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**The Origin and Spread of Christianity in Malabar
(Kerala):
Scenario prior to the European advent (1498 AD)**

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RESUMO

A presente dissertação pretende estudar a história da origem e crescimento da fé cristã, bem como as alterações e conflitos sócio-culturais-espirituais provocados em Malabar, Índia (atual estado de Kerala). A fé cristã, de acordo com a tradição em Malabar, possui raízes no primeiro século de Nosso Senhor. De acordo com estudos históricos, bem como com a tradição, foi S. Tomé Apóstolo quem trouxe a fé aos povos de Malabar. Estes tornaram-se historicamente conhecidos como “Cristãos de Tomé”.

A fé cristã em Malabar enfrentou três tipos de inculturações sociais e atravessou vários conflitos sociopolíticos: (a) a chegada do Apóstolo, em 52 AD., (b) a migração de cristãos persas (siríacos/caldaicos), em 345 AD., e (c) o aparecimento dos primeiros europeus, portugueses, em 1498. Três capítulos deste trabalho abordam detalhadamente cada um destes aspetos. Uma origem, crescimento e sustentabilidade do cristianismo na Índia possui variados fenómenos históricos. Esta história encontra-se abundantemente relacionada com a Teologia e Espiritualidade da fé cristã em Malabar e ainda mais com o modo de vida do povo da região. Como sociedade ancestral, com muitas tradições culturais e sociais e com um sistema de castas, Malabar aceitou uma religião como o cristianismo, à época da sua origem, muito recente e dissemelhante das suas crenças.

Diferentes nações chegaram a Malabar e transformaram as convicções e modo de vida dos nativos. A Pérsia e Portugal deram-lhes diferentes Ritos de rituais e devoções, da mesma fé cristã. Mas, não obstante, o cristianismo em Malabar é forte e encontra-se em crescimento. Existem três Ritos católicos: latino, sírio-Malabar e sírio-Malankara.

Palavras-chave:

Malabar, história comercial de Malabar, S. Tomás Apóstolo, Sete Igrejas e Meia de S. Tomás, conceito de Deus no hinduísmo, sistema de castas da Índia, igreja Knanaya/Caldaica/Siríaca/Persa, primeiras missões latinas na Índia, portugueses na Índia

ABSTRACT

This dissertation intends to study the history of origin and growth of Christian faith and the socio-cultural-spiritual changes and conflicts which made in Malabar, India (now state of Kerala). The Christian faith, according to the tradition in Malabar, has a root from the first century of our Lord. According to the historical studies and tradition St. Thomas the Apostle has given faith to the people of Malabar. They became known in the history as 'Thomas Christians'.

Christian faith in Malabar faced three kinds of social inculturations and passed through many socio-political wars. (a) The arrival of Apostle in 52 AD., (b) the migration of Persian Christians (Syriac/Chaldaic) in 345 AD., and (c) the arrival of first Europeans, Portuguese in 1498. Three chapters of this work consider each of these aspects in detail. An origin, growth and sustainability of Christianity in India had many historical phenomena. This history has many things to relate with Theology and Spirituality of Christian faith in Malabar and more over the way of life of people in the land. As an ancient society with many cultural and social customs, and caste systems, Malabar received a religion like Christianity in its time of origin, which was very new and different from their thoughts.

Different nations came to Malabar and changed the convictions and way of life of natives. Persia and Portugal have given them different Rites of rituals and devotions of same Christian faith. But even though Christianity in Malabar is strong and growing. There exists three Catholic Rites: Latin, Syro-Malabar, and Syro-Malankara.

Keywords:

Malabar, Malabar trade history, St. Thomas the Apostle, St. Thomas Christians, Seven and half Churches of St. Thomas, God concept of Hinduism, Caste system of India, Knanaya/Chaldaic/Syriac/Persian Church, first Latin missions in India, Portuguese in India,

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Biblical

OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Kgs	Kings
Ch	Chronicles
Mt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
Lk	Luke
Jn	John

St. Thomas

GTh	Gospel of Thomas
BTh	Book of Thomas
ATh	Act of Thomas
IGTh	Infancy Gospel of Thomas
LTh	Law of Thomas

General

AD	Anno Domini (After Christ)
BC	Before Christ
Km	Kilometre
Cen	Century
St.	Saint
Mr.	Mister

Fr.	Father/Priest
Bl.	Blessed
Dom.	Denomination of respect in Portuguese
Syro	Syriac/Syrian
vol.	Volume
ed.	Editor/Edition
Co.	Company/Organisation
i.e.	id est (Latin)/ 'that is to say'
n.d.	No Date

INTRODUCTION

Relevance Of The Study

The state of Kerala, which is an integral part in India was early known as Malabar. The Malabar has witnessed the proclamation of faith in Christianity as early as it had experienced in Rome. This marks the presence of evangelization from one of the twelve apostles of Christ. Jesus had told His disciples to be witnesses for Him unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Act 1,8). This tradition of ancient faith in Christianity was spread in Malabar because of Christ's dictum to his disciples to spread his words to all parts of the earth. To fulfill this desire of Jesus Christ, his apostles unfurled to all parts of the world. As a result of this St. Thomas came to Malabar for his mission work. The presence and work of St. Thomas in Malabar could be traced from the early century soon after the era of Christ. The same is appended by majority of writers, travelers, and historians.

Malabar had a vast trade relation with the other part of the world from the early time of BC. There were trade routes, through the land and sea which connected Malabar to the rest of the world. It was not impossible for an Apostle to visit the land in century because Malabar was very famous to the whole world on account of its spices, animals, and trees and there were famous trade routes to reach the land. It is evident from the ancient literatures about the worldwide fame of Malabar from BC.

From the period of first Jerusalem Temple, the presence of Jews in Malabar is confirmed by many of the historians. According to the tradition St. Thomas came to Malabar, India to preach the Gospel to the Jews of diaspora. No other nation has like this strong tradition in the name of Thomas Apostle. The patristic writings from third century have propagated the visit of Apostle Thomas in India.

When a religion like Christianity came to India, where had many religions with polytheism, pantheism and atheism, there emerged many socio-cultural and spiritual conflicts in the community. The first shock of knowledge about a religion, which is monotheistic and a sacrament of baptism to become a member of it made many confusions in the society. As whole of the India had strong caste system, a religion like Christianity which do not consider the caste, but equal identity made easy for many conversions in a short period.

There was another situation of socio-spiritual inculturation when Persian Christians migrated to Malabar. Later the religious state of Malabar became 'Hindu in culture, Christian

in religion, Oriental in worship'. and happened the same when Portuguese came to Malabar with *Padroado* Mission.

As a Christian from Malabar and above all as a student of Theology I believe that it is very much essential to study about the birth, nourishment and faith mission of the Church of Malabar happened in the first century onwards. It is mandatory to have knowledge about the theological and spiritual growth that Malabar had in history and how the present socio-religious situation emerged in the land.

Aim And Task

Through this systematic study of dissertation, I would like to study the three major socio-political interventions which Malabar had in the base of Christian faith and mission. The objectives are:

1. In 52 AD., an Apostle of Christ, St. Thomas came to Malabar for the evangelisation and the faith mission. Which all drastic changes had happened in the society through this incident? What are the inculturation that Christianity had in Malabar in the ambient of a major religion like Hinduism? How did the people of Malabar accept a new faith which was monotheistic and very new to their idea? Thomas tradition in apocryphal works, such as the *Gospel of Thomas* (GTh), the *Book of Thomas* (BTh), the *Acts of Thomas* (ATh), and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (IGTh), have long been misunderstood, and they are not yet non-canonical. Relating with these texts what the tradition and the history define about Thomas the Apostle? is also an aim of research.
2. In 345 AD. There was a Christian migration to Malabar from the Persia. Thomas of Cana and many families came to Malabar due to the Christian persecution during the reign of Sapor II of Sassanian Empire (Iran). There were many cultural and spiritual changes between the migrated Christians of Persia and the natives of Malabar. Especially there had been linguistic and liturgical contrast between the St. Thomas Christians and the Persian migrated Christians. Through the migrated Christians the Persian bishops took charge of the whole Christians in Malabar from the time of St. Thomas and instituted their liturgy and rituals among them.

There were many social disputes and contradictions in the mixed Christian community of Malabar. Which all were the social changes happened in Malabar people? How long these clashes continued and resolved? How did the Persian Church helped the Christians of Malabar to grow in the Christian faith and culture?

3. In 1291 the first Latin monks came to Malabar, what they could do for the Church of Malabar, In the sake of Rome? Then in 1498 as the first Europeans, Portuguese came to Malabar under the guidance of Vasco Da Gama. The *Padroado* mission of the Portuguese found a Christian community with a very different way of life, liturgy, and rituals in Malabar. They had a faith tradition of an Apostle from Jerusalem, later a mixing of Persian aspects in the faith life.

As Portuguese had Latin Rite and great relation to Holy See of Rome, the Christian life they encountered in Malabar was very strange. Through the *Padroado Mission* they started to change the rituals and liturgy from the Syriac Rite to the Latin Rite. There had been many disputes between the traditional Thomas Christians, the Jews, Persian migrated Christians, and Portuguese Christians. Christianity in the third phase of its inculturation in Malabar was happened through the Portuguese. What was the result of this third encounter of a new culture, rite, and custom of Europe with the Malabar Christianity and social system?

Research Methodology

This systematic study is an attempt to explore the logical aspects of the evangelisation and the social changes happened in the socio-cultural part of Malabar in particular. First, the research goes to the trade relations that Malabar had with the rest of the world from BC. Then studying the possibility of the reach of an Apostle in Malabar in the first century and how did the commercial transaction made easy to have inculturation in the social system of the land.

It is fundamental to conduct research about the possibilities and the evidence of an Apostolic tradition in Malabar from 52 AD. and excavate more the documents for appending this strong ancient tradition. In this context it becomes essential to examine the classical writings and the notes of travellers of the time. As in India there was no system like preserving the historical data, it will be helpful to relay on the travelogues and historical books written by experts from outside India. The historical-critique method is apt for this dissertation. The *traditio*-historical study about the Thomas Christians will help to understand the theological and political aspect of the evangelisation and faith mission that happened in Malabar through the ages.

The patristic and Magisterium literary tools will help to find the corroborations and sources of Thomas's apostleship to India/Malabar. A wide analysis of various documents

written from the 3rd century, the Church Fathers and Church Councils will be a great help for this study. The chronicles written by the travellers and the Persian and Portuguese people will provide materials for this research.

Exegetical analysis of historical works which have literary, historical, theological, and religious explanations will help this study. The libraries of India, especially of Kerala, the National Library of Portugal, Torre de Tombo, library of Catholic University of Portugal, National Library of Netherlands etc can help to get the fonts and literary tools for this work.

Plan Of Research

This work is based on research of three inventions that happened in the socio-cultural-religious realm of Malabar from 52 AD., 345 AD., and 1498 AD. First it is necessary to find the evidence and possibility of apostleship of Thomas in India. Or any one from Jerusalem, of the Christian faith came to Malabar to evangelize the people in the 1st century. Then the social changes that, as a new religion, Christianity brought to the social system of Malabar.

The Persian migration; its political and religious background and the inculturation in Malabar. How the Persian church made hierarchy and introduced their rituals and liturgy to the St. Thomas Christians. How this immigration affected the indigenous growth of the ancient St. Thomas Christian community in Malabar.

At the third part, study the innovation of Portuguese and the changes they brought in aspects of religion, culture, liturgy, and rite among the Malabar Christians. How the inculturation happened in the land. What kind of conflicts and confusions the Malabar Christians confronted? And in which all aspects Malabar Christians gained in this inculturation.

Chapter 1.

St. Thomas The Apostle Tradition Of Malabar (Kerala) (AD 52-)

Regarding the life, mission and the martyrdom of the Thomas Apostle in India, there are many proofs according to the classic historians of all over the world. From the 4th century onwards, we have valuable evidence for the same. The Greco-Roman classical writers and historians from Hecataeus of Miletus (550-476 BC.) give evidence about the trade relation and the possibilities of traveling through sea and land that Malabar had from the ancient time with the middle east and Europe. The Church Fathers from Origin (186-254 AD.) write about the evangelisation of Apostle in India and the origin of Christianity in the land from the first century of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

1.1. Trade History of Malabar

From the very ancient time Malabar (Kerala) had a very diverse trade relation with the Western Asian countries. Before Christ, from the year 3000 onwards through the civilisation centres like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, Malabar had a splendid kind of commercial relations with the Arabian Countries. Malabar was very famous in its spices production and that attracted the foreigners to the land from the antique time of 3000 BC.¹ The trade relation made the land a hub of social, cultural, and a religious transaction place. Different languages and the way of live have been entered and Malabar got a new face of diversity.

“So, Malabar (Kerala) was in touch with all the ancient, civilised nations of the world like Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Phoenicia, Greece, Italy, and China. Possibly, in pre-historic times, Malabar was brought in touch with another cultural centre viz., Mohenjo-Daro.”²

Malabar or Kerala are the chief names given to the narrow strip of land which has been from the ancient times, the home of the Christians. It lies between the Western Ghats and the

¹ C. V. Cherian, *Malankara Orthodox Church History, 52-1836* (Malayalam Heritage, 1989), 18.

² K. K. Kusuman, *A History of Trade & Commerce in Travancore, 1600-1805* (Mittal Publications, 1987), 1.

Arabian Sea, stretching from Cape Comorin some 350 miles northwards.³ Malabar was the familiar word used by the early historians and travellers to denote modern Kerala. Al Biruni, an Iranian scholar (AD. 970-1039) appears to have been the first to call the country by its proper name Malabar.⁴

Before that there were different names were used to denote this land. Neither Kerala nor Travancore was mentioned by the writers or travellers. During the past the name Malabar was used to denote the whole Kerala in common. And now it is reduced to the extreme north part of it. The following are the few of the various forms in which the word Malabar was written by the ancient geographers and travellers:

“Al Biruni (A.D 970-1039) Melibar, Al Idirisi (A.D 1153) Manibar, Rashidu’ddin (A.D 1247-1381) Manibar, Al Kazwini (A.D 1263-1275) Malibar, Abulfeda (A.D 1273-1381) Manibar, Ibn Batuta (A.D 1342-1347) Malibar, Bakui-Malibar, Marco Polo (A.D 1271-1294) Melibar, Friar Odoric (A.D 1286-1330) Minibar, Marignolli (A.D 1290-1355) Mynibar, John of Monte Corvino (A.D 1291) Minabar, Friar Jordanus (A.D 1320) Molebar, Nicolo Conti (A.D 1419) Melibaria, Fra Mouro (A.D 1440) Melibar.”⁵

Malabar in the present time is the State of Kerala, one of the 28 states of India. The ancient ports of Malabar were very famous worldwide. These ports made easy the trade of spices and other goods. ‘Malabar had three famous ports named: Cranganore, which is formerly known as Mahodayapuram or (Vanchi/ Muziris/ Kodungallur/ Tyndis); then Berkarai (Baraka/Varkala?) and Nelcynda (Nirkunnam). And these were the principal ports of the time. Thus, Malabar was the centre of the spices production for the world markets.’⁶

“Muziris, the Cranganore of modern times, was the celebrated port and capital of the Chera Kingdom, one of the three Tamil kingdoms (Chera, Chola and Pandya), among whom the whole of South India was then divided”.⁷

³ Mathias Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552* (Bangalore, India: Dharmaram College, 1967), 2.

⁴ K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, vol. I (Ernakulam, India: Cochin Government Press, 1924), 1-2.

⁵ Menon, I:2.

⁶ Kusuman, *A History of Trade & Commerce in Travancore, 1600-1805*, 1.

⁷ George Mark Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier: A.D. 52-1542* (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1964), 35.

The ancient coastal city named Ur which situated about 140 miles (225 Km) southeast of the site of Babylon and about 10 miles (16 Km) west of the present bed of the Euphrates River, dates from 3800 BC, was a Sumerian city state in the old Mesopotamia, and now is in South Iraq. The king Ur-ea / Ur-Bagash, who ruled not later than 3000 BC had constructed a city named Mugheir, the ancient city of Ur of Chaldea (Gen 11, 28; 31), and there have been founded the ruins of Teak woods from India.⁸ This tree grows in the Southern India (Deccan) and that is very close to the Malabar coast and nowhere else.⁹

Then it is evident that from the ancient time about 3000 BC, Kerala was known to far lands because of its spices and other natural goods. Kerala had a vast trade relation and the exchange of the culture from this very antique period. There are many authors and historians who affirm the same.

“Carving of the Neolithic age indicating that the southwest coastal port of India – Muziris, in Kerala, as a major spice centre from as early as 3000 B.C, indicates the beginning of the spice trade of India with the Western world through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea”.¹⁰

The Chaldeans traders had also made their way to the western coast of India. Apart from the ruins of the Teak wood from India, an ancient Babylonian list of clothing which is known as *sindhu* or “muslin” (vegetable cloth), the *sadin* (Hebrew) of Old Testament, “σινδών” of the Greeks, which means “the Indian” made cloth also had been recognised. And which proves that these Indian trades with West were happened by sea and not by land because the city Mugheir was a coastal city.¹¹

“We now know that there was intercourse at a very early period between Chaldea and the Sinaitic Peninsula, as well as with India...Teak wood has been founded at the Mugheir, or Ur of the Chaldeans, although that wood is an Indian special product¹². The teak wood found in

⁸ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:299.

⁹ Baldeo Sahi, *Indian Navy, A Perspective: From the Earliest Period to Modern Times* (University of California, 2011), 8.

¹⁰ Amit Baran Sharangi, *Indian Spices: The Legacy, Production and Processing of India's Treasured Export* (Springer, 2018), 14–15.

¹¹ A. H. Sayce, *The Hibbert Lectures, 1887: Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 136–38.

¹² H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 226.

lower Chaldea must have been brought by sea, and the cotton, also believed to have been imported”.¹³

According to the British historian and Theologian George Rawlinson (1812-1902), in 3000 BC, in the temple of Moon at Mugheir (Ur) and in the Palace of the Nebuchadnezzar, had been founded the Teak woods from India. More than teak wood, Rawlinson proves that the ancient Chaldea had trade of gold, tin, silks, pearls, spices, and other articles of commerce with India through the “Ships of Ur”.¹⁴

These are the typical products from Kerala in the old and in the present time. The trade relation that Kerala had with the Chaldean lands made many transactions of culture and the social changes. Especially later we see that, after the emergence of Christianity by St. Thomas Apostle, Kerala had the guidance and help from the part of Chaldean Church.

From the prehistoric times, three ancient trade routes have connected India with the West. And the Persian Gulf route must be the oldest of these. Through these trade routes India had the commerce relation with Persian and Arabian coasts, up the Red Sea to Egypt Tyre and Sidon. The trade between the Indus Valley and the Euphrates is very ancient. The very earliest proof of this intercourse is seen in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Hittite Kings of Mitanni in Cappadocia, which is belongs to the fourteenth or the fifteenth century BC.¹⁵

“It is widely believed that from the time of Solomon (1000 BC) Palestine had a trade relation with India of gold. “But the return cargoes in these triennial voyages were not made up of gold only, but also of silver, apes, ivory, peacocks and almug or sandal wood”.¹⁶

According to the famous English historian Reginald Bosworth Smith (1839-1908), the ancient North African city called Carthage (Now Republic of Tunisia) which was existed in 1000 BC had its big doors built by the Sandalwoods from Malabar (Kerala)^{17, 18}. He explains

¹³ Edith Jemima Simcox, *Primitive Civilisations: Or Outlines of the History of Ownership in Archaic Communities* (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), 232.

