of bridges were destroyed. In fact, almost the whole southern division of Malabar was freely under the control of the rebels for nearly six months It took more than 18 months to suppress the revolt and re-establish the British regime. No one can definitely say what was the total number of rebels killed in this event It is calculated that more than 12000 were killed where as more than 14000 were court-martialed and either sentenced for death or transported for life.

After this rebellion the Congress became very inactive in almost all parts of this district for many years But during this period of political inactivity political journalism started spreading its roots in Malabar. "*The Mathrubhumi*", "*Al-Amin*" ,and "*The Yuvabharatam*" played significant role in the propagation and spread of national spirit among the people

The people of this district participated in the boycott of the Simon commission of 1928. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the fourth all Kerala provincial conference held at Payyannur in May 1928. The salt *Satyagraha* of March 1930 had its impact in this district too. A batch of Congress volunteers under the leadership of T.K. Krishnaswami Iyer started on foot from Palakkad to Payyannur and violated the salt law. The police arrested leaders like Kelappan, T.R. Krishna Swami Iyer, P. Krishna Pillai, K. Madhavan Nair and others and sentenced them to 9 months rigorous imprisonment. The civil disobedience movement died out in Kerala together with in other parts of India after the Gandhi Irwin Pact of 1931. All arrested persons were released from jail. The withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement brought widespread discontent among the youth of this district. Palakkad was in the fore front of the second Civil Disobedience Movement also. In May 1934, Gandhiji again withdrew the Civil Disobedience Movement. The progressive elements all over India got dissatisfied with this decision. It was during this month that the All India Socialist party was formed. P. Krishna Pillai, E.M. Sankaran Namboothiripad were the founder members of the Kerala Branch of the All India Socialist Party. During this period, the branch of the All India Muslim League also began to function. The Kerala Branch of the Indian Communist Party was established by the year 1939.¹⁸

There were difference of opinion between the right and left wings in the Congress. In Kerala the left wing was more influential. They were even ready to fight against the central leadership on important issues. So the central leadership decided to reorganize the

¹⁸ Kareem, n 2 p 140

Congress in Kerala. The result was that the Socialist in the Congress rallied round the Communist Party of India.

During the 'Quit India' movement of 1942, many political workers were arrested and detained from this district. The Communists did not participate in this movement. After securing Independence in 1947, there was a realignment of political forces in this district. At present the Marxist party and allies are one of the major political forces in the Palakkad district.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Palakkad, one of the interior districts of Kerala, is unique in many respects. The continuity of the majestic western *ghats*, which stretches over, 1000 kms is broken at Palakkad gap with a width of 32 kms. On either side of the gap are the giant Nilgiris and Anamalais. The climate of the district is greatly influenced by this gap, as it enables the north-east winds to blow spreading its wings right up to the coast through out the breadth of the gap. Since the district gets the benefit of south-west and north east winds, rainfall is heavy in both the seasons and consequently The Palakkad district has extensive paddy fields and is aptly known as the *granery* of Kerala. The eastern region of the district has high mountains, extensive ravines and dense forests. In the southern part, there are a number of estates. To the west of this region, is the plains broken here and there by formed some isolated hills. There is no low land region in this district.

The mountains of this district, ranging from 914 to 2132.7 metres, form the western ghat. It forms a formidable fortress on the eastern side of the district. Anginda is the highest peak [2,383 metres] followed by Karimala [1,998] Padagiri [1,585] and Karimala Gopuram [1,440]. Other important peaks are Kalladikode, Vellachimudi, and Myanamudi, etc.

Originating from Anamalai hills at about 610 meters above the mean sea level, Bharathapuzha, the longest river in the state traverses through the Pollachi *taluk* of the Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu, before entering in the Palakkad district. The main river passes through Palakkad and Ottappalam *taluks* and finally it empties into the sea at Ponnani in Malappuram into the sea at Ponnani in the Malappuram district

Bhavani river rises from the Kunda mountains near Bhawaniar Betta in Nilgiris. After flowing circuitously for about 18 km. through the Attappady valley, it takes a north eastern direction and enters into Tamil Nadu.

Siruvani is in fact an important tributary of Bhavani river. It originates from the hills on the northern edge of the Palakkad gap and flows into a deep and legendary lake called Muthukulam.

The climate of this district is slightly different from the rest of the state, as it is influenced by the presence of Palakkad gap. The district has a tropical climate with an oppressive hot season and plentiful seasonal rainfall. Summer starts from February onwards and temperature rises steadily till the end of May. It is followed by the southwest monsoon which lasts till September. During this season, there is abundant rainfall. The north east or retreating monsoon winds flow during October and November. Because of the Palakkad gap, the district experiences heavy rainfall and winds during the northeast monsoon season. The period from December to February is generally dry in this district. The meteorological observatory at Palakkad records that March and April are the hottest months in a year.

THE ECONOMIC PROFILE

Palakkad is predominantly an agricultural area and industry backward due to lack of power supply and communication facilities. Palakkad district being the granary of the State,

has rice as the most important commodity manufactured. It is cultivated in three seasons, viz, Autumn, Winter and Summer Sugarcane, another important crop is cultivated in a large scale in Chittur taluk Mangoes, banana, and plantains are the important fresh fruits cultivated in this district Coconut, arecanut, cashewnut, coffee, tea, cardamom, pepper and rubber are also cultivated in the Palakkad district

Agricultural implements are the principal commodity manufactured in Shornur town Handloom cloth, matches, fish and earthen vessels are exported from Chittur and Thathamangalm There are also some metal industries, electronic and electrical industries, bricks and tiles manufacturing units in this district. Palakkad and Ottappalam blocks are the comparatively better developed industrial areas in the district.

