

THE 1949 COCHIN PICTORIAL ISSUE GENUINE OR FANTASY?



by Donald B. Griffin

Most collectors of the Indian Native States are probably aware of the 1949 Cochin pictorial issue. I venture that few of these collectors know that this issue of two stamps was intended to comprise an issue of thirteen stamps of which ten were to be pictorials. Still fewer of these collectors probably know of the proposed designs or have seen illustrations of them.

The major catalogs list the two issued pictorials as numbers 100 and 101 (Scott) and 117 and 118 (Gibbons). Until these stamps were issued the Cochin Anchal had, for thirty eight years, used the same design for all of its postal emissions. The stamps during this period differed only in the portrait

of the reigning raja which formed the central portion of the design.

The first reference to this issue that I have seen occurs in the May 1947 issue of India's Stamp Journal. On page 105 Antony Tavsons mentions that the Cochin Anchal department "... has decided to change the size and design of both the anchal and service stamps in order to make them more attractive. . . ." Stamps of two, three and four pies denominations were to use the portrait of the Maharaja Sri Kerala Varma II—the so-called "sixth raja" design (Scotts A16 and Gibbons #30 designs). Following these three Tavsons describes the following:

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COCHIN (Cont'd)

Denomination	Vignette
6 Pies	Secretariat Building
9 Pies	Cochin Harbour
11/4 Annas	Cochin Backwaters
13/4 Annas	Tramway
2 Annas	Chinese Net
2 1/4 Annas	Dutch Palace
3 Annas	Ram Mohan Palace
3 As 4 Pies	Cocoanut Palms
6 As 8 Pies	Synagogue
10 Annas	Hill Palace

A friend and former contributor to the CCP has advised the author that at least one proof sheet showing the last ten values of this proposed issue has surfaced in India. His photocopy of this sheet constitutes the illustration of this note.

Without commenting on the pedigree of the sheet the illustrated designs are,

logically, probably correct. Two of them (Dutch Palace and Chinese Net) are, of course, correct. That on the 6 As 8 Pies closely resembles and may be identical to that used in 1968 for India's Synagogue commemorative; this is understandable since the Cochin 1949 issue was also printed at Nasik. Too, the designs of the 1 1/4 Anna and 2 Annas stamps seem to have also been used by George Woodcock as two of the illustrations in his book "Kerala, A Portrait of the Malabar Coast" (Faber and Faber, London, 1967).

A final note—the fact (?) that this item seems to have just surfaced after some twenty five years should not be held against its genuineness. Although forged material is definitely coming out of India so, too, is hitherto unrecognized, genuine material being located.