¹⁴ George Rawlinson, *The Seven Greek Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World: Chaldea the History, Geography and Antiquities of Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, Parthia, and Sassanian or New Persian Empire, with Maps and Illustrations*, vol. 1 (Tredition, 2012), IV.

¹⁵ H. G. Rawlinson, *Intercourse Between India and the Western World, From the Earliest Time to the Fall of Rome* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1916), 1.

¹⁶ J. F. Hewitt, ‘Notes on the Early History of Northern India, Part II’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 21 (n.d.): 204.

¹⁷ K. L. Bernard, *Flashes of Kerala History* (Kochi: Swaraj Printers, 1995), 12.

¹⁸ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:298.

the trade relation that Carthage had with the shore lands like Arabia, Egypt, Sahara, and Malabar through the sea route with the help of the Polar Star. The Greeks also depended on the sea route for their trade in that era.¹⁹ Sandalwood is found indigenous in India only, and there chiefly on the coast of Malabar.²⁰

“They depended on the Great Bear. It was they who rounded the capes of storms...called it the Cape of Good Hope, 2000 years before Vasco de Gama. Their ships returned to their native shores bringing with them sandal woods from Malabar”.²¹

From the historians, travellers, and writers we realise that Malabar had trade relation from the very antient time of BC with far lands. Then Malabar was famous in all over the world and there had been antique trade routes through the land and the sea which connected Malabar to different countries. There were many travellers who visited the land. Then in the first century, exactly in 52 AD it was not impossible the journey of St. Thomas the Apostle to Malabar. There are no countries affirm the mission of Apostle Thomas like Malabar. The antient and strong tradition of Malabar on the faith mission of Apostle is accepted by most of the writers and historians.

1.1.1 India And Malabar In Ancient Greek And Roman Classics

It is essential to study how the antient writers and historians speak about Malabar. In many of the Greek and Roman authors from 550 BC we find the explanations about this land. Which gives the glimpse that this land was very much known to the whole world from the very old times. Let us also consider the authors who write about India from the time BC. Some of the famous ports of India includes the ports of Malabar. These writings declare the fame that India had in the old time. The Greeks and the Romans had trade relation with India.

¹⁹ Reginald Bosworth Smith, *Rome, and Carthage: The Punic Wars* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 1–2.

²⁰ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:298.

²¹ Reginald Bosworth Smith, *Cartage, and the Carthaginians* (Longmans, Green, and Company, 1878), 2–3.

1.1.1.1 Hecataeus of Miletus (550-476 BC)

Hecataeus was an early Greek historian and geographer and known as the “Father of Geography”. He is the first known Greek historian and was one of the first classical writers to mention the Celtic people and the first Greek historian write about India.²²

“In 517 BC, the Greek Scylax of Caryanda was send by Darius I to explore the Indus River valley, and his now-lost book, *Gen Periodos*, is earliest known first-hand account of India by a Greek. The earliest Greek map to indicate India-was drawn by Hecataeus of Miletus”.²³

He has written a work of systematic geography, the *Periegesis* or *Periodos Ges* (“Journey Round the World”), divided in to two books: “Europe” and “Asia”. The work provides information about the places and peoples to be encountered on a clockwise costal voyage round the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, which ending on the inland to Scythia, Persia, India, Egypt, and Nubia.²⁴

1.1.1.2 Herodotus (484 - 413 BC)

The Greek historian Herodotus who lived in Persian Empire (Now Turkey) is considered as the one of the first Greek authors who wrote about India. According to the Roman writer and thinker Cicero (106 - 43 BC), Herodotus is the father of history (in the work “The Histories”). Herodotus states that the goods brought the Arabs from Malabar were sold to the Hebrews at Aden still the time of surrender of Egypt to the Romans.²⁵ “Herodotus mentions that the Red Sea trade in frank incense and myrrh, and cinnamon and cassia (the two latter being Malabar products)²⁶, was in the hands of Egyptians and Phoenicians, but these traders do not appear to have proceeded beyond the port I Arabia Felix (Aden) where these goods were procurable”.²⁷ Here we find the fame of Malabar in the Greek world. Malabar was very much known to the whole world from the very antient era.

²² Sir George Christopher Molesworth Birdwood, *Handbook to the British Indian Section* (Offices of the Royal commission, 1878), 10.

²³ Adrian Kuzminski, *Pyrrhonism: How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism* (Lexington Books, 2008), 36.

²⁴ Nigel Guy Wilson, *Encyclopaedia of Ancient Greece* (Psychology Press, 2006), 339.

²⁵ Sharangi, *Indian Spices: The Legacy, Production and Processing of India's Treasured Export*, 15.

²⁶ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:299.

²⁷ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2010), 247.

1.1.1.3 Ktesias (5th cen. BC)

At the end of the fourth century BC the Greek writer Ktesias (also known as Ctesias the Cnidian or Ctesias of Cnidus), who lived in Caria of the Achaemenid Empire at the Asia Minor during the Greek-Roman period was a historian and a Greek physician. The book he wrote about the Persian held of India named *Indika*, speaks of “Malabar and its products of trade like spices, probably alluded to cinnamon, a common product of Malabar²⁸, as *Karpion*, a name which seems to...word *Karuppu* or *Karppu*”.²⁹ “The Erythraean sea in the extent attributed to it subsequently to the days of Ctesias, appears to have comprised, along with the Red Sea, that part of the Indian Ocean between the straits of Babelmandel and the Malabar coast”.³⁰

“Indians are not dark-skinned from the sun but by nature, for some of them, both men and women, are very light-skinned, even if they are a minority... In the middle of the India live black men called Pygmies who speak the same language as the rest of the Indians”.³¹

1.1.1.4 Megasthenes (350-290 BC)

Was an Ancient Greek Historian, diplomat, and Indian ethnographer. He describes India in his famous work named *Indika*³², and this is a lost work now but partially is available in the works of the other authors of history and geography. The latter authors like Eratosthenes, Strabo, Pliny the Elder etc quotes Megasthenes in their works³³.

In *Indika* the author narrates about the boundaries, general character, and rivers of India. There are explanations about the wild beasts and apes of Indian land. “India forms the largest of the four parts into which Southern Asia is divided... India is bounded on its eastern side... the boundary towards the west and the north- west, as far as the great ocean, is formed by the river Indus”.³⁴

²⁸ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:299.

²⁹ Logan, *Malabar Manual*, 1:247.

³⁰ Horace Hayman Wilson, *Notes on the Indica of Ctesias* (S. Collingwood, printer to the University, 1836), 14.

³¹ Ctesias, *Ctesias on India*, trans. Andrew Nichols (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 49–50.

³² Megasthenes, *Megasthenis Indica*, trans. E. A. Schwanbeck (Bonnae: Sumptibus Pleimesii Bibliopolae, 1776).

³³ Pliny the Elder, *Pliny the Elder: The Natural History Book VII (with Book VIII 1-34)* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 114.

³⁴ Megasthenes and John Watson McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenès and Arrian*, ed. E. A. Schwanbeck (Thacker, Spink, 1877), 45–46.

1.1.1.5 Hippalus (1st cen. BC)

The Greek navigator Hippalus who lived in the first century before Christ had discovered the direct route from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean and made the trade easy with the Indian ports. *Periplus Maris Erythraei* gives the proof of the same. Pliny the Elder states that Hippalus discovered not the route but the monsoon wind (the south-west monsoon wind). The historians explain that knowledge of Monsoon winds was necessary to use the direct route.

“From the epoch of this discovery (Monsoon wind of Hippalus), fleets traded periodically from Egypt to Musiris (Muziris) conveying the products of Europe to India, and conversely”.³⁵

In the chapter 57 of *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, we find “Hippalus was the first navigator who, by observing the position of the stars and the character of the sea, discovered a route across the ocean... when the monsoon in the Indian Ocean appears to be south-west, it is called Hippalos from the name of the man who discovered the passage across”.³⁶ The result of this discovery was that mariners were enabled to strike boldly from the mouth of the Arabian Gulf across the ocean, and the Western Monsoons carried them to Muziris, a harbour on the Malabar coast.³⁷

1.1.1.6 Diodorus Siculus (90-30 BC)

Diodorus Siculus was an Ancient Greek historian, born in Sicily. *The Library of History* (Βιβλιοθήκη Ἱστορική) published in 7th cen. BC, in three parts, is the famous book written by him in Ancient Greek. The work was written in (60-30 BC). In that work he narrates the geography of Indian shores and the lifestyle of people.

“Now India has many lofty mountains that abound in fruit trees of every variety, and many large and fertile plains, which are remarkable for their beauty and are supplied with water by a multitude of rivers”.³⁸

³⁵ Megasthenes and McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenês and Arrian*, 45–46.

³⁶ G. W. B. Huntingford, ed., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, by an Unknown Author*, II 151 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1980), 52–53, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, by an unknown author with some extracts from Agatharkhides* — *On the Erythraean Sea* — by G.W.B. Huntingford (z-lib.org).

³⁷ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:303.

³⁸ C.H. Oldfather, *Diodorus of Sicily*, vol. II (London: Harvard University Press, 1935), 3–27.

1.1.1.7 Strabo (64/63 BC – 24 AD)

Strabo a Roman citizen of the Roman Empire of Greek decent, was a Greek geographer, Philosopher, and a famous historian of the Asia Minor during the transition period of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. The famous work by him is *The Geography* (Γεωγραφικά), is an encyclopaedia of geographical knowledge, consisting of 17 books, written in Ancient Greek. In this work he speaks about the geography, people, the caste system, social and cultural aspects, and the plants of Indian land. “But I must now begin with India, for it is the first and largest country that lies out towards the east...but not many of our people have seen it; and even those who have seen it, have seen only parts of it”.³⁹

1.1.1.8 Periplus Maris Erythraei⁴⁰ (89 AD)

The Greco-Roman periplus by an unknown author, written in *Koine Greek* named *Periplus Maris Erythraei*,⁴¹ is a work that describes navigation and trading politics from the Roman Egyptian ports to the ports of different countries like Africa, Persia, Arabia and till the

³⁹Horace Leonard Jones, *The Geography of Strabo*, vol. 7, XV (New York: G. P Putnam’s Sons, 1930), 3–90, <http://archive.org/details/Strabo08Geography17AndIndex>.

⁴⁰ 1658 Jansson *Map of the Indian Ocean (Erythraean Sea) in Antiquity*, accessed 12 February 2021, <https://www.geographicus.com/P/AntiqueMap/ErythraeanSea-jansson-1658>.



⁴¹ *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, accessed 12 February 2021, <https://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/164948>.

Indian Ocean. The origin of book dates in first century AD and the author is unknown but must be a Greek who lived in Egypt.⁴²

There were two important trade routes, and the traditional land route was called the Silk Route. The other was the Maritime Route which was known as spice route. And these trade routes connected Malabar with all other lands of the world. In the Periplus we find the Maritime Route of trade and St. Thomas might took this route from Alexandria vis Berenike, Myos Hormos, Adulis, and Kane. As this route was famous and found in the 1st century A.D, the Apostle might have used the same to come India.

The work- Periplus, gives the accurate insights about the knowledge of the ancient Hellenic world about the Indian lands. In the chapters 53 and 54, the author writes about the ancient ports of Kerala (Malabar) like Tundis (Tindis), Mouziriz (Muziris) and Nelkunda (Nelkinda). “Tundis is in the kingdom of Keprobotos and is a well-known village beside the sea. Muziris, belonging to the same kingdom, is a flourishing place with ships from Ariake coming to it, and Greeks”.⁴³

1.1.1.9 Pliny The Elder (23/24-79 AD)

Pliny (Pliny the Elder), Roman historian and navigator writes: “from Syagros a promontory of Arabia they go to Patale (near the mouth of Indus) with the wind Favonius which they called Hippalus, ...and in the same chapter, from Ocelis they go to Muziris in forty days with the wind called Hippalus”.⁴⁴

“The first important advance was made by Greek named Hippalus, who, acting on information received probably from Arab or Hindu informants, boldly stood out to sea from Cape Fartak in Arabia, and sailing with the south-west monsoon trade winds, found a direct route to the pepper-bearing country of Malabar.”⁴⁵

In the time of Pliny, the contemporary of Apostles, one hundred and twenty Roman merchant ships visited the coasts of India each year, and numerous caravans crossing Mesopotamia, Persia, Arachosia (Afghanistan) arrived on the coast of India. The import trade

⁴² Huntingford, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, 50.

⁴³ Huntingford, 50.

⁴⁴ The Elder Pliny, *Pliny's Natural History. In Thirty-Seven Books*, trans. Philemon Holland, vol. 1 (London: Printed for the Club by G. Barclay, 1847), 138–42, <http://archive.org/details/plinysnaturalhis00plinrich>.

⁴⁵ Logan, *Malabar Manual*, 1:249.

from India was valued in Rome at twenty-five million francs a year. Roman merchants, as they were called (Syrians or Jewish from Alexandria), had permanent trading ports in India.⁴⁶

1.1.1.10 Lucius Flavius Arrian (86-160 AD)

Indica (The Indica of Arrian), the book is a short military history about interior Asia which is written by Arrian / Lucius Flavius Arrianus a Greek historian, in the second century AD. The book is consisting of three parts: The First gives a general description of India, the second gives an account of the voyage made by Nearchus the Cretan from the Indus to the Pasitigris, the third contains a collection of proofs to show that the southern parts of the world are uninhabitable on account of the great heat. Then the author gives an elaborated description about the geography of Indian shores and rivers like

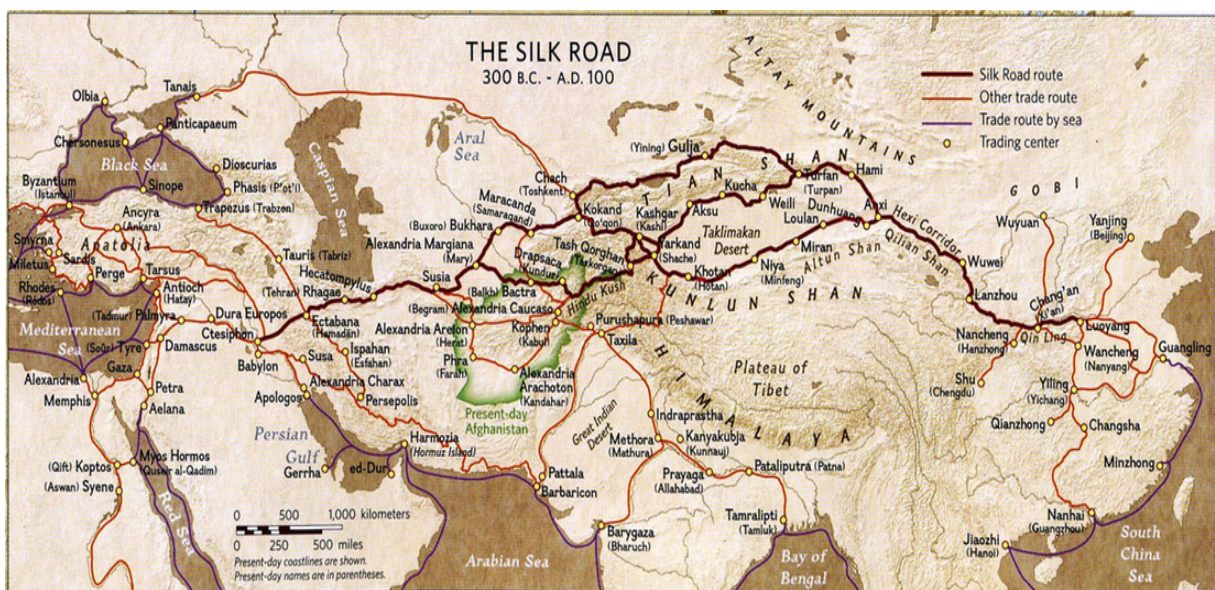
“On the west the bounties of India are marked by the river Indus all the way to the great ocean into which it pours its waters, which is does by two mouths...”⁴⁷

1.1.2 The Silk Road⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ladislao Michael Zaleski, *Les Origines Du Christianisme Aux Indes* (Mangalore: Codialbail Press, 1915), 15–16.

⁴⁷ Arrian, *The Indica of Arrian*, trans. McCrindle Watson (Bombay: Education Society Press, 1876), 5.

⁴⁸ *Silk Road City Links*, accessed 12 February 2021, <http://www.historyshories.com/silk-road-city-links.html>.



The Silk Road was a network of ancient trade routes which connected the East and West from the 2nd century BC to the 18th century AD. It was a great connecting factor of economic, cultural, political, and religious interactions between these regions. The Silk Road refers to some land routes which connected the East Asia and Southeast Asia with South Asia, Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, and Southern Europe. The name of this route comes from the trade of Silk that had happened through this route and started by Han dynasty in China (207 BC – 220 AD).

The intercourse with Malabar is also evidenced by the find of the Roman coins in many parts of the country. These coins range from those of the times of Augustus to those of that of Nero (B.C 27- A.D 68).⁴⁹

“During the reign of the first Emperor Augustus (27 BC- 14 AD) large quantities of foreign imports from Arabia, India and China became widely obtained in Mediterranean markets as popular consumer goods...Other Indian products included precious stones, ivory, pearls, crystals and cotton”.⁵⁰

According to the same author McLaughlin, in his other work narrates that “Pliny received further information on monsoon travel from a government report compiled sometime between AD 48 And AD 52. This report called the southeast monsoon the ‘Hippalos’ and gave sailing times to ports in southern India...Roman ships would enter the Gulf of Aden in early August when the south-west monsoon was just beginning to blow across the Indian Ocean”.⁵¹

1.2 Historical Background of St. Thomas’ Arrival at Malabar

Contacts between the Mediterranean world, Mesopotamia, Persia, and India has its root from the fourth millennium BC. The Jews encountered South India in the tenth century BC following the commercial relation of Solomon. According to the historians the first Jewish colony of South India goes back to the days of King Solomon.⁵² After Solomon Jewish underwent the exiles in Assyria in 734-732 BC and Babylonia in 6th and 5th century BC. The

⁴⁹ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:306.

⁵⁰ Raoul McLaughlin, *The Roman Empire and the Indian Ocean the Ancient World Economy and the Kingdoms of Africa, Arabia, and India* (Britain: Pen and Sword Military, 2014), 32–33.

⁵¹ McLaughlin, 150–51.

⁵² Fiona Hallegua and Shabdai Samuel Koder, *Kerala and Her Jews* (Kerala History Association, 1984), 1–6.