THE SOCIAL PROFILE

Total population of the district according to the 1991 Census is 2382,235 persons, comprising of 1155,822 males and 1226,413 females Rural population of the district is 2007,658 persons (972,765 males and 1034,893 females) and urban population is 374,577 persons (183,057 males and 191,520 females)

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of the district as per the 1991 census is 378,548 persons and 35,465 persons respectively The rural-urban breakup of this population is indicated below.

Rural (i) Scheduled Castes 333881

(ii) Scheduled Tribes 34899

Urban (i) Scheduled Castes 44667

(ii) Scheduled Tribes 566

The urban population of the district as percentage of total population in the census years 1981 and 1991 is indicated below. It also shows the sex ratio (females per 1000 males) and density (population of per sq km.) in the urban population of the district in relation to the state.

TABLE 2-1

THE URBAN POPULATION

State / District	Urban population as percentage of total population	Sex ratio 1991 (Females per 1000 males)	Density (population per sq kms)
	1981 1991	Total Rural Urban	
Kerala	18 74 26 44	1040 1043 1033	747
Palakkad	10 11 15 75	1063 1066 1046	530

Source: Census of India (1981,1991)

TABLE 2-2

SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION OF PALAKKAD

No.	Tribe	Total
1.	Eravalar	3615
2	Irular	22,390
3	Kadar	902
4.	Kurumban	1211
5	Malayan	2100
6	Mudugar	4915
7	Paniyan	304
8	Ulladan	28
	Total	35,456

Source: S T. Development Department Records

As regards language of the peoples of this district, Malayalam is the main language Tamil and Telugu are also spoken in the district

Religion-wise breakup of population is indicated below as per the 1991 census
Hindus 1679544, Muslims : 684352, Christians . 96953, Sikhs : 24, Bhudhists . 11, Jains 11, Other religions and persuasions : 201, Religion not stated . 1059

According to the 1991 Census , total literates (excluding the population in the age group of 0-6 years) is 1658,781 persons Of these, 857,216 are males and 801,565 are females In the rural areas of the district,, 1376762 persons (712,088 males and 664,674 females) are literates and in urban areas 282,019 persons (145,128 males and 136,891 females) are literates The rate of literacy of this population to the total population, excluding 0-6 years age group according to the 1991 census is shown below :

TABLE 2-3
LITERACY RATE

	Persons	Males	Females
Total	81 27	87 24	75 72
Rural	80 20	86 30	74.56
Urban	86 87	92 15	81 90

Source : Census of India, 1991

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The growth of Palakkad district as a distinct administrative unit began after the 1st January 1957 When the states of the Indian Union were formed on linguistic basis under the States Reorganization Act of 1956 [Central Act 37 of 1956], the erstwhile Malabar district was separated from the Madras state and integrated with the Travancore- Cochin

state to form the new linguistic state of Kerala. But due to the unwieldy nature of the district, the Malabar district was trifurcated into the revenue districts of Cannanore, Kozhikode and Palakkad for administrative convenience.

The Palakkad district thus formed consisted of old Valluvanad *taluk*, Palakkad *taluk* and a portion of Ponnani *taluk* of Malabar district and Chittur *taluk* of the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin State. On the same date, the Valluvanadu *taluk* was bifurcated into Perinthalmanna and Ottappalam *taluks*. The old Palakkad *taluk* was trifurcated into Palakkad, Alathur and portion of Chittur *taluk*. The present Chittur *taluk* thus covers *taluks* of erstwhile Travancore-Cochin State and 14 villages of the old Palakkad *taluk* of the erstwhile Malabar district. The old Ponnani *taluk* of Malabar district was also trifurcated to form Ponnani, Chavakad and portion of Tirur *taluk*. Of these, Palakkad district was formed comprising 6 *taluks*, viz., Perinthalmanna, Ponnani, Ottappalam, Palakkad, Alathur and Chittur.

The Palakkad district had undergone some changes in jurisdiction when a new district, namely Malapuram was formed in 1969. Mannarghat *taluk* was newly formed comprising 19 reorganised villages of the erstwhile Perinthalmanna *taluk*. Paradur village of Tirur *taluk* transferred to the Ottappalam *taluk*, Ponnani *taluk* which hitherto formed part of the Palakkad district was transferred to the Malapuram district. At present, the district consists of the following *taluks*, development blocks, and Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies,

Taluks

Ottappalam, Mannarkad, Palakkad, Chittur, Alathur

Development Blocks

Thrithala, Pattambi, Ottappalam, Sreekrishnapuram, Mannarkad, Attappadi, Palakkad, Koyalmannam, Chittur, Kollengode, Nemmara, Alathur.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Palakkad , Ottappalam

Assembly Constituencies

Sreekrishnapuram, Mannarkad, Malampuzha, Palakkad, Chittur, Kllengode, Alathur, Thrithala,Pattambi, Ottapalam, Koyalmannam, Chelakara,Wadakkancherry, Kunnamkulam

In the light of our discussion of history, geography, socio-cultural, economic and administrative profiles of the palakkad district, we now propose to go into details about the various tribal communities of the Palakkad district in the next chapter