Jews in diaspora began to engage in commercial dealings with South India. The Jews of Babylon started speaking Aramaic for the sake of international trade and daily life. That time Babylon was an icon of international trade which had sea route trade with the South India which was extended to the southern China. The Jewish exile of Assyria were scattered among many people and countries. Some of them came to settle in different part of India. From the seventh century onwards, South India became the famous in the production and trade of teakwood, sandal, ivory, spices, peacocks, apes etc. Babylonian captivity of the Jews was terminated by the Persian Emperor Cyrus in 539 BC. And there were some Jews settlement in Malabar.⁵³

When Roman army conquered Egypt in 30 BC and dominated the international trade through Egypt then came to Malabar for the commerce. 120 ships used to sail every year from Red Sea to Malabar coast for the trade. The emperors Augustus (27 BC- 14 AD) and Tiberius (14-37 AD) guided trade between Egypt and Malabar. Innumerable coins of Augustus and Tiberius have been discovered in South India. The Persian, Arab and Egyptian navigators knew the course of Monsoon winds and helped them to reach the Malabar coast very fast.⁵⁴

“According to the historian G. F. Hourani, analysing the *Peutinger Tables* from the second century AD Egypt, there existed a temple in honour of Augustus at Muziris (ancient and famous Malabar port).”⁵⁵

According to the tradition, the Apostle Thomas undertook his first evangelisation at the Persian region (including North- West India) where he found Aramaic speaking Jewish settlements of the diaspora. By the help of a Jewish merchant named Habban in AD 52, Apostle started the second mission in South India among the Jewish settlements. The Jews and the people of Malabar cordially accepted the message of Gospel and many of them converted to Christianity. This is how Christian Aramaic or Syriac became the liturgical language of St. Thomas Christians.⁵⁶

⁵³ University of Chicago, ‘The Jews of Malabar’, *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and Its Dependencies* 6, no. September-December (1831): 6–9.

⁵⁴ Malpan Thoma Koonamakkal, *Elements Of Syro Malabar Church History* (Kuravilangad, Kerala: Beth Aprem Nazrani Dayra, 2012), 1–5.

⁵⁵ George Fadlo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 15–35.

⁵⁶ Luís Filipe F. R. Thomaz, ‘JORNADA of Dom Alexis de Menezes: a portuguese account of the sixteenth century Malabar (Jornada do Arcebispo originally written in Portuguese in 1603 by António de Gouvea). Editor Pius Malekandathil. Cochin: LRC Publications’, *Lusitania Sacra*, no. 17 (1 January 2005): 569–70.

1.3 The Jews Of Malabar

According to the famous historians the Jews had trade relation with the port of Malabar (Muziris) from the time of Moses (14th BC- 13th BC) according to OT of Bible ⁵⁷. And continued at the time of King Solomon. There are proofs for the commerce of spices between Malabar and Israel from the 1000 BC. The Jews are supposed to have first encountered a Dravidian people as early as the time of Solomon.⁵⁸ “Philology proves that the precious cargoes of Solomon’s merchant ships came from the ancient coast of Malabar”.⁵⁹ The remarkable goods like vegetables, animals, precious stones, ivory etc productions of Malabar coast have been well known to the Eastern nations from the times of great civilisations.

“As early as the time of Moses...this commerce existed, for cinnamon and cassia played a part in the temple services of the Jews (Ex. 30, 23-24), and at any rate the commerce existed in the time of King Solomon (970 BC-931 BC)”.⁶⁰

King Solomon had a navy of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks (1Kgs 10, 22; 2Chr 9,21). Except the silver, all other products were plenty in the land of Malabar.⁶¹ The Biblical name for peacock is *tuk*, and plural is *tuk-ki-yim* (תִּקְכִּיִּים)⁶², apparently borrowed from the Tamil (native language of Malabar that time) language. This bird is indigenous to India, probably a district on the Malabar coast of India.⁶³

Analysing the first subtitle “The Trade History of Kerala” it is evident that there were many commercial intercourses with Malabar and Eastern Asia. “And if the Jews were settled on the coast at the early period mentioned in their traditions, they would have had no difficulty in maintaining intercourse with their native land, for in Herodotus’ time (BC 484-413) the trade with the East was maintained”.⁶⁴ “The opinion that the ten tribes retried to the East Indies and China, has been plausibly maintained. The Jews were acquainted with these countries in the

⁵⁷ Bernard, *Flashes of Kerala History*, 27.

⁵⁸ Philip Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar* (Trichinopoly, India: The Catholic Truth Society of India, 1938), 4.

⁵⁹ F. A. D’Cruz, *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India: An Investigation Based on the Latest Research in Connection with the Time-Honoured Tradition Regarding the Martyrdom of St. Thomas in Southern India* (Madras: Hoe and Co., 1929), 133.

⁶⁰ Logan, *Malabar Manual*, 1:246.

⁶¹ Johann Jahn, *Jahn’s History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*, trans. Calvin Ellis Stowe (New York: Printed at the Codman Press by Flagg and Gould, for G. & C. Carvill, 1828), 613.

⁶² ‘2 Chronicles 9 / Hebrew - English Bible / Mechon-Mamre’, accessed 16 November 2020, <https://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt25b09.htm>.

⁶³ ‘Topical Bible: Peacock’, accessed 16 November 2020, <https://biblehub.com/topical/p/peacock.htm>.

⁶⁴ Logan, *Malabar Manual*, 1:247.

time of Solomon”.⁶⁵ “...evidence of the commerce between the land of Israel and south India as early as the 6th century BC, and it is quite possible that there were Jews living in Cranganore (Muziris) during the period of extensive Roman trade around the beginning of the Christian Era”.⁶⁶

Alexander Hamilton (Sailor) (1688-1733) was a Scottish sea captain and merchant, who travelled to India was a great historian too. In his famous work *A New Account of East Indies* (1727), he writes about the coast of Malabar and the Jews of Malabar. To him the Jews of Malabar have their history very long from the birth of Christ. “They (Jews) have a Synagogue at Cochin (one of the famous ports of Malabar), not far from the King’s Palace, about two miles from the city, in which are carefully kept their records...in Hebrew characters... their own history from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to this present time”.⁶⁷

“In a famous journal of 1831, *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies*, we read “They (the White Jews) arrived there, after the destruction of the second temple, in considerable numbers; they obtained permission to reside at Cranganore (The ancient port of Malabar coast) ...in AD 490; their forefathers continued at Cranganore for about 1000 years”.⁶⁸

In the historical findings of Charles Matthew Which (1794-1833), who was an English civil servant in the Madras Establishment of the East India Company, narrate that “In view of the commercial intercourse between the Jews and the people of the Malabar coast long before the Christian Era, it seems highly probable that Christianity but followed in the wake of Judaism... the Jews must have settled in Malabar at least as early as the first century AD”.⁶⁹

There is a study that there were Jewish migration to the coast of India during the reign of Cyrus II of Persia (600-530 BC), about 540 years before the birth of Christ.⁷⁰ “it is, however, more probable that they belong to the remainder of those Jewish people who continued in

⁶⁵ Jahn, *Jahn’s History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*, 611.

⁶⁶ Muzeon Yisrael, *The Jews of India: A Story of Three Communities*, ed. Orpa Slapak (London: University Press of New England, 1995), 27.

⁶⁷ Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies: Being the Observations and Remarks*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: J. Mosman, 1727), 321–22.

⁶⁸ University of Chicago, ‘The Jews of Malabar’, 7.

⁶⁹ D’Cruz, *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India*, 133.

⁷⁰ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:298.

Persia, who were consequently separated from the rest of the tribes, and who, after the downfall of the Persian empire, about 500 years before Christ, fled to India”.⁷¹

“St. Thomas landed at Cranganore or rather Maliankara, the Mouziris (Muzirikode) of the Jewish copper plates in the year 52 AD, in search of the Jewish colony along the coast. In Cranganore still exist “Jews’ Hill”.⁷²

The Jews were all over the Mediterranean world, and in Persia and Arabia even before the temple in AD. 70. It seems that the Jews were in India even before the beginning of the first century AD. The Bene-Israel Jewish community at Kalyan near Bombay traces its beginning back to the second century BC.⁷³ Then like Malabar had world famous ports and trade relations it is evident that there were Jews in Malabar since BC. And when the Apostles of Christ started their mission of evangelisation for the boundaries of the world, it was possible that Apostle Thomas could reach India to evangelise the Jews of India. The trade routes through the sea made easy his voyage. The presence of Jews from the very antient time in India must be one of the main reasons which brought St. Thomas to India.

1.4 The Act Of St. Thomas

The third century ancient text called *The Act of St. Thomas* is one of the New Testament apocryphal texts. It is an apocryphal work attributed to Bardesana, which was probably written in the beginning of the third century either at Edessa itself or another place in upper Mesopotamia. It is perhaps the first written account of the mission of an Apostle other than those mentioned in the Acts of Apostles.

This is considered as the most ancient record about the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. Even though this work has been acknowledged as apocryphal, Gnostic in origin, and romantic in style, several scholars admit in it a historical nucleus which represents the second century

⁷¹ Paulinus, *A Voyage to the East Indies: Containing an Account of the Manners, Customs ... of the Natives: With a Geographical Description of the Country*, trans. William Johnston (London: J. Davis, 1800), 107–8.

⁷² Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 8.

⁷³ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ‘The Blackwell Dictionary of Judaica’ (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 51.

tradition about the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. From the fourth century onwards, the major Churches are unanimous in their witnessing to the tradition.⁷⁴

It describes the mission and martyrdom of the Apostle Thomas in India. The work is consisted of the genres like romance, travel journal, and hagiography etc. The complete version of this work that survive are in Syriac and Greek, and there are many surviving fragments of the text in the languages like Latin, Armenian, Ethiopian, and Coptic.⁷⁵

The substance of the tradition as recorded in the Syriac version of the *Acts* is as follows: On the occasion when the 12 Apostles divided the countries of the world among themselves by lot, India fell to St. Thomas. He did not wish to go there. In one of the versions there are nine acts. “The first Act is entitled ‘The Act of Judas Thomas the Apostle, when He (i.e., Our Lord) sold him to the merchant Habban, that he might go down and convert India’”.⁷⁶ And the first Act speaks of an Indian king Gondophernes who sent the merchant Habban in search of a skilful carpenter. St. Thomas was sold to this merchant for the king. Then St. Thomas Apostle first came to North India.⁷⁷ After some years Apostle got the intimation of Our Lad’s death, then he went to Jerusalem. On his second journey, he reached south India, and did his mission in Malabar, then went to Coromandel coast, where he died at Calamina (i.e., Mylapore), under king named Masdai.⁷⁸

The third century *Act* explains many proofs of the visit of Thomas the Apostle in India. There are no other countries demand the mission and martyrdom of Apostle. The ancient literature work like this which was well received by the people near to the century of Apostle’s visit is a fundamental evident for the world.

1.5 The Magisterium

It is essential to study the Church teaching to know about an Apostle, his life, mission, and death. As a fundamental aspect we can start with the Holy Scripture then the teachings of Apostles. The Roman Martyrology, the Church Council are also important to analyse for the

⁷⁴ H. C. Perumalil and E. R. Hambye, eds., *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective* (Alleppey, India: Prakasam Publications, 1973), 15.

⁷⁵ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 6.

⁷⁶ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 25.

⁷⁷ K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, vol. II (Ernakulam, India: Cochin Government Press, 1924), 459.

⁷⁸ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 6–7.

same. The teachings and writings of Church Fathers are very valuable for this study. The Roman Breviary and the testimonies of some of the Roman Pontiffs are also taken for proofs.

1.5.1 The Holy Scripture

In the Bible record St. Thomas, the Apostle, his name is mentioned in three synoptic Gospels: Mt 10, 3; Mk 3,18; Lk 6, 15. In the Gospel of John, he appears in a characteristic light, full of devotion and ready to die with his Lord and Master in Jn 6,16: “Thomas, who is called Didymus (twin),” said to them: “Let us also go that we may die with Him”. And in Jn 14, 2-6 we read as he responds to Jesus: “Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?”. We also find about St. Thomas in the following Bible passages: Jn 20, 20-29; Jn 21, 1-2; Mk 16,4-15; Act 1, 12-14; Acts 2, 1-12; Jn 14, 22.⁷⁹ As an Apostle of Christ Thomas was with Jesus and after the death and resurrection of Christ he was also with the other Apostles.

1.5.2 The Doctrine Of Apostles

Didascalia Apostolorum (Didascalia) is a Christian writing which was clearly modelled on the earlier Didache, in the genre of the Church Orders. The origin of text is believed as being written by the Twelve Apostles during the Council of Jerusalem (50 AD); however, scholars and historians agree that it was a composition of the 3rd century, about 230 AD.

The author of the text probably a bishop and the provenance are usually regarded as Northern Syria, probably near Antioch. Which narrate three times the name of Apostle Thomas.⁸⁰ According to the tradition this might have happened before Apostles put lots for the places of Evangelisation.

1.5.3 The Roman Martyrology

The Roman Martyrology positively affirms the apostolate and the Martyrdom of St. Thomas in India. The Roman Breviary is no less explicit, and so we have the official admission

⁷⁹ *The New Jerusalem Bible*, I (London: Darton, Longman and Todd (Verbum Bible), 1985), 1609–1790.

⁸⁰ Margaret Dunlop Smith Gibson, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English* (London: C.J. Clay, 1903), 12.

of the fact by the Church. It says like this: “At Edessa, in Mesopotamia, the translation of the Apostle St. Thomas from India. His relics were afterwards taken to Tortona.”

As a basis to our inquiry, we take the Roman Martyrology and the lessons of the Breviary which, whatever the critics may say of them, are nevertheless the expression of the constant tradition of the Church. The Martyrology has been subjected to many revisions, nevertheless throughout the ages, down to our times, it has preserved intact the tradition of the apostle and of the Martyrdom of the Apostle St. Thomas in India.⁸¹

1.5.4 The Church Council

At the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, a Bishop appears to have attended and subscribed his name as Johannes “Metropolitan of Persia and the great India”. A fact which seems to indicate that there was at that time a Christian Church of bulk and significance planted on the Indian coast.

The St. Thomas tradition according to Ante-Nicaean writers generally mention Parthia (eastern Persia and north-west India), while the Post-Nicaean references prefer the general term, India. From this it may be concluded that in the Western tradition the apostolic field of St. Thomas can be North India and or South India.⁸²

1.5.5 St. Thomas In Patristic Writings

The Church fathers from Origen to the St. John Damascenes we can find the teachings and writings about the mission and martyrdom of St. Thomas in India. From the third century onwards the Church Fathers accept the truth that India was evangelised by St. Thomas. In the writings and homilies of the patristic writers we find India and the mission of Apostle.

1.5.5.1 Origen (186-254 AD)

⁸¹ Ladislav Michel Zaleski, *The Saints of India* (Mangalore: Codialbail Press, 1915), 105.

⁸² Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 20.

According to the St. Thomas tradition, Apostle first came to Parthia and from there to India in a ship of Merchants. Origin in the third chapter of his commentary on Genesis and Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea (315-340) affirm that St. Thomas evangelised Parthia (Persia and Afghanistan), and the first visit of St. Thomas in Parthia is clarified here.⁸³

1.5.5.2 Pantaeus (190)

There are two texts which related to this author dates from second century Alexandria. He was the head of the Alexandrian school and said to have visited the South Indian Christians in the year 190 AD. The author refers to the Apostolic origin of the Indian Church, but says it was founded by St. Bartolomeo which, however, is a mistake for St. Thomas.⁸⁴ Eusebius the Father of Church history and Biblical scholar Jerome write that Pantaeus was sent to India by Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria for the evangelization among the Brahmans.⁸⁵

1.5.5.3 Dorotheus, Bishop Of Tyre (254-313)

Referring to the Acts and journeying of the Apostles, relates that the Apostle St. Thomas, after having preached the Gospel to the Parthians...suffered martyrdom at Calamina in India.⁸⁶

1.5.5.4 St. Ephrem (300-373)

In the testimony of St. Ephrem, whose hymns embody the local traditions extant at the time in Edessa. That there was a such tradition then connecting St. Thomas with India, whence his relics were brought to Edessa is not disputed.⁸⁷ The actual place of the martyrdom of St. Thomas is not mentioned by Ephrem; but in his hymns there are indications about India when he says, "A land of peacock...the dark people or sunburnt...". In his time there believed the

⁸³ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 12.

⁸⁴ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:464.

⁸⁵ Koonamakal, *Elements Of Syro Malabar Church History*, 6.

⁸⁶ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:464.

⁸⁷ Ephraim, 'CHURCH FATHERS: Nisibene Hymns', *New Advent*, 42, accessed 21 July 2021, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3702e.htm>.

Apostle preached in Southern India and was martyred and buried there.⁸⁸ Ephrem explicitly states that St. Thomas was martyred in India and that his relics had been brought to Edessa, by a merchant.⁸⁹ The mission and martyrdom of Apostle in India is accepted by many historians and theologians.⁹⁰

1.5.5.5 St. Athanasius (330)

Who presided over the see of Alexandria, deputed Frumentius as Bishop of India. He is said to have preached “to the people of India and received the reward of his zealous labours in the crown of martyrdom”.⁹¹

1.5.5.6 St. Gregory Of Nazianzens (330-389) Or (370-390)

Granting that Juda was the country of Peter, what had Paul in common with the Gentiles, Luke with Achaia, Andrew with Epirus, John with Ephesus, and Thomas with India.^{92, 93}

1.5.5.7 St. Ambrose Of Milan (340-397)

Ambrose of Milan had a great knowledge about the Greek and Latin Classics and had a good information about India and Indians. In his writings he deals with many aspects of India: Ocean, the river Ganges etc.

“This admitted of the Apostle being sent without delay according to the saying of our Lord Jesus...even those kingdoms which were shut out by rugged mountains became accessible to them, as India to Thomas, Persia to Matthew...”⁹⁴

⁸⁸ D’Cruz, *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India*, 77–78.

⁸⁹ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 12.

⁹⁰ A. E. (Adolphus E.) Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas: An Inquiry, with a Critical Analysis of the Acta Thomae* (London: David Nutt, 1905), 21–32.

⁹¹ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:464.

⁹² Menon, II:465.

⁹³ Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, 42–43.

⁹⁴ Medlycott, 43–44.

1.5.5.8 St. John Chrysostom (344/347-407)

According to Chrysostom, the Indians were evangelized by an apostle with the “gift of tongues”. And this is about Apostle Thomas because in Chrysostom’s time, it was a well-known fact that Thomas had preached in India.⁹⁵ He also writes that, from the earliest time of Christianity, the tomb of St. Thomas was, in the East, as much venerated as that of St. Peter at Rome.⁹⁶

1.5.5.9 St. Jerome (345-419)

St. Jerome writes: According to tradition, St. Thomas preached the Gospel of the Lord to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Caramans, the Hircanians, the Bactrians and the Magi. He ended his days in the town of Calamina in India.⁹⁷ And in his Martyrology, St. Jerome says: Twelve Kalends of January: Death of the Apostle St. Thomas, who was martyred in India.

Twelve Kalends of January: In Mesopotamia, death and translation of the Apostle St. Thomas, whose relics were brought from India, where his passion is celebrated. Fifty-nine of July: At Edessa in Mesopotamia: Death and translation of the relics of St. Thomas the Apostle, who was martyred in India.⁹⁸

1.5.5.10 St. Gregory Of Tours (538-593) Or (544-595)

Speaks about the existence of a “Monastery and temple of great size and excellent structure and ornament in the place in India where the body of Thomas lay long before it was

⁹⁵ James Aerthayil, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians* (Bangalore, India: Dharmaram Publications, 2001), 10–20.

⁹⁶ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:464.

⁹⁷ Menon, II:465.

⁹⁸ Zaleski, *The Saints of India*, 109.

transported to Edessa.”⁹⁹ The body of martyr Thomas the Apostle is buried in South India¹⁰⁰. In the work named *Glory of the Martyrs* Gregory of Tours affirm the same.¹⁰¹

1.5.5.11 St. Isidore Of Seville (636)

In his famous work, *De Ortu et Obitu Patrum* writes that St. Thomas Apostle of Christ, called Didymus, that is the twin, on account of his great resemblance to our Lord Jesus Christ, was incredulous when he heard, but faithful when he saw. He preached the Gospel to the Persians, the Hyrcanians, the Bactrians, and the Indians of the Eastern Coast, and having reached the remotest countries, he preached to the Heathens till the day of his passion, when, pierced with lances he died at Calamina, a town of India, where he was given an honourable burial.¹⁰²

1.5.5.12 St. John Damascenes (754)

India an immense and thickly populated country is situated at the great distance from Egypt and separated from that country by the ocean. On the side of the land, it touches Persia. The most holy Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles, was sent to India to preach the Gospel of salvation.¹⁰³

1.5.6 The Roman Breviary

In the *Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours, According to the Roman Rite*, accepted by the Catholic Church, on the feast day text of July 3rd we read: “But tradition has it that he preached to the people of India. From the 6th century a feast of the translation of his relics has been kept at Edessa on 3rd July.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:465.

¹⁰⁰ Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, 71.

¹⁰¹ Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, trans. Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 51.

¹⁰² Zaleski, *The Saints of India*, 110.

¹⁰³ Zaleski, 110.

¹⁰⁴ Catholic Church, *The Divine Office, The Liturgy of the Hours, According to the Roman Rite*, ed. Clement D. Tierney et al., 2006th ed., vol. III (Dublin: Harper Collins, 1974), 93.

The summary given in the Roman Breviary, that the Apostle Thomas, who was also called Didymus, a Galilean, went to many countries to preach the Gospel of Christ; that he handed over the precepts of Christian faith and life to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Hyrcanians and the Bactrians; that finally by taking himself to the Indians he instructed them in the Christian religion; that when towards the end, by the sanctity of his life and doctrine and the greatness of his miracles, he aroused in all others admiration for himself and love for Jesus Christ, he greatly excited to anger the king of that nation, a worshiper of idols; and being condemned by his sentence and pierced with arrows, he adorned the honour of the Apostolate with the crown of martyrdom at Calamina.¹⁰⁵

1.5.7 The Popes

Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) and Latin theologian speaks about Apostle Thomas: ‘At the night Lord appeared to Thomas in a vision and told him- Don’t fear to go to India’. In the second coming of Christ, Peter will appear with the converts from Judea, Paul with his Gentile converts, Andrew with Achaea, John with Asia, Thomas with India.¹⁰⁶

Pope Paul V erected the diocese of *San Tome of Mylapore* in 1606, “because there lay buried the body of St. Thomas.”¹⁰⁷ Pope Leo XIII in his apostolic letter, of Sep. 1886, extending the Episcopal hierarchy in India speaks in the following terms: “it has been the constant tradition of the Church that the duty of discharging the apostolic office in the vast regions of the East Indies fell to the loss of St. Thomas.”¹⁰⁸

In the Encyclical *Ad Extremas* on seminaries for native clergy, of June 24, 1893, Pope Leo XIII writes: “Our thoughts turn first of all to the blessed Apostle Thomas who is rightly called the founder of preaching the Gospel to the Hindus.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ D’Cruz, *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India*, 32.

It will be observed how Parthia and the countries bordering are grouped together, and then how India, in a way motioned separately. It can be clarified with the two distinct missions, like first dispersion of the Apostles soon after the Resurrection, Parthia fell to the lot of St. Thomas, and the second dispersion, when according to the tradition they were all assembled again at Jerusalem at the death of the Blessed Virgin, India then fell to his lot. There are critics and writers having confusion that St. Thomas only had mission in Parthia or only in India.

¹⁰⁶ Koonamakal, *Elements Of Syro Malabar Church History*, 8.

¹⁰⁷ D’Cruz, *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India*, 135.

¹⁰⁸ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 13.

¹⁰⁹ Leo XIII, ‘Ad Extremas’, Encyclicals, 24 June 1893, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_24061893_ad-extremas.html.

1.6 St. Thomas And Edessa

According to the Tradition, in AD 232, the major portion of the relics of St. Thomas Apostle are said to have been sent by an Indian king named 'Mazdai' and brought from Mylapore to the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia. It is believed that on this occasion his Syriac Acts were written.

“The Church of Edessa came to be specially interested in St. Thomas, who doubtless sent letters to at different times from India; and how a merchant from Edessa thought himself privileged to carry away to that place the best part of the remains of St. Thomas from his tomb at Mylapore where, it is believed, he was originally buried.”¹¹⁰

Edessa plays no small part in St. Thomas tradition. According to Newman, in his *Development of Christian Doctrine* we read: “Edessa, the Metropolis of Mesopotamia, had remained an oriental city till the third century, when it was made a Roman colony by Caracalla. Its position on the confines of two empires gave it great ecclesiastical importance, as the channel by which the theology of Rome and Greece was conveyed to a family of Christians, dwelling in contempt and persecution amid a still heathen world. It was the seat of various schools: apparently of a Greek school, where the classics were studied and theology.”¹¹¹

1.7 Mission Of St. Thomas In Malabar

According to the South Indian tradition the Apostle Thomas came to Malabar from the island of Socotra (Socotra Archipelago, now part of Yemen) after preaching the Gospel of Jesus to the inhabitants there, then he reached at Malabar at the port of Cranganore (Muyiri-Khodu/Muziris) in AD 52.¹¹² And planted Christianity for the first time in India.¹¹³

Muziris, the Cranganore was the capital city of Chera Kingdom (one of the ancient three Tamil kingdoms among whom the whole of the South India was then divided) and a famous port of South India that time. According to the tradition St. Thomas founded seven Christian

¹¹⁰ D'Cruz, *St. Thomas, the Apostle, in India*, 31.

¹¹¹ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 7th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1890), 291–97.

¹¹² Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 34.

¹¹³ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:307.

faith communities in Malabar.¹¹⁴ After the establishment of these churches and the propagation of Christianity in Malabar, the tradition says that the Apostle crossed the Peninsula to the Coromandel Coast, laboured among the people there, and finally suffered martyrdom at Mylapore near Madras.¹¹⁵

According to the Indian tradition in Cranganore and other places he converted high caste Hindu families then crossed over to China and preached the Gospel and returned to India and organised the Christians of Malabar under some guides (priests) from among the leading families he had converted and erected some public places of worship. Then he moved to the coast of Coromandel and suffered martyrdom on or near little mound. His body was brought to the town of Mylapore and was buried in a holy shrine he had built.^{116, 117}

Seven and half churches¹¹⁸ built by St. Thomas in the south India is an essential element of the faith deposit of Christianity in Malabar. These are the valuable reminds of the glorious

¹¹⁴ Placid Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures* (Alleppey, India: Prakasam Publications, 1974), 25.

¹¹⁵ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:445.

¹¹⁶ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 18.

¹¹⁷ Ciril J. Kuttianikkal, *Khrist Bhakta Movement: A Model for an Indian Church?: A Model for an Indian Church?: Inculturation in the Area of Community Building* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014), 47–48.

¹¹⁸ 'Prof. M.M.Ninan - Thomas', accessed 27 September 2021, <https://www.talentshare.org/~mm9n/articles/impact/3.htm>.



past of the faith tradition. The churches meant here are not the buildings, but the faith community that the Apostle established. Because in the first century AD most of the population of Kerala were the followers of Dravidian religion which did not have any buildings for worship, but the nature temples called *Kavukal*. The possibility of a Christian prayer place in that time might be only a Cross under a tree.

“St. Thomas founded the seven churches at Cranganore, Palur, NorthParur, South Pallippuram, Niranam, Nellakul and Quilon. This number cannot be dismissed as symbolical, as some of these churches have accounts of their foundation that are far from being mere imaginary fictions”.¹¹⁹

The first missionary to India, with the clear record was Pantaenus of Alexandria, who was in India in the year 180 AD.¹²⁰ He found a Church in India which was already in existence and possession of a Hebrew text of St. Mathew’s Gospel. Jerome tells us that Pantaenus was sent out by bishop Demetrius of Alexandria that he might preach Christ among the Brahmans.¹²¹

According to the tradition Apostle passed from Malabar to the Coromandel coast where had a violent persecution against the Christians and Apostle martyred there. There are many versions of the martyrdom of St. Thomas. In the *Acts of Thomas*, a king decided to kill Thomas by stabbing him on a mountain. In the Greek version, the king handed Thomas to four soldiers, ordering them to take him up to the mountain and there to pierce him with their lances.¹²² And in many writings and martyrologies state the same that St. Thomas was martyred by a lance. The travellers and the historians in a wide way accept the death of Apostle Thomas at Mylapore.¹²³

1.8 Arguments Against St. Thomas Tradition

A few scholars take the view that the *Acts* alone cannot be the source of western tradition, which is constant and universal from the beginning of the fourth century, particularly

¹¹⁹ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 39–40.

¹²⁰ Cyril Bruce Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1961), 19–20.

¹²¹ J. Waskom Pickett, *Christ’s Way To India’s Heart* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing house, 1938), 12.

¹²² Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, 122–32.

¹²³ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 41.

since the *Acts* were acknowledged by the certain Fathers already in the fourth century as apocryphal. There must have existed already before the composition of *Acts* some elements in the oral tradition about the apostolate of St. Thomas, which probably formed the nucleus of departure for the romantic *Acts*.¹²⁴

According to Mr. Vincent Smith, the author of *The Oxford History of India*, remarks that: in the tradition of St. Thomas, there mentions a king called Gondophernes/ Gondophares, whose name is clearly Persian or Parthian. His reign may be placed between A.D 20 and 48. Many writers affirm that St. Thomas preached Christianity in his dominions and in Persia martyred. Another group of writers says that Apostle was martyred at Mylapore, near Madras in South India. To Smith, these both stories obviously cannot be true. But in his personal impression, which formed after many examinations of the evidence, is that the story of martyrdom in Southern India is better supported of the two versions of the Apostle's death.¹²⁵

“The subject has been discussed by many authors from every possible point of view, and immense learning has been invoked in the hope of establishing one or other hypothesis, without reaching any conclusion approaching certainty. There is no reason to expect that additional evidence will be discovered.”¹²⁶

As a historian the writer of the book *History of Kerala*, Mr. K. P. Padmanabha Menon finds some of the criticisms against St. Thomas tradition of Southern India: it was not possible for St. Thomas to have come to peninsular India; St. Thomas was the Apostle of Parthia, and the sphere of his work was confined to the North West, and not to Southern India; there were no Brahmans in South India in the early years of the Christian era, whom the Apostle could have converted, as he is said to have done; there is no historic evidence to support the tradition.¹²⁷

There are other fundamental criticisms about the same Apostolic traditions in the study of Mr. Padmanabha Menon like: the existence of the St. Thomas tradition is accounted for by the theory that it has its foundation in mistaking the Apostle with St. Bartolomeo, Thomas the Manichean, and Thomas of Cana, who, it is asserted, were the early introducers of the Christian religion into Malabar; Thomas the Manichean, a follower of Manes, was a Persian, is

¹²⁴ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 17.

¹²⁵ Vincent Arthur Smith and Stephen Meredyth Edwardes, *The Oxford History of India, from the Earliest Times to the End of 1911* (London: Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1919), 126.

¹²⁶ Smith and Edwardes, 126.

¹²⁷ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:445–46.

supposed to have visited India, sometimes in 227 A.D. and introduced Christianity there; the second Thomas with whom the Apostle is said to be confounded is 'Thomas of Cana', an Armenian merchant, who is supposed to have brought a colony of Syrians to Malabar in A.D. 345 or in 745. His memory was so much venerated that he is alleged to have been canonised, and this Thomas, came to be confounded with St. Thomas the Apostle. We next come to the Indian Apostleship of St. Bartolomeo. This rests in the statement of Eusebius, who wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* more than two centuries after the events narrated by him and happened. According to Eusebius, St. Bartolomeo preached the Gospel in India.¹²⁸ St. Hypolytus, Bishop of Portus (220 A.D.) also assigns the conversion of India to the Apostle St. Bartolomeo. The testimony of Eusebius is confirmed by Jerome (A.D. 390).¹²⁹

1.9 Possibilities Of The Visit Of St. Thomas In Kerala

From the very ancient time, before Christ, the South India had the trade relation with the Western world. It has been well explained in the first head of this thesis 'The Trade History of Kerala'. The very old port of Malabar – Cranganore or 'Muziris of Ptolemy and the Periplus' is considered as the door through which all commerce of Malabar that had with the Western world. "In the words of Pliny, the Elder, Muziris was the first emporium of India".¹³⁰

According to the historian Pierre Meile (1911-1963), the discovery of the monsoon wind by Hippalus in AD 47 made the way easy for the ships traverse the Arabian Sea and make whatever port they (Greeks) desired on the West coast of the Indian peninsula.¹³¹ A tedious voyage, it must have taken them two years to complete it, back and forth. Discovering these favourable winds, the ships could now cover a thousand nautical miles with in fourth days, and it was thus a Roman in the second half of the first century could accomplish in a year the voyage to India and back.¹³² Through this in a short time the communication and the trade between West and India improved so much.

The Greeks came to Muziris and other parts of the Malabar in search of the Pepper, which is typical of Kerala (Malabar) product which was in great demand in the West. "The thriving port of Muciri (Muziris) were large and beautiful ships of the Yavanas (Greek) laden with gold came, splashing the white foam, of the waters of the Periyar which belongs to the

¹²⁸ Menon, II:448-49.

¹²⁹ Menon, II:450.

¹³⁰ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 35.

¹³¹ Moraes, 36.

¹³² Pierre Meile, 'Les Yavanas Dans L'Inde Tamoule', *La Société Asiatique* 232, no. 1 (1940): 86.

Chera and go back laden with pepper”.¹³³ According to the historians this famous route of trade can be a great evident that, St. Thomas easily could travel to India to preach the Gospel of God, especially to the Jews of Malabar and to the natives.

“Following this much travelled route, the Apostle (St. Thomas) could, leaving Myos Hormos by ship, land at Socotra, which lay on his way...among whom there must have been a Jewish element...St. Thomas must also have come to Muziris drawn by the existence of the well-established colony”.¹³⁴

“Ancient and ecclesiastical writers both from the East and the West, such as Dorotheus and St. Hippolytus, both of them flourished in the 3rd century, St. Ephraim of Edessa and St. Gregory Nazianzen in the 4th, St. Jerome and St. Paulinus of Nola in the 5th, St. Gregory de Tours in the 6th century,¹³⁵ and numerous others; the most ancient liturgies of nearly all the Eastern Churches, as the Syrian, the Greek and the Armenian as well as the Roman and Mozarabic, as we can see in the prayers, hymns etc., of the Mass and Breviaries; ancient travellers from all nations and creeds, Arabian narratives of the 9th century quoted by Renandot; the Venetian Marco Polo of the 12th and the English traveller Mandeville of the 13th century, and others to came to India long before the Portuguese, all these give evidence that the Apostle St. Thomas preached the Gospel in India and ended here his life by martyrdom”.¹³⁶

In Malabar there existed from times immemorial a community called “St. Thomas Christians”. They observe a national holiday on July 3rd, which is believed to be the day of his martyrdom. this feast called *Duharana* (a Syriac word means commemoration) became a great custom and is a proof of Apostle’s mission in India. In the Latin Church the feast of 21st December was started only in 495 AD. The divine of the Syriac rite for July 3rd with its octave, repeats the same tradition.¹³⁷

Some details of the St.Thomas tradition may be found in a few traditional songs in Malabar: *Rabban Pattu*, *Veeradyan Pattu*, *Margam Kali Pattu*, and some historical accounts about which is now existed in written records. The people of Malabar undoubtedly processed a rich oral tradition of St. Thomas through these songs and written annals.¹³⁸ The ancient

¹³³ Meile, 90.

¹³⁴ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 38.

¹³⁵ Zaleski, *The Saints of India*, 107.

¹³⁶ *The Tricentenary of the Diocese of San Thome de Meliapor* (Madras: Prince Current Press, 1906), 2–3.

¹³⁷ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 8–9.

¹³⁸ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 18.

Malayalam ballad known as “*Thoma Parvam*”, and the “*Margam Kali*” explicitly states that St. Thomas was mortally wounded by Brahmins near a temple dedicated to *Kali* at Mylapore in the morning of July 3rd, 72 A.D, and that he died at 4.30 pm on the same day. Other ancient songs and the traditions of all Syrians confirm this Malabar tradition.¹³⁹

“Every year till 1653, at least once in his life time, every Christian made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore. To give alms for this particular pilgrimage was a glorious custom among the St. Thomas Christians. The name of Thomas is given to at least one child in each family. No other nation claims the tomb of St. Thomas...nobody claims the introduction of Christianity in Malabar, not even the Church of Meopotamia”.¹⁴⁰

According to the author of *History of Kerala*, K. P. Padmanabha Menon, in his study: St. Bertolomeo was ever in India is very problematical indeed. The description of the country said to have been assigned to St. Bartolomeo makes it uncertain what precise locality was meant, and if it was, it will be the country beyond Ethiopia and not India...and if the Apostle (St. Bartolomeo) did really labour on the coast, there is no reason why the Malabar Christians should have preferred the one Apostle to the other.¹⁴¹

Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveller, who visited the Apostle’s Tomb in 1293 A.D. says: “The body of Messer, St. Thomas lies in this province of Malabar at a certain little town having no great population.”¹⁴² About the same time, (A.D. 1292-1293), John of Monte Corvino, who visited the Coromandel Coast and stayed there for about a year, speak of the Church of St. Thomas at Mylapore.¹⁴³ The church of St. Thomas at Mylapore is noticed by Friar Odoric in 1318 A. D., also by John Marignolli who, as the Pope’s Legate, stayed at Quilon for 14 months in A. D. 1349. He visited the church of St. Thomas at Mylapore.¹⁴⁴

In the 16th century the Portuguese were told of his burial place by the natives and others of Malabar and were taken there by Armenian merchants on a pilgrimage. This was in the year 1517. From that year onwards the Portuguese began to visit the place and even settled down in Mylapore. In a few years they discovered many other places and monuments in the vicinity of Mylapore, such as the Big Mount and the Little Mount. In the year 1523 they excavated the

¹³⁹ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Kaithanal, 11.

¹⁴¹ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:451–52.

¹⁴² Henry Yule and Henri Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. II (London: Printed for the Hakluyt society, 1913), 358.

¹⁴³ Yule and Cordier, II:356.

¹⁴⁴ Yule and Cordier, II:356–60.

tomb and found a few relics therein. The categorical statement that the identification of the tomb was the work of the Portuguese may not hold water when one makes even a causal examination of records which refer to the tomb of St. Thomas before the unreliable Portuguese appear on the scene.¹⁴⁵

The famous Portuguese national poet Luís Vaz de Camões (1524-1580) in his famous work *Os Lusíadas*, 10th song, 108-118, writes about the glorious relic (body) of St. Thomas, his martyrdom in India.¹⁴⁶

1.10 A New Religion In An Ancient Society

Through the trade relations there had been mixing of culture and lifestyle between Malabar and other lands. One of the great changes can be considered as the emergence of Christianity in the Land. The reach of Christianity in Malabar made grater changes in the society. There had been antient religions like Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (as a way of life. In that period, it was not a religion) in all over the country of India.

According to Jainism and Buddhism there is no God (atheism). But in Hinduism there are millions of gods (pantheism). As a new religion, Christianity when reached in Malabar with one God concept (monotheism), that made very many social changes and clashes in the society. Christianity, and its one God concept especially made great changes in the sociocultural aspect of Malabar, where the casts system was very prominent.

1.10.1 God Concept In Hinduism

The concept of God in Hinduism has in the scriptures like Vedas and Upanishads. It comes from the observation and reflections, meditation, and spiritual exercises. Different philosophies and theologies emerged in this quest to know God. In Hinduism “*Brahman*” is the one and only reality and infinite. He is the ever present, all powerful and beyond the comprehension. It can be formless and without attributes but manifests in form. *Brahman* is

¹⁴⁵ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 18–19.

¹⁴⁶ Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas* (Lisboa: P. Crasbeeck [Com privilégio, à custa de Domingos Fernandez, livreyro.], 1609), 178–80.

supreme and transcendent. The world is also a manifestation of *Brahman*, the universe and the Absolute are not two but one.

The universe is different but inseparable from God. And all of existence is within the Absolute-Pantheism. God is existing in oneself and all other human beings and in all other beings, including plants and animals then God exist in whole universe. Hinduism believes that God can incarnate in human form, as an *Avatar*. Then a person can have more than one preferable deity, as a personal God. The Hinduism, according to the antient scripters is a mixture of Monotheism, Monism, Pantheism, Polytheism and Animism.¹⁴⁷

The idea of Hindu *Trimurti* (Tri-icon) radically differs from that of the Christian Trinity. According to the Rudrahrdaya Upanishad, the *Trimurti* “is the tree of three worlds whose top is Visnu, whose centre is Brahma and whose root is Siva”. One another interpretation is that Visnu is the effect, Brahma the action, and Siva the cause. The third interpretation is that: Visnu is the earth; Brahma is all Knowledge. The fundamental interpretation of *Trimurti* is that the Brahma is the creator, Visnu is the preserver, and Siva is the destroyer.¹⁴⁸ The unique reality and the Absolute Brahman is totally different from one of the gods named Brahma.

1.10.2 Caste System Of South India

For the Hindus, the religion is given by birth only. There is no conversion or choosing. The children of a Hindu couple are naturally Hindus by birth. A Hindu has a belief to take part of Brahma or to become Supreme. The base of Hindu orthodoxy says: “*Aham Brahamasmi*” (I am the supreme). For them, the God has given the revelation to each people about their religion and faith.¹⁴⁹

In Malabar the present inhabitants appear to be predominantly *Dravidian*. The Aryan settlers, the Malabar Brahmins, who came at a later age, adopted many features of Dravidian culture and the language of the land. In Barbosa’s classification the people of Malabar are divided into four main categories: the ruling class or kings, the higher castes, the law castes, and the strangers or those who were without caste distinction. The higher castes were the Brahmins, the *Nairs*, the *Baibares* (Indian Merchants), *Cuivem* (Kusava or the potter caste), the

¹⁴⁷ Abid Mushtaq Wani, *Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism: A Comparative Study* (Educreation Publishing, 2018), 4–40.

¹⁴⁸ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 267.

¹⁴⁹ José Machado Lourenço, *Mensagem Cristã à Índia* (Goa: Tipografia Rangel Bastora India Portuguesa, 1945), 23–24.

Mainatos (wahermen of kings, Brahmins and Nairs), and the *Calets* (Chalians or Weavers). And there are many sub casts in the lower caste.¹⁵⁰

In the Hinduism, the god Brahma is having a figure of fatherhood. And the gods are different in their faculties, power, colour, privileges and even in their final destinies. Then the devotees could hardly be considered brothers themselves. The Brahmins incorporated this doctrine of Brahma's children in their religion and sacred books. Thus, the *Rig-Veda*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and *Manu's Codex* have all sanctified the castes and have raised their rule to a preferment of a supreme religious duty, under the pro-opus title *Varnashrama Dharma*, which denies salvation outside it.

From its very beginning the caste system had been a brutal way of hold the privileges for the superior classes and to suppress the humbler ones. The high-class people never could adjust with the lower-class people even they are converting to the Christianity. The upper-class men always had an ambition to become the priests or bishops in the Christian faith. The men of the high castes were rejecting such an equalisation that the Church teach and live. But in the time the Christian doctrines have given a great testimony about the dualities and brotherhood before the one and same God of love. The Church taught the love, charity, and equality in the light of Bible. Christianity has its doctrine of equality before the only God and love for neighbours for the sake of God. This has been contributed immensely to weaken the harmful influence of this sad legacy of our forefathers (Hindus).¹⁵¹

1.10.3 Christianity And Hinduism

The early Christians who were born out of the evangelisation of St. Thomas Apostle, who are called St. Thomas Christians, became gradually integrated or rewarded to their old lifestyle of caste system even being a baptised Christian. They thought that they will become an original Christian only by the birth, as they had the caste system as a Hindu is born a Brahmin or Sudra: to born in a caste and being the part of it till death. The Christian law that preached by St. Tomas was very vague and unclear for the native people. And in front of them the new Christianity became as a mere caste among the other castes of Hinduism.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 14–15.

¹⁵¹ Irneu, *The Church and the Problem of Cast in India* (Goa: Rally, 1956), 1–3.

¹⁵² Irneu, 1–3.

According to the John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan and the first Latin missionary reached at India in 13th century, found some of the Hindu religious culture in the South India: the individual character of Hindu worship is that they have idol houses (Temples) which they worship at almost all hours of the day; for they never join to worship at any fixed hour, but each goes to worship when it pleases himself. The institution of marriage in Hinduism in his observation is like this: when the husband dies, the wife cannot marry again. And about the disposal of the dead, he writes: They burry not their dead but burn them, carrying them to the pile with the music ad singing; whilst apart from this occasion, the relatives of the dead manifest great grief and affliction like other folk. It was perhaps well that the gruesome practice of *Sati* somehow escaped his attention.¹⁵³

Here we see the first religious clash and the mixture of liturgy and customs of Hinduism and Christianity. A confusion between a monotheistic religion and a polytheistic religion. Many of the Hindus, through the faith mission of St. Thomas converted to Christianity. For them that was a good option to get out of their caste system and gain equality and dignity in the society. So, there were large numbers of conversions of Hindus to Christianity. But the people got converted from Hinduism faced great difficulty to change their lifestyle, rituals, and the social customs. Then emerged an inculturation and ritual adaptation in the Indian Christianity.

¹⁵³ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 87–88.

Chapter 2.

History Of St. Thomas Christians And the Migration Of Chaldean Christians (AD 345-)

2.1 St. Thomas Christians

The term Thomas Christians now denotes the most ancient Christians of India who have their origin in Malabar (Where the Malayalam language is spoken and now known as Kerala), the South-West coast of India. They have the proofs and the faith that Apostle St. Thomas as the one who converted their forefathers to Christian faith. Formerly there were Thomas Christians in different parts of the India and outside. For this first St. Thomas Christians, they have their tradition of Christian faith since 52 AD.¹⁵⁴

“The mother tongue of Thomas Christians is Malayalam, one of the Dravidian languages of India. Their hieratic language is Syriac, which they were using for the liturgy services, and it also known as East Syriac or Chaldaic language. Later there were use of the West-Syriac language in the liturgy of among some Thomas Christian communities.”¹⁵⁵

From the very ancient times they were having hierarchical relations successively with the Church of Persia (Iran) and with the East-Syriac Church of Mesopotamia (Iraq) from where their bishops came for the administrations.¹⁵⁶ The chief bishops were known as *Metropolitan and Gate of all India*.¹⁵⁷ “Gate” in the Orient stands for “sublime power”. The jurisdiction of this Metropolitan extended to the whole of India. And he was sent by the East Syrian Patriarch of Mesopotamia with an autonomous status.¹⁵⁸

The local priests who had the effective administration were called *Archdeacons of all India*. The Church of “all India”, therefore, gravitated towards Malabar.¹⁵⁹ These priests were the political and the social leaders of the Thomas Christians. As the head of all the Thomas

¹⁵⁴ Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures*, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Podipara, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Kuttiyanikkal, *Khris̄t Bhakta Movement*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ P. Paulino and S. Bartholomaeo, *India Orientalis Christiana: continens fundationes ecclesiarum, scriem episcoporum, missiones ...* (Rome: Typis Salomonianis, 1794), 88.

¹⁵⁸ Placid J. Podipara, *The Malabar Christians* (Alleppey, India: Prakasam Publications, 1972), 2.

¹⁵⁹ Podipara, 3.

Christians there was only one Archdeacon at one time. The whole of India was belonged to this hierarchy ecclesiastically.¹⁶⁰

There had an assembly (Malabar Church Assemblies¹⁶¹) in each parish of the adults and the priests to look after the Christian life of people and the administration. This assembly had the right and power to even excommunicate the public delinquents. The matters of a serious nature were dealt with in the joint assemblies of two or more parishes. Likewise, the Malabar Church presented the appearance of a Christian Republic.¹⁶²

In the reply letter of King of Portugal Luís I, dated in 1886 February 10th, to the letter of Pope Leo XIII¹⁶³, dated 1886 January 6th¹⁶⁴ we read: “To all the region of Asia, Portugal carried the Apostolic mission, which brought about a revival from the point where the Apostle (St. Thomas) had left it, and where it lay almost extinct, in vain being all the efforts employed before to raise it.”¹⁶⁵

St. Thomas Christians first refused the diverse system of faith and liturgy of Persian church. But later majority of them became part of it. There were different groups of Christians: who accepted the East-Syrian rite and others remained in the Apostolic tradition of faith. This division made many social conflicts and confusion among the Christians of Malabar. But the domain of the Persian church was growing very fast.

When the Episcopal hierarchy of the East-Syrian church was fully organised by the 5th century (410), the Bishopric of Rewardastir was elevated to a title of metropolitan, taken the jurisdiction over whole India. This system continued to the 7th century till the time of Patriarch Isho-Yahb II (628-643), who appointed a metropolitan for India separately. Because the number of Christians in India was very high. Then there were near to twelve consecrated suffragan bishops for India. The same time Persian church had their reach in China also. The metropolitans of distant sees such as India and China made the General Synods very difficult. Thus, Indian church became a daughter of Persian Church.

¹⁶⁰ Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures*, 100.

¹⁶¹ Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 3.

¹⁶² P. Paulino and S. Bartholomaeo, *Viaggio alle Indie orientali* (Rome: A. Fulgoni, 1796), 80–81.

¹⁶³ Pope Leo XIII, ‘*Humanae Salutis*’, 1 September 1886, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/la/apost_letters/documents/hf_l-xiii_apl_18860901_humanae-salutis.html.

¹⁶⁴ Portugal Ministério Negocios Externos, *Negocios Externos: Documentos Apresentados Às Cortes Na Sessão Legislativa de 1887 Pelo Ministro E Secretario d’Estado dos Negocios Estrangeiros; Negociações Com a Santa Sé*, vol. II, II vols (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1887).

¹⁶⁵ Ernest Reginald Hull, *Bombay Mission-History: With a Special Study of the Padroado Question* (Bombay: Examiner Press, 1927), 173.

2.2 Socio-Political And Religious Background Of Chaldean Migration

The Church of Persia or Chaldea (East Syrians) existed in the region, which were once the Persian Empire, the great rival of the Roman Empire, the places presently known as Iran e Iraq. This part of the world was successively ruled by the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, and the Persians, it has been known in history by these various names. Also had a collective name as Church of Mesopotamia (Euphrates-Tigris valley). The name of the Apostle Thomas is intimately connected with the Church, two early missionaries, Agai and Mari, are reputed as the founders.¹⁶⁶

“The Chaldean Church (East Syrian) is part of the Christendom in those territories which once constituted by the Persian Empire, the great rival of the Roman empire till the rise of the political power of Islam, now the Church of modern Iraq and Iran. St. Thomas Apostle is considered intimately connected with their Church.”¹⁶⁷

During the time of the reign of Sapor/Sapur II (309-379), the 10th Emperor of the state of peace between Romans and Persians ended. He renewed the aggressive Western policy of the early Sasanian kings. Sapor II indented to recover not only those territories that had been lost in 298 but all of Mesopotamia and Armenia. Although Persia struggled with a period of political unrest after the death of king Hormizd II. Sapor II had the longest and one of the most renowned reigns of all Sasanian kings.¹⁶⁸

The year 338 was an important turning-point because at this time hostilities with Rome started again. Changes in religious affairs that had occurred within the Roman Empire dramatically affected the relationship between the two great powers. The reign of Constantine the Great (306-337) ushered in the turning point known as the ‘Constantine Revolution’. Since his victory over Maxentius (306-312) at the Milvian Bridge in the year 312 Constantine had been convinced that the well-being of the Roman Empire depended on its protection by the Christian God. From 312 onwards non-Christian religions were therefor repressed and the Christianization of the Roman Empire took place at a much-accelerated pace. Constantine turned to Christianity, and he felt responsible for the wee-being also of the Persian Christians,

¹⁶⁶ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Mundadan, 20.

¹⁶⁸ Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1969), 1–2.

the more they became the natural allies of the Western arch enemy in the eyes of Sapor II. And then the severe persecutions of the Christians in Persia began.¹⁶⁹

Shemon Bar Sabbae (Shimun) was bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon during the persecution of Sapor II of the Sasanian Empire of Iran. In 316 he had been named as the coadjutor bishop of his predecessor, Papa Bar Gaggai. He was later accused of the relation with the Roman emperor, Sapor II ordered for the execution of all the Christian priests. Because they refused the conversion to the Zoroastrianism. In the year 345, Shemon was beheaded with many other bishops and priests and faithful. According to the historians Sozomen and Al-Masiudy, there were 16,000 to 200,000 Christian martyrs that time in Persia.¹⁷⁰

The missionary activities of the Chaldean Church came to Malabar through the commercial relations between Malabar and Mesopotamia and the regions around. Missionary expansion had already begun under the Sassanids, whose persecution caused the Christians to flee to the eastern parts of the Persian empire, and to evangelise those parts. In the beginning of the 5th century, we find Christians with their bishops in the extreme eastern provinces.¹⁷¹

“India and Persia had very close connections from the ancient times. India was the immediate neighbour of Persia. The relation was not only in terms of commerce but also in terms of culture and language.”¹⁷²

When the Roman Empire became Christian in the 4th century, the Christians of the Persian Empire were suspected by their rulers of divided loyalty. The persecution¹⁷³ which

¹⁶⁹ Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 32–33.

¹⁷⁰ John Foxe, *Book of Martyrs: A Universal History of Christian Martyrdom from the Birth of Our Blessed Saviour to the Latest Periods of Persecution*, vol. 1–2 (Florence: E.C. Biddle, 1840), 4–7.

¹⁷¹ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 23–24.

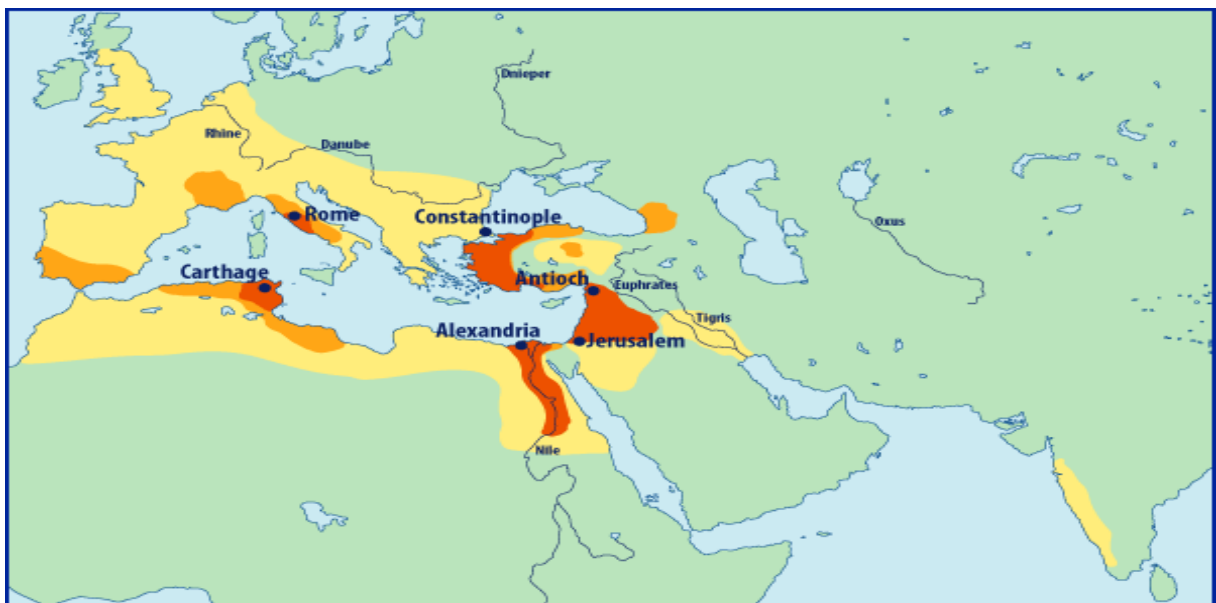
¹⁷² Gaṅgā Rām Garg, *Encyclopaedia of the Hindu World*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1992), 3–4.

¹⁷³ ‘The Spread of Early Christianity from AD250 to AD406’, accessed 20 May 2021, https://www.animatedmaps.div.ed.ac.uk/divinity_map/ad250.html.

followed fostered in the Christians a tendency towards what is called Centrifugalism- the desire for forming a national Church, which was situated in the Roman Empire, and to which it was juridically subject. The Synod of Markabta Tayyayye (424 A.D.) took the first steps, and the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (486A.D.) made the final steps towards the independence of the native Church. From the end of the 5th century, under the Sassanid rulers of Persia, the Chaldean Church made their own theology, canon law, liturgy and so on. The first repercussion of the Mohammedan occupation of Persia (from 642 A.D.) were not too disastrous for the Church.



A.D. 250: Christianity at the time of Decian persecution.



Middle Stage A.D. 250-A.D. 406: The map shows the increasing spread and destiny of Christianity throughout the territory of the Roman Empire and eventually beyond it. They expand outwards to detail the increasingly large agree within which Christianity is now present, including Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Ethiopia, as well as a thin spread along the western coast of India. The yellow colour mark in India is Malabar (In present the state of Kerala).

but in course of time Christians were reduced to the status of second-rate citizens, and many were also forced to abandon their faith.¹⁷⁴

The original Christian community of St. Thomas is alleged to have undergone, in course of time, a decline without any leaders or religious structure. But it was reconstituted and reinvigorated by groups of Christians who migrated from Persia (Chaldean or Babylon).¹⁷⁵ There had been a thick relation between the Indian Christians and the Persian Christians from the very early centuries. There are two events about how the Church, founded by St. Thomas, encountered with the Chaldean Church in the middle of the 4th century. The first is the arrival of a group of Chaldean Christians in the company of Thomas of Cana (A.D. 345) and the second, the arrival of another such group together with Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz/ Prot (A.D. 824).¹⁷⁶

2.3 The Chaldean (Persian/Knanaya) Christians In Malabar

In the fourth century when a state of persecution against the Christians prevailed in the homeland, the Chaldean Christians migrated to Cranganore with the Thomas of Cana. They allegedly played a great role in the organisation and building up of the church and community of Cranganore. Then the Cranganore became a Christian city by them. As the very ancient port, after the mission of St. Thomas, in the 4th century by Thomas of Cana,¹⁷⁷ Cranganore again became a cradle of Christian faith in Kerala. There had been two groups of Christians according to the different traditions. The Northists, originated from the missionary activities of St. Thomas the Apostle and the Southists, who came with Thomas of Cana. Thomas of Cana appears as the link between the Malabar Church and Chaldean Church.¹⁷⁸

Apart from the Ecclesiastical bond established with the East Syrian church, there were two important immigrations of Persian Christians to Malabar one in the 4th century (AD 345) and in the 9th century (AD 823). The king of Malabar Cheraman Perumal received them with royal privileges, land and other things inscribed on copper plates. They became a strong community and built their town Mahadevapattanam near the port city of Kodungalore. There came the divisions on the ethnic aspects between St. Thomas Christians (Northists) and

¹⁷⁴ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 25.

¹⁷⁵ Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All-India* (Kottayam, Kerala: [s.n.], 1972), 79.

¹⁷⁶ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Ian Gilman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (London: Routledge, 2013), 159–60.

¹⁷⁸ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 26–27.

Kananya Christians (Southists). This immigration not only strengthened the existing Christian community of Malabar but also influenced its liturgical aspects.

“There is a distinct ethnic community known as the Southists or Knanaya. Its origins have been traced to a group of 72 Jewish Christian families who immigrated to India from Mesopotamia in the year A.D. 345.”^{179, 180}

The king not only gave Thomas of Cana this town (Mahadevapattanam) but also seven kinds of musical instruments and all the honours, and to travel in a palanquin and conferred on him the duty and privilege of spreading carpets on the ground and to use sandals and to erect a pandal and to ride on elephants. Besides this also granted five taxes to Thomas of Cana and his posterity and all his men and the followers of his faith for ever.¹⁸¹

Thomas of Cana, a merchant, who came to India in AD 345 bringing with him to Cranganore a colony of four hundred Christians from Bagdad, Nineveh, and Jerusalem. Among them was a bishop from Edessa named Joseph and several priests and deacons. From the time of this immigration the Church in Malabar seems to have been on a much firmer footing. The Chaldean Church was now in communion with the Churches of Asia appears from the tradition that the body or part of the body of Apostle St. Thomas carried towards the close of the fourth century from Mylapore to Edessa.¹⁸²

According to Wilhelm Germann, the archdeaconate of India was instructed at the initiative of the certain Thomas of Cana, who arrived at Cranganore in AD 345 at the head of a Christian colony from the Middle East. To the zeal of this Thomas is attributed the reorganization of the dwindling community of the St. Thomas Christians. The Church was recognised under the pastoral care of bishop.¹⁸³ The establishment of the archdeaconate of India by Thomas of Cana is stated also in a letter of a Jacobite priest, Abraham by name, to Mr. William H. in December 1821.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Erwin Fahlbusch et al., *The Encycloedia of Christianity*, vol. V (Boston: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 285–86.

¹⁸⁰ Suresh K. Sharma and Usha Sharma, *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India: Christianity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2004), 12.

¹⁸¹ L. W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 86.

¹⁸² Manoel Francis X D'Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India* (Bombay: B.X. Furtado and Sons, 1910), 9.

¹⁸³ Germann Wilhelm, *Die Kirche Der Thomaschristen Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Orientalischen Kirchen* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1877), 94.

¹⁸⁴ F Nau, 'Deux Notices Relatives au Malabar', *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, II, XVII (1912): 79.

In Malabar the church founded by St, Thomas Apostle, entered in relation with the Chaldean Church in the middle of the 4th century. We see a bishop John, “the bishop of Persia and India” in the list of the Nicene Fathers. And in the beginning of the 5th century when we have the unmistakable witness of Cosmas Indicopleustes about Christian communities in the Malabar Coast,¹⁸⁵ which lived in the relation with the Church of Persia.¹⁸⁶

“The ruler of Cranganore, Cheraman Perumal, conferred privileges upon Thomas Cana and on his people. The kindness which Thomas of Cana received by the king of Cranganore were many honours and privileges to the Christians. Among others they alone could deck the hair after marriage with a gold flower, ride on elephants like the members of the royal family, travel in a palanquin, etc.”¹⁸⁷

Theophilus the Indian (a native of one of the Maldives Isles), sent by the Roman Emperor Constantine before the year 356 at the head of a mission to propagate Arianism beyond

¹⁸⁵ Eugene Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity In India*, trans. E. R. Hambye (Calcutta, India: Orient Longmans, 1957), 7–13.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Church of the East’, in *Wikipedia*, 20 May 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Church_of_the_East&oldid=1024218078.



The expansion of the Church of the East in the Middle Ages: A.D. 500-1500. After the split with the Western world and synthesis with Nestorianism, the Church of the East expanded rapidly due to missionary works during the medieval period. During the period between 500 and 1400 the geographical horizon of the Church of the East extended well. This most important conversion, however, was of the St. Thomas Christians of the Malabar coast in India.

¹⁸⁷ D’Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 9.

the boundaries of the Roman Empire, visited Arabia, Maldives, Ceylon, and Malabar.¹⁸⁸ According to the Greek historian Philostorgius (368-439 AD): “ Theophilus went on to the rest of the Indian country (written the name ‘Malabar’ in the foot note), where he corrected much that was not being done by them (the people of Malabar) in a lawful way. They would for the instance listen to the Gospel readings while seated, and they did other things not permitted by divine law. When, however, he (Theophilus) had amended each of these matters with a view to their reverence and love of God, he confirmed the Church’s teaching.¹⁸⁹

These migrated Christians of Malabar held their faith pure until the source of their bishops and clergy, the patriarchate of Babylon was pulled by the Nestorian heresy.¹⁹⁰ In the year 431, the Nestorianism entered in the Persian church and till by the year 530, the Indian Christians had all been captured in the Nestorian net.¹⁹¹

Between AD 823 and 1599 the Malabar Christians were part of the East Syrian church. the second immigration of Persian Christians in AD 823, under the leadership of Mar Sapor and Mar Prot reached in Quilon (Malabar). They also received the privileges and certain rights written in the copper plates from the king of Quilon. They enjoyed a sound social status and lived a truly appreciable indigenous lifestyle in identical to that of non-Christian natives.

“One of the Syrian-Christian copperplates makes mention of Vira Raghava Chakravartti as ruling in Malabar about 774 A.D. the second charter of the Syrian-Christians, granted by Sthanu Ravi Gupta about 824 A.D, give permission to Mar Sapor to transfer to the Tarisa church and community at Quilon.”¹⁹²

The very numbers of the inscriptions in Pahlavi (a script derives from Aramaic, which contains Aramaic as well as ideograms) on the crosses show the relation of Malabar Church with the Middle East. The two identical crosses found in different parts of South India: Mylapore, on the east coast, the traditional place of martyrdom of Apostle Thomas and in a Church at Kottayam (Malabar) in Travancore, both bear the one and the same inscription in the language of Pahlavi. According to Winckworth the writing on the crosses is, like this: “My Lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chaharbukt, the Syrian, who cut this”.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ D’Sa, 10.

¹⁸⁹ Philostorgius, *Philostorgius: Church History*, trans. Philip R. Amidon (Atlanta, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 40–43.

¹⁹⁰ D’Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 10.

¹⁹¹ D’Sa, 10–13.

¹⁹² Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:273.

¹⁹³ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 77.

“The only extant monuments of early Christian settlement in southern India are the so-called Persian crosses...the surface of which is intagliated with an inscription in the Pahlavi character of Sassanian Persia. The most famous of these crosses was discovered on St. Thomas Mount, Madras, in the sixteenth century by Portuguese Jesuits”.¹⁹⁴

Cosmas, who passed through the India some time about AD 545, his book, *Christian Topography*, he confirms the Persian Church relation of Malabar.¹⁹⁵ “In the country called Malê (Malabar), where the pepper grows, there is also a church, and at another place called *Calliana* there is more over a Bishop, who is appointed from Persia.”¹⁹⁶

2.4 The East-Syrian Rite And Liturgy (Babylon/Persian)

The Indian Church with Edessa and with Seleucia-Ctesiphon, maintained their friendly relationship because of their almost common (Apostolic) origin. Then it is not surprising that the Indian Priests should be sent to Persia for ecclesiastical training. A priest from India named Daniel had helped Ishodad to translate a Greek origin text of ‘A commentary on the Epistle to the Romans by Mar Komai’ into Syriac. And it is evident that Greek was the liturgical language of India ever since the evangelisation of people by St. Thomas. The proficiency of priest Daniel explains the same and for him Syriac might had been the medium of the instruction for his ecclesiastical studies in Persia.¹⁹⁷

“The East Syriac relation and liturgy, the Christianised Hindu customs were all *The Law of Thomas* for the Malabarians. And this made the Malabar Church fully at home in the Indian soil from both the religious and cultural point of view. The peculiar nature of the individuality of the Malabar Church was entirely Indo-Oriental.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ C. P. T. Winckworth, ‘A New Interpretation of the Pahlavi Cross-Inscriptions of Southern India’, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 30, no. 119 (1929): 237–44.

¹⁹⁵ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 73.

¹⁹⁶ Cosmas Indicopleustes, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk: Translated from the Greek, and Edited with Notes and Introduction*, ed. J. W. McCrindle (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 119.

¹⁹⁷ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 70–71.

¹⁹⁸ Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 3.

The Christians of Malabar accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian Church, because for many years there were no priests and bishops or any leaders for the Malabar Christians of St. Thomas. Thomas of Cana always managed to get Syrian bishops for Malabar Church. In the list of bishops, who attended the Nicæan Council of 325 is mentioned one John of the Persian, who according to the history of Gelasius, written in the second half of the 5th century, was bishop of the whole of Persia and Greater India. This can be the great proof for the presence and reign of Persian bishops in the Malabar Church from 4th century.^{199,200}

“Baptism and Confirmation were administered together according to the East Syriac Rite. They had a greatest respect to the Most Holy Eucharist. They had their East Syriac liturgy which had inculturation with the Malabar customs and the Portuguese could not understand anything that was not Latin in Rite, everything else for them being heresy or schism or superstition.”²⁰¹

Till the end of the 16th century the Thomas Christians were all using the genuine form of East Syriac Rite. This Rite was originally the Rite of the Christians outside the limits of the Roman Empire. And Thomas Christians had attachment with this Rite which also connected them with St. Thomas in some way or another. This Rite was originated and developed in Mesopotamia and Persia which had cultural and trade relation with Malabar from very ancient times. The Thomas Christians loved the Syriac language, was also a commercial language in the East during the first centuries of the Christian era.²⁰²

“It is very clear and evident that the whole of the Indian Church had already been incorporated and related with the Persian Church, under the control of the Metropolitan of Rew-Ardashir”.²⁰³

The Nestorian Church, which got divided and was unable to recapture its glorious past. And the distant missions of this Church were neglected, sending prelates to India at irregular intervals. During this time Christianity started fading in the east coast of India, because of the lack of a ministering clergy. The second spring of the Nestorian Church later did not affect the

¹⁹⁹ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 28.

²⁰⁰ D'Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 8.

²⁰¹ Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 47–52.

²⁰² Podipara, 44–47.

²⁰³ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 73.

Indian Church. The Nestorianism was not a scandal for the Malabar Christians, it doesn't make any sense or change of faith in the community.

But the Christianity was saved in the Malabar and the west coast because the people had a certain political status which was gained from the local chiefs of the society. The privileges given to Thomas of Cana were repeated by the local chiefs, which were given in written in the copper plates – the Quilon Church Copper Plates of AD 880 by the local authority named Sthanu Ravi Gupta, who was the contemporary of the Chola king Aditya I (887-907). This charter which was written partly in Tamil and partly in Pahlavi then in Arabic, was attested by four Jewish signatories. This states that the Christians of Malabar had a high place in the social hierarchy such as the Jews of Malabar that time.²⁰⁴

The St. Thomas Christians suffered some detriment to their Christianity on account of their dependence upon the Chaldean Church to obtain their prelates, as that Church was not able to send prelates to India whenever needed them. There were times when St. Thomas Christians lived without prelates, and without sufficient spiritual care. In this need they requested prelates from the Patriarchate of Antioch and brought down prelates. The relation with the Chaldean Church also continued at the arrival of Portuguese and was cut off in 1599, by the 'Synod of Diamper',²⁰⁵ which was convoked by a Portuguese archbishop of Goa in the same year.²⁰⁶

2.5 The Chaldean Bishops Of Malabar

From the third century there were many bishops of Persia governed the Malabar church. In the 3rd century about 295-300 Dudi (David), bishop of Basra (in Mesopotamia near the head of the Persian Gulf), left his see and went to India, where he evangelised many people.²⁰⁷ Under Catholicos Ezechiel (557-581) a priest, called Bodh seems to have come to Iran and India as a

²⁰⁴ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:273.

²⁰⁵ Aleixo de Meneses and Diogo Gomes de Loureiro, *Synodo diocesano da Igreja e Bispado de Angamale dos antigos christãos de Sam Thome das Serras do Malabar das partes da India Oriental* (Coimbra: Na Officina de Diogo Gomez Loureyro Impressor da Vniversidade, 1606).

²⁰⁶ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 27.

²⁰⁷ Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 19–21.

Periodeutes, that is a delegate entrusted with teaching and visiting scattered communities of his Church.²⁰⁸

The *Cronicle of Seert* (or *Siirt*), it is also called the name *Historie Nestorienne* is an ecclesiastical history of the Church of East written in Arabic by an anonymous Nestorian writer. In the book we find in the sixth century a bishop Maruta (also called Parwa) was ambassador of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (582-602) to the Sassanid Emperor Khosrau II (590-628), In Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital, he met the Eastern Patriarch Sabrisho I (596-604), and received as presents from him perfumes and gifts, which used to be sent to the Patriarch from India and China.²⁰⁹

At the time of Catholicos Ishoyahb II (624-646) priests, mostly belonging to the monastic order, and bishops from his Church were sent to India.²¹⁰ This strengthens the proof of the bond between Indian Christians and the East-Syrian Church. And this sending of Middle East clergy and bishops to India lasted with ups and downs beyond the middle of the 16th century.²¹¹

In the expansion of the East-Syrian Church in Asia, metropolitan and episcopal sees were established accordingly. The Christians in India first depended on the metropolitan of D'Maisan (Basrah), and on that of Rew-Ardashir in south-west Iran since the 5th century. However, the Church of India obtained its own metropolitan see sometime in the 7th or 8th century.²¹² Timothy I (780-823), the new Catholicos, fought hard against the separatism of Rew-Ardashir, which carried India into the schism together with herself.²¹³

The arrival of two Nestorian bishops from East Syria Mar Sabriso/Sapor, and Mar Peroz, who were settled in Quilon in 823 A.D, their memories are preserved in the local tradition under the names of Soper Iso and Prodho. They have built a church in Quilon by the consent of the Shakirbirti/ Chakravarti (title of the king).²¹⁴ There are two copper-plate grants preserved in the Seminary of Kottayam, one of the years 774 and the other of 824. By the former king Vira Raghava Chakravarti hands over to Eravi Korttan of Cranganore, the territory of Manigramam, and confers on him the rank of merchant. By the latter Miruvan Sapir Iso with

²⁰⁸ William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894), 123–24.

²⁰⁹ Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (England: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196.

²¹⁰ Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, 27.

²¹¹ Perumalil and Hambye, *Christianity In India: A History In Ecumenical Perspective*, 30–31.

²¹² Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 83–84.

²¹³ Eugene Tisserant, 'Syro-Malabare (Eglise)', in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique: Contenant L'exposé des Doctrines de la Théologie Catholique, Leurs Preuves et Leur Histoire*, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangelot, and E. Amann, I (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1939), 3089–3162.

²¹⁴ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:23.

the leave of king Stanu Ravi Guptha gives certain land near Quilon to the Church.²¹⁵ After their death they have buried in the same church. Later they were revered as saints by the St. Thomas Christians.

Towards the year 1129 the Catholicus of Bagdad sent a Nestorian bishop Mar John III to Malabar.²¹⁶ There were two groups of Bishops came from Babylon in 1490-1491 and in 1504. In 1504 there were five Chaldean Bishops in Malabar: Mar John, Mar Yahballaha, Mar Thomas, Mar Denha, and Mar Jacob. These bishops were arrived in India a few years before the arrival of Portuguese. The first four bishops were sent by the Armenian Patriarch, of whom two of them died when reached India and the other two divided the province between themselves.²¹⁷

Likewise, till the arrival of Portuguese (1498), or even till the synod of Diamper (1599), there were many Persian bishoprics and the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Malabar among the native Christians. The Persian church was governing the Malabar church considering all the needs of faith and liturgy of the people of Malabar.

2.6 Nestorianism (431 AD) And The Malabar Church

Nestor became the archbishop of Constantinople in 428, was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 and expelled from his See. He taught that Christ had two persons, a divine person, and a human person, and that the infant born of the Virgin Mary was not God but a mere man. The doctrine upheld against him by the Council of Ephesus is that Christ is one person with two nature, human and divine.²¹⁸

“Thus, with in the seven years of its suppression in the Roman Empire, Nestorians triumphed in the eastern world beyond the roman frontiers. The see of Rew-Ardashir was now being held by Patrick, a prominent Nestorian, and the Indian Church depending as it did on Rew-Ardashir for the supply of its clergy, soon came under Nestorian influence.”²¹⁹

²¹⁵ D'Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 13–14.

²¹⁶ D'Sa, 14.

²¹⁷ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 83–84.

²¹⁸ D'Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 10–11.

²¹⁹ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 73–74.

During the time of Cosmas, the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was captured by the followers of Nestorius. After this in AD 489, emperor Zeno ordered Cyrus, Bishop of Edessa, to purge his diocese of Nestorian, and later had been compelled to seek asylum in Persia. The banished professors and students at the Persian School of Edessa, the centre of Nestorian teaching found protection under Barsumas, the Metropolitan of Nisibis, who was the most ardent follower of Nestorius. Barsumas at this time became the Persian Governor of the frontier. And with his influence he possessed at the court.²²⁰ He made the Persian king to believe that on account of the close association between the state and the Church in the Roman Empire. By the help of the secular arm the Nestorians soon possessed themselves of all the seas in Persia including the chief see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in AD 496.²²¹

“The Chaldean Church was looked upon by the Western Christendom as schismatic and heretical from the end of the 5th century. However, there were occasions, from the time of Crusades, on which the Church kept good relations with the Latin Missionaries and Rome.”²²²

“With the conquest of Iran by the rising power of Islam, the Nestorian Church had suffered an irretrievable setback and persecution. Even before the persecution by Islam, schism had raised in the Nestorian Church. There are allusions in the correspondence of Isoy’ahb III, (in the last quarter of the seventh century), to the separatist tendency of the metropolitans of Rew-Ardashir, who by their attitude caused refractoriness among the Bishops of India. Isoy’ahb says that the Christianity extended not only as far as India, but as far as Qalah or Quillah, undoubtedly the Kalah of the Arab geographers of the Straits of Malacca. Isoy’ahb is without doubt referring to the expansion achieved not only during his own days, but also during the golden age of the Nestorian Church”.²²³

“Later, we find many allusions to the Christians of India in the writings of the Chaldeans. One such allusion is that of Catholicos Ishoyabh III. In his correspondence he makes mention of the schismatic tendencies of the Metropolitan of Rew-Ardashir (in the southwestern part of present Iran), who by his stubbornness led the bishops of India astray from the

²²⁰ Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity In India*, 218–25.

²²¹ D’Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 10–11.

²²² Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity In India*, 218–25.

²²³ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 75.

Catholicos. This gives clear reference that the Indian Church depended directly on the Persian province of the Chaldean Church at least for a time.”²²⁴

Timothy I (780-823), the new Catholicos, fought hard against the separatism of Rew-Ardashir, which carried India into the schism together with herself. Bar Heraeus says that...the recalcitrant bishop replied to him: we are the disciples of Apostle Thomas; we have no relation with the See of Mari. According to the author of *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*,²²⁵ it may be noted here that it was the first time on this occasion that the style “Christians of St. Thomas” was used.²²⁶ The arrival of two Nestorian bishops from East Syria Mar Sabriso/Sapor, and Mar Peroz/Prodho, who were settled in Quilon (Malabar) in 823 A.D.

“Nestorian” is the name commonly applied to the Syro-Chaldaic or East-Syriac language. When Nestorianism spread in the East, the Syro-Chaldean language also underwent many changes in the characters and pronunciation and came to known by the same name of Nestorian. Despite its lack of precision, the term Chaldean was used in early modern Italy to refer to a variety of Eastern Christians- Nestorians, Jacobite, and Melkites, located at the intersection of present-day Turkey, Syria, and Iraq.²²⁷ Some of the historians made an error in their statements: all the oriental Churches fell into heresy. They have never scrutinized the local traditions, documents, and other monuments before passing such remarks.²²⁸

Because of the relation with the Persian church Malabar, India also became part of this list of heretics. Whole of the Oriental church was not the part of this heresy. The false teaching of Nestor was not a commonly accepted aspect. The Malabar church did not have anything to do with the same. The theological fallacies of Nestor did not change anything in the aspect of faith and spirituality of Malabar Christians.

This practiced continued for centuries, but in 1445, the Catholics who were improperly called Nestorians- sent a petition to Pope Eugenius IV; and Pope ordered, under pain of excommunication, that, in future, they should not be called Nestorians, but Catholic Chaldeans. According to the historian Joseph Assemani (*Biblioteca Orientalis*) there were Syro-Chaldeans in various parts of Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia who vigorously opposed the spared of the pernicious doctrines of Nestorius.²²⁹

²²⁴ Tisserant, ‘Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique’, 3089–3162.

²²⁵ Tisserant, 3089–3162.

²²⁶ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 76.

²²⁷ Cristelle Baskins, ‘Popes, Patriarchs, and Print: Representing Chaldeans in Renaissance Rome’, *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 3 (2014): 405.

²²⁸ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 16–17.

²²⁹ Kaithanal, 16.

“According to Bishop Adolphus Medlycott, Vicar Apostolic of Trichur, we the Catholics of Malabar, unanimously hold we were, neither formal nor materially Nestorians, but always good and loyal Catholics, as much as our lights and the distance from Rome allowed.”²³⁰

The orthodoxy of the St. Thomas Christians may be clearer from the history of the Council of Nicaea in 325, we see that Mar John, “Bishop of Persia and Greater India”, had attended the council and put his signature to its decrees. Therefore, he was a Catholic Bishop. In 1122, Archbishop Mar John III of India went to Constantinople and thence to Rome. He received the *Pallium* from the Pope Callixtus II and exposed before the Pope and Cardinals the miracles that were wrought at the tomb of St. Thomas in Mylapore. In 1329, Pope John XXII, at Avignon, consecrated a French Dominican, Jordan de Severac, as a bishop of Quilon (in Malabar). He was sent with a Pontifical Bull dated 8th April 1330 addressed to the chief of the Christians in Quilon. Popes do not send pastors to the Nestorians. In 1348, the Franciscan bishop, John de Marignolli, also came to India as legate of Pope Clement VI.²³¹

“According to Fr. Francisco Roz SJ, though he calls the Thomas Christians Nestorians, admits at the same time that “they profess the Roman Catholic faith” though their books contained Nestorian doctrines, further they publicly preached the Virgin Mary as Mother of God and left out the names of Nestorius and his colleagues while reciting the Divine Office.”²³²

There is an inscription on a metal bell cast in 1584 for the church of Kuravilangad calls the Blessed Virgin Mary “Mother of God” (Greek: Θεοτόκος - Theotokos). All these give proof that the Thomas Christians were not addicted to the Nestorian doctrine. The European travellers and the Portuguese have made the whole world believe that the Thomas Christians were Nestorian heretics and schismatics.²³³

“Whatever has been written in favour of an early connection between the Church of Malabar and the Patriarchate of Antioch and of all East, there is no historical probability, or the

²³⁰ Kaithanal, 14.

²³¹ Kaithanal, 18–20.

²³² Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 36–37.

²³³ Podipara, 39–40.

evidence that any Indian group of Christians ever came under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch, whether Catholic, Greek, or even Jacobite.”²³⁴ ²³⁵

It is evident that all the people who had the title of Church of Orient was not Nestorian. There were bishops and groups of people who were accepting the Nestorianism and another major group did not have any notion about the Nestorianism. Malabar, India, never had this kind of a faith dilemma in relation with the Nestorianism but became part of it improperly because of the common ecclesiastical title: Oriental Church.

²³⁴ Tisserant, ‘Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique’, 3089–3162.

²³⁵ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 25–26.

Chapter 3.

Christian Missionaries In Kerala Until The Advent Of Europeans (AD 1291-)

3.1 The Earliest Latin Mission In Kerala

The Latin mission, for the first time in Malabar or in India was not an innovation of Portuguese, who reached in Malabar in 1498. But from the 4th century (AD 543) there had been Latin missionaries in India especially in Malabar. Many of them had done their glorious mission in different part of India, converted many to the Christian faith. Majority of them became martyred for the sake of evangelisation. Let us analyse some earliest Latin mission happened in Malabar:

The first evidence come from the Frankish monk, Theodore, who was the witness referred to by St. Gregory of Tours (AD 593-594). This monk visited Mylapore and found there a large community of Christians which richly ornamented their churches where monks were officiating. This testimony confirms a flourishing community of Christians in Malabar. There were a monastery and a church magnificently and carefully adorned and built.²³⁶

The message of Pope Alexander III (1181) in 1177, writing to the Negus of Ethiopia, begins thus: “Alexander Bishop (Pope), servant of the servants of God, to his very dear son in Christ, John the illustrious and magnificent King of the Indians”.²³⁷ Prester John was known to Europeans as a mighty emperor reigning somewhere in central Asia or India. Pope Eugene IV (1383-1447) had greater interest getting the co-operation of this emperor (his kingdom) in the work of his League of union and his proposed crusades.²³⁸

“There is very little information on the Church in India after the Syriac Church relation till the arrival of the Latin Monks in the thirteenth century. Latin or Western Christendom was unknown to the Thomas Christians either indirectly through the Chaldean Church or directly through contacts with foreigners who occasionally visited the Malabar Coast.”²³⁹

²³⁶ E. R. Hambye, *Eastern Christianity In India* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1880), 19.

²³⁷ H.Y, ‘Prester John’, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885), 714–15.

²³⁸ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 30–32.

²³⁹ Mundadan, 28.

After the separation with the Persian Church, during threat period Rome could make her attention to the East. The reason that turned the attention of Rome to the East was the incursion of the Mongols into Christian Europe. In that time under the leadership of Chingiz Khan (*l'Empereur Inflexible*), the Mongol tribes occupied the Central Asia (Northern China and of the empire of Kharezm in Central Asia) and became a great nation. The conquest of this nation under the different leaders reached from China and above all into Europe. Appalled by the excesses committed by these rude barbarians, in 1241, Pope Gregory IX had charged the Cistercians, the Dominicans and the Franciscans to preach a crusade against the Mongols. But Pope Gregory died that very year.²⁴⁰

About the middle of 13th century Pope Innocent IV conceived the bold project of sending missionaries to attempt to convert these barbarians to Christianity. The pope had found the first society of missionaries for the East, known as *Societas Peregrinantium pro Christo* composed of Franciscan and Dominican Friars. Some of them gone to India, establishing churches in several points on the western coast and fraternising with the Christians already existing in Malabar.²⁴¹

“In 1246 two missions were dispatched to the Mongols, composed of the two religious orders. The Dominican mission headed by Ascelin/Anselm, made for the camp of General Baiju to the northwest of Persia... And under the leadership of John of Plano Carpini, the Franciscan mission had fared better”.²⁴²

The Catholicism made a rapid stride and in 1318 Pope John XXII established the Episcopal Hierarchy in Persia by His bull, *Redemptor Noster*. India immediately drew the attention of these Latin missionaries to its own religious needs, and the mission started in the country itself.

Even before the arrival of the Portuguese on the Coast, Latin missionaries had made attempts to convert the Christians of Malabar into Roman Catholicism. Early in the fourteenth century, three Latin Missionaries, John of Monte Corvino, Friar Jordanus and John Marignolli, visited Malabar and made converts.^{243, 244}

²⁴⁰ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 81.

²⁴¹ Gordon Thomson MacKenzie, *Christianity in Travancore* (Trivandrum: Travancore Govt. Press, 1901), 8–9.

²⁴² Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 82.

²⁴³ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, II:481.

²⁴⁴ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 29.

3.1.1 John Of Monte Corvino

The first Catholic missionary to go to China was a Franciscan, John of Monte Corvino. Appointed as Papal Legate he started his journey in 1291 accompanied by the Dominican Nicolas of Pistoia. Because of the inconveniences happened in the journey, John of Monte Corvino, chose the route which led to China through India. He must be the first European to follow this route to China.²⁴⁵ It was the sea route which was used by the Arab Merchants. Marco Polo, who left China a little after the arrival of Monte Corvino took three and a half years to reach Europe.²⁴⁶

Arriving in India, the two missionaries landed at Mylapore, the city known by the martyrdom of St. Thomas and other places on the coast of Malabar or Coromandel. Because of the inconveniences, their further travel was delayed by thirteen months. John of Monte Corvino then decided to make Mylapore a midway station- a halting place for the missionary on their long voyage to China, hoping to develop it into a new apostolate in due course. He was there for the thirteen months among the Tamils, near Kerala. In different places round about Mylapore, he himself had baptised a hundred persons. According to the mission he received from the Pope he needed to go to the China to establish the Church.

“In 1306 he appealed to his fellow monks in Persia to go and minister in the mission field he had opened in India...But Rome had fixed her eyes on China...Later it was thus left to Friar-Preacher Jordan of Severac, who followed Monte Corvino, to establish the Catholic Church in India”.²⁴⁷

A little later Marco Polo touched Mylapore on his way to Europe. He saw the Christians there. In China, the Holy See made John of Monte Corvino Archbishop at Khan Bali (Peking) with patriarchal authority. John died, aged upwards of eighty years, sometimes about the year 1328.

²⁴⁵ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:281.

²⁴⁶ Henry Yule and Henri Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. III (London: Printed for the Hakluyt society, 1913), 3–10.

²⁴⁷ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 88–89.

3.1.2 Jordan Cathalani Of Severac

About 1302 a Dominican friar, Jordan Cathalani de Severac, belonging to the small congregation founded by the order of Friars-preachers at the beginning of the fourteenth century- that of *Societates peregrinantium pro Christo*, with the special object of working for the conversion of the Eastern people.²⁴⁸ In 1318, Pope John XXII, receding at Avignon, divided the mission territory in the East between the Franciscans and the Dominicans for the task of evangelisation of the Orient.²⁴⁹ And it was thus that while the whole of the Far East was made over to the Franciscans, the Dominicans were entrusted with the mission in the Middle East, which included the whole of West Asia, the Indies and Turkestan as far as Arabia and Ethiopia.²⁵⁰

Jordan had come to India with some companions in 1320. The companions mean, there were some Franciscan friars had plan to going to China by the sea route for the mission. They were Thomas of Tolentino, James of Padua, both priests, Peter of Sienna, and Demetrius of Tiflis. Jordan asked the permission to the Vicar General of their congregation to depart to India with above mentioned Franciscan friars.

They proceeded to Quilon on the Malabar coast at the end of 1320. But instead of sailing to the Malabar coast, the vessel wended its course to Thana (near Bombay) at the principal port named Kalyan. The news of the arrival of the monks from the West rapidly spread among the Christians and non-Christians alike. And Jordan had other invitations to the different parts of India, by the Christian communities for the evangelisation like Sopara, Gujarat etc.

On April 10, 1321, he got the news that his companions have got arrested. The companions were martyred by the Mohammedans somewhere on the present Bombay coast.²⁵¹ Jordan himself remarks in his *Mirabilia Descripta*, that in his time, five Friars-Preachers and four friar-Minors were cruelly done to death for the Catholic faith.²⁵² Jordan had the bodies of these martyrs conveyed to Sopara, where he buried them in the Church of St. Thomas. Jordan was successful in his ministry and in six months he baptised hundreds of people there.

Then Jordan returned to Europe to give an account of what he has seen in the East and the affairs of the Indian mission to the sovereign pontiff, John XXII. He convinced the Pope of the need of establishing in India regular ecclesiastical government, with a bishop at its head. It

²⁴⁸ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:281–83.

²⁴⁹ Christine Gadrat and Iordanus Catalani, *Mirabilia Descripta*, vol. 78 (Paris: National School of Charters, 2005), 45–47.

²⁵⁰ D'Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 15–16.

²⁵¹ Henry Yule and Henri Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. I (London: Printed for the Hakluyt society, 1913), 171.

²⁵² Gadrat and Catalani, *Mirabilia Descripta*, 78:55–56.

had always been the policy of the Holy See to convert a mission into a diocese as soon as enough Christians had been made. The Pope offered this office to Friar Jordan. Appointed him as the bishop of Quilon and Congedie.

“Eighteen years later Fr. John de Marignolli, Franciscan Bishop, and the Papal Legate for the Far East, on his return from China in 1348, found a Latin church in Quilon and was honoured as Papal Legate by the St. Thomas Christians”.²⁵³

In his small book named “*Mirabilia Descripta*”, Jordan describes himself as *oriundos de Severaco, in India majori Episcopum Columbensen* (Hailing from Severac, Bishop of Quilon in the Great Indies).²⁵⁴ Bishop Jordan returned to India for his missions in the year 1328. The Muslims could not bear to see the big conversions of Indians to Christianity, and they stoned him to death in Thana (Mumbai), and the year is not known.

3.1.3 Blessed Friar Oderic Of Pordenone (1324-1325)

A Franciscan, Friar Oderic of Pordenone left his convent for foreign missions in the year 1315-1316. After spending some years in Armenia and Persian in mission he came to Tana (Mumbai) to recover the bones of his three brethren of the same Order who suffered martyrdom in 1321.²⁵⁵ Then he proceeded to Quilon of Malabar coast.²⁵⁶

He passed down the Malabar coast and touched at Quilon, where he found Christian community and visited Mylapore, the place of the tomb of St. Thomas.²⁵⁷ He also found fifteen houses of Nestorian Christians.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ MacKenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, 8–10.

²⁵⁴ Gadrat and Catalani, *Mirabilia Descripta*, 78:1–2.

²⁵⁵ Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 1913, I:57.

²⁵⁶ Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas*, 90–95.

²⁵⁷ D’Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 16.

²⁵⁸ MacKenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, 7–9.

3.1.4 John Of Marignolli (1349)

India had a dark period in the vacuum of Latin Mission. India was visited by John de Marignolli, a Franciscan.²⁵⁹ The Pope had sent him to China to the Grand Khan. He left China sometime in 1346 or 1347, and a few months later he arrived in Quilon, in Malabar, where he stayed for sixteen months.²⁶⁰

He has visited the shrine of the Thomas the Apostle in 1348 or 1349. Quilon was the centre of Catholic missions in India and a busy port at that time. There was a Latin Church dedicated to St. George. There were many Jews and Christians in that place.²⁶¹ Before leaving India for the remembrance, Marignolli made a stone cross like a landmark at the Cape Comorin,²⁶² the extremity of the Indian peninsula in full view of Ceylon.²⁶³ And this cross can be considered as the monument of Latin mission at the coast of Malabar²⁶⁴

“In sooth it was a marble pillar with a stone cross upon it, intended to last till the end of the world. And it had the Pope’s arms and my own engraved upon it, with inscriptions both in Indian and Latin characters. I consecrated and blessed it in the presence of an infinite multitude of people”.²⁶⁵

The Jews, Muslims, and even some of the Christians, regarded the Latins as the worst of idolaters, because they used statues in their Churches.²⁶⁶ After that he went Ceylon (Sri Lanka) then returned to Europe.

3.1.5 The End Of Latin Mission

Bishop Jordan’s mission can be considered as the first link of the historical chain leading from the Peter’s Throne (The Latin Roman Catholicity) to the Church of India. The next links are the appointments of the Apostolic commissaries “*In partibus Orientalibus Indiae, Aethiopiae, Egypti et Hierusalem*” in the person of the Franciscan Bl. Albert of Sarteano in

²⁵⁹ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:284–85.

²⁶⁰ Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 1913, I:171.

²⁶¹ Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 1913, III:217–18.

²⁶² Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:284–85.

²⁶³ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 105.

²⁶⁴ D’Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 16–17.

²⁶⁵ Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 1913, III:218.

²⁶⁶ Yule and Cordier, III:217–19.

1439, bearing a letter of Pope Eugene IV to his “most beloved son, Thomas, the illustrious Emperor of the Indies”²⁶⁷, and of Gandulphus of Sicily in 1443. Some writers speak of another Franciscan, Louis of Bologna, from 1454-1457. But he seems to have had only special faculties to leave for “*Aethiopiae ac Indiae partes*”, without the title of Apostolic commissary.²⁶⁸

After the martyrdom of the bishop Jordan, the Catholic missions in India got end. In the 15th century the whole of the West Asia fell under the power of the Turks, and the route to the Far East was closed to the missionaries. The flourishing missions of both the Franciscans and Dominicans were ruined, and when in the 16th century, the Church returned to the charge.

3.2 The Portuguese In Kerala

On May 20th, 1498, Vasco da Gama reached Calicut on the Malabar coast, ten months setting sail from Lisbon. The province of Malabar was divided in twenty-five kingdoms. The Cananor was the first and the Calecute as principle.²⁶⁹ He had brought a successful conclusion almost a century of consistent effort in the quest of a sea route to India, by doubling the cape of Good Hope. On the sea route to India, one of the most urgent instruction of the King of Portugal was that they should diligently search for Christians in all these remote regions lying on the route.

The Portuguese whom, on reaching Calicut on 21st of August 1498 the Muslims asked them: What the hell! What have you brought here? Then Gama answered that they had come to seek Christians and spice (“*Vimos buscar cristãos e especiaria*”).²⁷⁰

Malabar, the vast land of tea and rivers. The nativars of the place includes the Gentiles (Hindus), Muslims, Jews, and Christians. And all are living together in this province. The Christians are the descendances of holy Apostle St. Thomas, who converted them to the faith

²⁶⁷ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 21.

²⁶⁸ Msgr. Leo P. Kierkels, *Golden Jubilee of the Apostolic Delegation of the East Indies (1884-1934)* (Bangalore: Belmont, 1934), 19–21.

²⁶⁹ Paulo da Trindade and F. Félix Lopes, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, vol. I (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962), 35–39.

²⁷⁰ Trindade and Lopes, I:35–39.

and baptised. The Jews were living here from the ancient time. They first came to Cranganore and multiplied in Cochin and with this respect the king of Cochin was called the king of Jews.²⁷¹

Gama would seem to have deliberately refrained from seeking out the Christians. He was disappointed at the cold reception he received by the ruler of Calicut, the Zamorin. But in 1500 when came Pedro Alvares Cabral, he could make a rapprochement with the St. Thomas Christians. The Portuguese freely fraternized with their Indian brethren, and their relations between them grew so intimate.²⁷²

“The Portuguese missionaries, both the Franciscans and the secular priests, immediately tried to relate to the Syrians, a name given to the descendants of the Indians converted by the Apostle St. Thomas to the Christian faith.”²⁷³

Soon after the arrival of Portuguese missionaries, the need of episcopal ministry became evident. In 1455 Pope Callixtus III had given “*Omnimodam jurisdictionem ordinariam*” to the Grand Prior of the Order of Christ over all Portuguese missions in the East, “*In terras et locis usque ad Indos, acuisitis et acuirendis*” and that concession had been confirmed by Pope Sixtus IV in 1487. Pope Leo X transferred that jurisdiction to the Vicar of Thomar in 1514 and shortly afterwards the Bishop of Funchal (Madeira Island) until the erection of the See of Goa in 1533, extending also explicitly and conforming the Portuguese Padroado over India.²⁷⁴

From the year 1514, the whole of Orient was ecclesiastically subjected to the Bisphosphate of Funchal, erected by Pope Leo X in 12 of June. The decree is named *Pro excellenti praeeminencia*.²⁷⁵ Thus the whole Padroado mission then came under the jurisdiction and the ecclesiastical province of Funchal.

In 1500, king Emmanuel of Portugal, through the Cardinal of Lisbon, had requested Pope Alexander VI to give him the faculty to appoint an Apostolic Commissary. In the same year on March 26th Pope has given sanction for the same. “*Quem ex nunc prout ex tunc et ex tunc prout ex nunc in commissarium, cum facultatibus praedictis (Ordinariorum) dumtaxat ad annum constituimus*”, as the Pope expresses it. Apparently, the King did not use that *ad interim* faculty,

²⁷¹ Paulo da Trindade and F. Félix Lopes, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, vol. II (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962), 244.

²⁷² Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 205.

²⁷³ António Lourenço Farinha, *A Expansão da Fé: No Oriente*, vol. II (Portugal: Agência Geral das colónias, 1943), 195.

²⁷⁴ Kierkels, *Golden Jubilee of the Apostolic Delegation of the East Indies (1884-1934)*, 19–21.

²⁷⁵ António da Silva Rêgo, *O Padroado Português do Oriente* (Portugal: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1940), 15.

for only about 1515 did the Dominican Don Gaspar (or Duarte) Nunes, titular Bishop of Laodicea, comes to India as Apostolic Commissary. And the Apostolic Commissioners entered the historical development of Papal representation or delegation in India.²⁷⁶

3.3 The Portuguese And St. Thomas Christians

At the time of the arrival of Portuguese, the St. Thomas Christians were spread over of the kingdoms into which Kerala was divided. The more important of these kingdoms were Camaiore, Calicut, Travancore, and Cochin, and the three minor ones with relation with these Christians were Kodungalore (Cranganore), Mangat, and Kollam (Quilon). There were many churches, fifty settlements, and one hundred thousand Christians.²⁷⁷

On the 8th of July 1497, Vasco da Gama set sail from Lisbon like a Christian sailor after hearing Mass and receiving Communion along with all his comrades, in four ships specially built for the purpose. He carried five religious who, without any arms except their Bible and the Crucifix. Among them were the two members of the illustrious order of the Most Holy Trinity, who accompanied Gama at their own request. They were Pedro de Covilhã, who was the confessor of Gama, and Rodrigues Annes. In 1500, with Cabral sailed nine secular priests, and eight Franciscan friars.²⁷⁸

“When Vasco da Gama arrived at Cochin in 1502, the St. Thomas Christians sent representatives and informed him that formerly they had a king of their own and showed him the sceptre of the last king.”²⁷⁹ “The Thomas Christians presented the sceptre to Gama and sought protection against the Muhammedans. Gama solemnly accepted the sceptre and promised the protection in the name of the king of Portugal.”²⁸⁰

To analyse the early contacts between St. Thomas Christians and Portuguese we need to be concerned with two important centres: Cranganore and Quilon. The wars between Zamorin of Calicut and the king of Cochin were a source of contact trouble for the St. Thomas Christians living in Cranganore, which separated the territories of Calicut and Cochin. It was

²⁷⁶ Kierkels, *Golden Jubilee of the Apostolic Delegation of the East Indies (1884-1934)*, 19–21.

²⁷⁷ Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India, from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier*, 175.

²⁷⁸ D'Sa, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, 28–29.

²⁷⁹ Menon, *History of Kerala*, 1924, I:311–12.

²⁸⁰ Kaithanal, *Christianity in Malabar*, 21.

an ideal place for Zamorin to concentrate his forces against Cochin. When such concentration happened in 1505 which forced the king of Cochin to approach the Portuguese asking them to send an army against these forces of the Zamorin. Lopo Soares de Albergaria (Vice-rei da India 1515) set out with a fleet and fired all the weapons and the ships and boats of Zamorin. The churches of Our Lady and Apostle and the homes of St. Thomas Christians were also burnt out.²⁸¹

In Quilon we see the St. Thomas Christians and the Portuguese coming together much more closely and intimately than in Cranganore. Because, in the town of Quilon there were Christians living and the Portuguese were there too. In Cochin also there were Portuguese living in their factory and later inside their fort. In Cranganore there were no Portuguese living with the St. Thomas Christians and that was the territory of Zamorin.²⁸²

The Thomas Christians welcomed Portuguese with enthusiasm and take their priests very solemnly to their church. In all the external relations with the local king the Portuguese and these Christians made their interest identical. The churches of Christians of St. Thomas from that time onwards were made use of by the Portuguese. According to a document dated 1505, the Portuguese priests were using the churches of Thomas Christians for the liturgical services.²⁸³

These Christians of St. Thomas were known among the Hindus as *Nazranis* the word *Christiani* coming into vogue not before the Portuguese period. These Christians had gained an important place in the Hindu hierarchy of castes, being regarded as even superior to the *Nayars*, who constituted the second estate of the realm. And the Christians to preserve their title to nobility, would not touch the people of inferior castes. When going along the road, shout to the people from afar to make way for them. If any person of the lower caste crossed their path, they had the right to kill them. Their social status was thus like of the Brahmans, to whom the kings themselves bowed, excepting the Christians.²⁸⁴

According to the book *The Summa Oriental* of Tomé Pires written about the East which speaks of the year 1512-1515, in a province of Malabar there were fifteen thousand Christians, dating back to the time of St. Thomas the Apostle. Two thousand of these are men of repute,

²⁸¹ Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552*, 73.

²⁸² Mundadan, 76.

²⁸³ Mundadan, 78-79.

²⁸⁴ Maturin Veyssiere La Croze, *Histoire du christianisme des Indes* (France: Chez les frères Vaillant & N. Prevost, 1724), 95-96.

noblemen, merchants, estimable people, and the others are craftsmen, poor people. They are privileged and are allowed to touch the *Nayars*.²⁸⁵

They enjoyed the great privileges which had been secured by them since the days of Thomas Cana and other leaders. They were not answerable to any governor but to the king and his chief minister. There were priests in the churches of the foothills who celebrated Mass in Syriac and when they came down to Cochin, in Latin, the ceremonies of one different from those of other, and in their dealings with us use Portuguese.

In the eyes of Portuguese, *The Law of Thomas* (LTh) of the Malabar Church and all that it had were heresy and superstition. Their policy was to make the Malabarians Latin in Rite and to put them under their Padroado Latin jurisdiction. For them some of the East Syrian bishops of Malabar were Catholics and other heretics. The Malabarians stood against the Latinisation and even against their children whom the Portuguese had ordained priests in the Latin Rite.²⁸⁶

At the end of the 16th century the Portuguese Padroado or the Latin ecclesiastical rule was imposed upon the Thomas Christians. The first Latin prelates of Malabar were Jesuits and these rules in several ways latinised the very ancient liturgy, Syriac language, and the customs of the Thomas Christian and curtailed the powers of their Archdeacons. Then the Portuguese treated these Christian communities of Malabar as a Latin diocese as a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Goa (The first Latin diocese of India in its whole dignity).²⁸⁷

In the book of Giamil Samuel, *Genuina Relationes Inter Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaerum Ecclesiam*, Romae, 1902, Document XXII, we read that: In 1578 three representatives of the Thomas Christians wrote to the Pope saying: “our prayers are in the Syriac (Chaldaic) language which was handed over to us by our Lord St. Thomas, and we and our predecessors have been taught this language”.²⁸⁸

“St. Thomas Christians are Catholic Christians. And no solid evidence has ever been brought forward to shake this statement. On the contrary there are positive proofs for the same. Then how could the Portuguese say those Christians were heretics?”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Tomé Pires and Francisco Rodrigues, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, vol. I (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), 73.

²⁸⁶ Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 4.

According to the author, the citation can be found in three more documents: British Museum Add. MS 9853, *Relação da Terra*, 1604 f 90; Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa, 65, f. 43 (*Relação 1606*); D'Souza f, SJ, *Oriente Conquistando a Jesus Cristo*, II, Bombay 1886, p. 71.

²⁸⁷ Podipara, *The Thomas Christians and Their Syriac Treasures*, 10–11.

²⁸⁸ Podipara, 24.

²⁸⁹ Podipara, 24.

The Metropolitan of the Malabar Church in the second half of the 16th century was Mar Abraham of Angamaly. The Syrian Patriarch gave him the title of Angamaly at the instance of Pope. He was also *The Gate of All India*. During his regime the Portuguese did all they could to realise their policy regarding the Malabarians. The enactment of the Councils of Goa of 1575 and 1585 regarding the Malabar Church were all made for this purpose. The important enactment was that Malabar was to be governed by bishops presented by the king of Portugal, or that Mar Abraham was to attend the Councils of Goa. In the Council of 1585, the Latinization of the liturgy was decreed upon. The Archbishop of Goa addressed Mar Abraham as his “bishop comprovincial” which he was not.²⁹⁰

Like his colleague Mar Joseph, Mar Abraham also was accused of heresy. By an Apostolic brief dated December 27, 1595, it was decided that the successor of Mar Abraham was to be nominated not by the East Syrian Patriarch, but by Rome directly. Later Dom. Meneses, the Portuguese Latin Archbishop of Goa, entered Malabar after the death of Mar Abraham in 1597. He then exercised jurisdiction in the Malabar Church and celebrated what in history is known as “The Diocesan Synod of Diamper”- everything for realising the Portuguese policy mentioned above.²⁹¹ From the Synod of Damper there were various evolutions of St. Thomas Christians. They started get divided in different denominations based on their traditions and adaptations.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, 5.

²⁹¹ Meneses and Loureiro, *Synodo diocesano da Igreja e Bispado de Angamale dos antigos cristãos de Sam Thome das Serras do Malabar das partes da India Oriental*.

²⁹² ‘Saint Thomas Christian Denominations’, in *Wikipedia*, 26 July 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Saint_Thomas_Christian_denominations&oldid=1035587368.

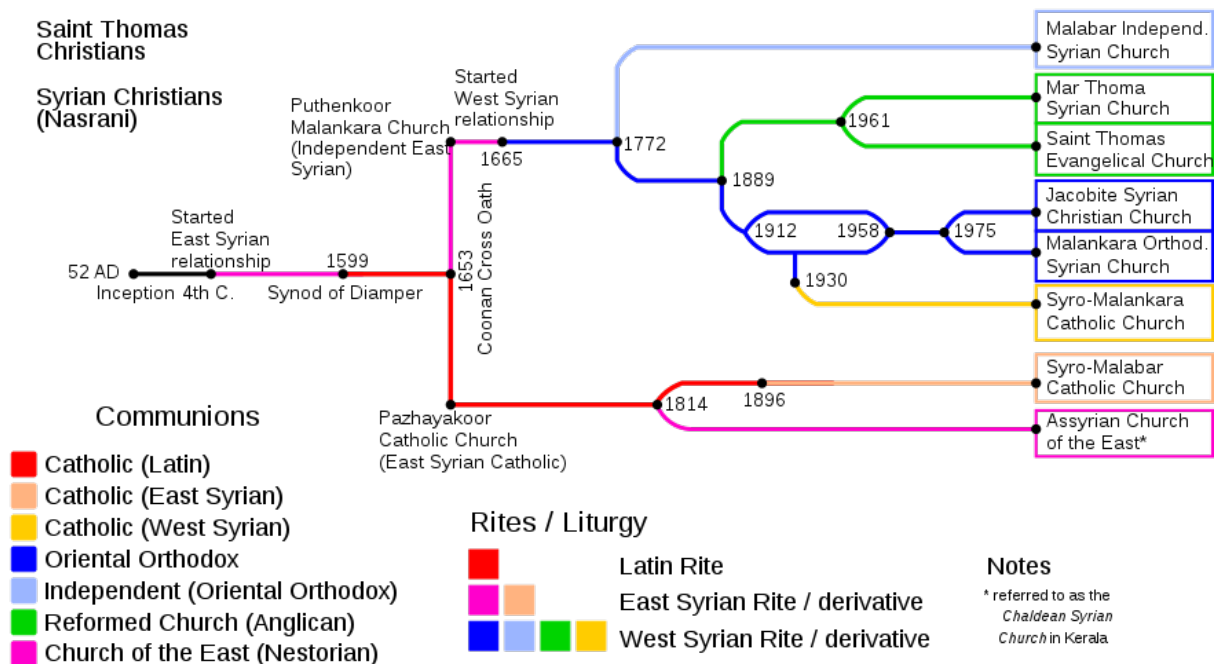
CONCLUSION

The trade history of Malabar helps to study about the geographical, social and the political aspect of the trade relations that Malabar had with the rest of the world. India and its ports were well known to the world from the earlier time. The ancient travel routes, the presence of Jews in Malabar from BC, the apocryphal *Act* of St. Thomas and the teachings of the Magisterium will confirm unanimously the presence of Apostle in India from the first century. There is a well-known investigation that Apostle came to India to preach the Gospel to the Aramaic speaking Jews of exile. In that time through the trade relations the presence of Jews in India was familiar to the countries of Middle East.

It was not difficult to travel a person from Jerusalem to South India in that context. Then it becomes clear that there was an origin of Christian faith in India in the first century itself and it was by an Apostle of Christ. As in this era there was no chronicle writing and preserving system in India, we get many proofs of this fact by the Travellers record.

As a new religion in an ancient society, Christianity had created disputes and the social clashes between new Christians and Hindus and in that time, there were presence of Jews too in Malabar. Malabar has a strong and historical tradition about Apostle Thomas. Centuries of

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faith customs, rituals and literature elements can be found about this tradition, and it is still alive.

This study enables to claim that the Christian faith was born in India from the first century of Christ era. There are many arguments against the Apostolic origin of Christianity in India. Even though what support my research is another fact. If evangelisation in Malabar was not by St. Thomas the Apostle, it can be even through his disciples, any way there was an emerging of Christian faith in India, in Malabar at the first century.

When Christianity reached in an ancient society of Hindu cultural Malabar, the multiple God concept of Hinduism (Hinduism was not a religion that time but a way of life) got confusions with the single God concept of Christian faith. For the Hindu concept everything has the element of God and in everything there is God. Then they have innumerable gods. The social system of Malabar was under strong caste system too, there were dignity divisions and inequality among the diverse groups of people. In Malabar existed untouchability and slavery for the lower-class people. When Christianity started spreading, given equality for everyone considering all as the children of God. Many of the Hindu people, obviously the low caste people started to convert to Christianity to have the equality of dignity which Christian faith has given. Within days when the low-caste men became equal to the high-caste men there emerged a social-cultural and spiritual clash in Malabar. These socio-political confusions and enmity later resulted like Christian persecutions and Martyrdoms of Christian missionaries in the Land. The Christian faith, in the Hindu culture gained many of inculturations in respect with the social customs. And even the Christians have been treated like the high-class people by the society.

When the Thomas tradition was fading in lack of guidance and governance in Malabar, the migration of East-Syrians from Persia in 345 AD., had given a new birth to Christianity in the land. From the fourth century onwards there came bishops and priests from the patriarchate of Babylon (Antioquia) for the spiritual and ritual needs of the people of Malabar and it prolonged till the arrival of the first Europeans - Portuguese. Thus, a Christianity, its spread and mission, which is not from behalf of Grego-Roman Empire had happened in India. The sustainment of faith and a Christianity with hierarchy and complexity got planted and nourished by the Persian Church (Aramaic/Syriac) in Malabar.

The liturgical language of Syriac/Aramaic and the Persian way of rituals reached in Malabar made other confusions in the native St. Thomas Christians of Malabar. Then there born a division between the Thomas Christians and the Syriac Christians. The disparity in the liturgy, language, culture, and the origin made them separated. The hierarchy and the governing system

that the bishops and priests of Persia implanted in Malabar became relevant for the growth and spread of Christian faith in Malabar and other part of India. Christians were increased in number very fast. Till the arrival of first Europeans, Portuguese, the Persian Church (Babylonian Patriarchate) controlled and governed the spiritual and faith needs of Malabar Christians.

The Persian immigration was beneficial for the Thomas Christians that it opened the small Christian Malabar community to a larger Christian world. But it also affected badly the independent and indigenous growth of the Thomas Christian community. A tight control and governance of Persian church on the Thomas Christians adversely affected the spontaneous growth of the community into a genuine Indian church with native lifestyle, thought, worship and liturgy. Which means the Thomas Christians had a life in two world and was a bit of contradiction. And this contradiction repeated with various troubles and divisions when the foreignization came through the first Europeans- Portuguese.

In the 12th century through Pope Alexander III, in 1177 started an attempt to plant Latin rite in India. In the 13th century came many Latin monks to India for the mission. Many of them were martyred. Latin or Western Christendom was unknown to the Thomas Christians. Through the missionaries of Western world Malabar came to know about the Latin- Roman Church and about the Roman Pontiff. The short-term mission of Latin mongs made no great changes in the Christian community of Malabar.

India was far from being an unreachable land to the people of the West for the centuries. Since the Crusade s had introduced the inhabitants of Europe to the trade possibilities of the East, an intense desire for trade with India emerged in them. The trade through the land was too tough for the merchants, more over the Mohammedans commanded the whole of the middle East countries and this stimulated the efforts of Spain, Portugal, and Britain to find some free, open, and safe route to the land of desire.

In the 15th century at the arrival of *Padroado* mission by Portuguese, they found in Malabar a Christianity with different way of life, liturgy, and rituals and even another Rite, which is too strange to Portuguese, as they had the Roman- Latin Rite. Then the Portuguese started their mission to change the Syriac Rite to the Latin Rite. Happened many social problems among the Thomas Christians in Malabar. The clashes got end with an ecumenical Synod (Synod of Diamper) which convocated by a Portuguese bishop named Aleixo de Meneses, archbishop of Goa in 1599.

Christianity in India has its origin, growth and spread in an unexpected way. It has gone through three diverse turning points in the history of its sustaining. The origin of faith had happened in the first century, in an entirely different culture and spiritual background of

Hinduism. After a three centuries Chaldaic-Syriac church changed and governed the Christendom in Malabar. Between 12th and 13th century the Latin mission happened in the land didn't make anything important and at the middle of 15th century came European Christianity with its Latin Rite to the Malabar Christians. And now in Malabar there are three Rites of Catholic Christianity: Latin, Syro-Malabar, and Syro-Malankara.

The origin, spread and the growth of Christian faith in Malabar that we deal here shows how difficult and conflictual was its process. We realise different types of evangelisations of same faith in a same place. The Rites, language and customs have made great social conflicts even among the faithful. The hierarchy, politics and other selfish motives of peoples destruct an ancient culture to impose the same faith in Malabar. Still the confusions and diversity can be found among St. Thomas Christians (Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara) and other denominations of the same with the Latin Christians of Malabar. But in this diversity Malabar also gained a unity in terms of multicultural-spiritual social system and way of life.

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