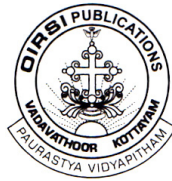


JAMES PULIURUMPIL

GLIMPSES OF
SYRO-MALABAR HISTORY



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PREFACE

Nowadays there is an increasing interest to read history. To cater to such needs there is need of books to provide them with the necessary materials for the reading. In history classes many expressed the wish of having history of our church in a compact form as they have no time to read a detailed history. This desire of many really prompted me to write this book giving a concise history of Syro-Malabar Church. Syro-Malabar Church has a long history. But certain elements of her history are yet to be made clear. Studies are going on in this regard. The ancient period can rightly be called 'the apostolic period' in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church. Apostle St Thomas laid a strong foundation to this Church. The beliefs of our ancestors handed over to us as traditions are not fictions, but historical facts, but often shrouded with other narrations, as their intentions were not exactly to hand over the historical facts.

As early as the fifth century and perhaps even before India's Christian community had maintained a conscious connection with the authority of the Persian patriarch and with the Syriac language and liturgy of the Nestorian Church or the Church of the East. In the seventh century this dependence took on a measure of structural independence when the Nestorian patriarch granted the metropolitan (archbishop) in India freedom from the jurisdiction of the Persian metropolitan of Rew-ardshir.

The period during which the St Thomas Christians were under the Portuguese Padroado and Propaganda Fide rules (16th till 19th centuries) is considered the modern period of the SyroMalabar Church. During this period the church witnessed a number of changes in all respects. The oriental nature, Syrian liturgy, Indian customs all underwent changes.

The contemporary history or the real modern period of the Syro-Malabar Church begins towards the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of two separate vicariates of Kottayam and Trissur in 1887. This new beginning is strengthened with the appointment of native bishops in the new three vicariates in 1896. The separation of the Syrians from the Latins helped the growth of both churches in India. The steady growth of the Syro-Malabar Church enabled to be granted a hierarchy which came in to existence in 1923 with one archdiocese and three suffragans. From 1962 onwards mission regions and dioceses started functioning. 1992 this church was recognized by Rome as a major archiepiscopal church. Present major archbishop Mar George Cardinal Alencherry is the third major archbishop after Mar Antony Padiyara and Mar Varkey Vithayathil. The Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church is the most active, living and rapidly growing eastern church with 35 dioceses, 63 bishops and has faithful all over the world.

I am indeed happy to express my heartfelt gratitude to His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, and to Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, the bishop of Palai for their encouragement, support and the words of appreciation. Thanks in a special way to Rev. Dr. Prof. Joseph Pariath for going through this work with necessary corrections. Thanks are also due to the staff of Amala Press, Kanjirapally and to the OIRSI Publications, Vadavathoor.

Fr. James Puliurumpil

ANCIENT PERIOD

1

MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF ST THOMAS IN NORTH INDIA

The missionary journey of Apostle Thomas to India from Jerusalem in the first century of the Christian era was not something unimaginable or impossible as some think. He reached India either by land route or sea route. The existence of these routes and the oft-frequented Alexandria-India travels by the traders should have helped Thomas. The visit of a trade agent from an Indian king to Jerusalem and even a voyage to India by an apostle of Christ would have been not at all unusual. The account of the *Acts of Thomas*¹ takes him on a sea voyage to India, which at that time was part of the Parthian kingdom of Gundaphar² with the capital Taxila and a second one to South India including Kerala to the kingdom of Mazdai which could be called *Tamizhakam*. Although both land and sea routes were operational, the later were faster, safer and were used by preference by travellers.

i. Alexandria-Muziris trade route

In the first part of the *AoT* we read that Thomas starts his journey from Jerusalem. But the starting point of his missionary journey to India should be Alexandria and not Jerusalem since Jerusalem is not a port city and from where there is no route leading to India. The classical trade route to India began from Alexandria.³ The purpose of the author of *AoT* is neither historical nor geographical but only catechetical. That means to teach the readers that the mission of the apostles starts from Jerusalem, the Holy City of Our Lord. *De Miraculis Beati Thomae* writes that Our Lord asks Thomas who was at Caesarea that time to go to India. Then from Jerusalem Thomas came first in Caesarea and the real missionary journey starts from Alexandria where Habban, the trade commissioner of the Indian king Gundaphar met Thomas. That time Alexandria was the greatest port in the world and the second biggest city of the Roman Empire.

India was quite possibly more open to direct communication with the West in the first two centuries of the Christian era. E.H. Warmington describes the time as an age of new discoveries and enterprises. Roman peace (*pax Romana*) and prosperity encouraged traders to turn east both by sea and by land – by sea through Greek and Arab middlemen, and by land through Jewish, Syrian and Armenian traders. The main channel for trade was the sea because of Roman-Persian wars along the land routes.⁴

ii. St Thomas lands at Broach in Gujarat

According to the *AoT* Habban and Thomas landed in Andrapolis or Broach (Bahruçh) in Gujarat, the royal city. He then proceeded to the palace of the king Gundaphar who was searching a man to build a palace. Thomas left Andrapolis in haste, having angered the king by converting his daughter at her own wedding to a gospel of Christian virginity.⁵ The ascetic emphasis is an often recurring theme

in the early apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. Thomas introduced as a carpenter, received from the king money for the erection of the palace, but spent it on the poor. The king remonstrated, but miraculous events convinced him that Thomas by spending the money on the poor had built him a palace in heaven. The wonderful deeds and the amazing words of Thomas induced the king Gundaphar and his brother Gad to become Christians.

Originally, ships from Egypt went as far as only Aden, and there exchanged their cargo for goods from India; but by the first century AD they made the complete voyage. With the discovery of monsoon winds in 47 AD by Hippalus, a Greek sailor, one can sail straight across from the Gulf of Aden to the Indian cities of Broach or Muziris. Discovery of monsoon winds eased the traffic between the Mediterranean world and India. The monsoon winds blow strongly from the southwest every year from June to September. Making use of it one can sail straight across the ocean north-east to the mouth of Indus. The voyage from Myos Hormos, at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez, to the coast of India took about two and a half months. A traveller from India starts sailing towards West late in November and reaches in Alexandria early in March and the return journey is in May and reaches the homeland in July.

2

MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF ST THOMAS IN SOUTH INDIA

i. The Silk route or Pepper route

The land route connecting the Mediterranean world and the Eastern world (India and China) starts from the Roman capital. From

Rome it comes to Antioch (capital of eastern Roman Empire) in Syria, and then passing through Edessa, reaches the twin city of Selucia-Ctesiphon. Selucia is a Greek city and Ctesiphon a Parthian city on the banks of the river Euphrates. Edessa, one of the small states lying in between the warring empires of Rome and Persia was a strategic junction of two highways. It is here the two ancient caravan routes met and crossed. One is the Silk Road running east from Antioch to the Persian border crossing Edessa and reaches India and China. The other caravan road crossed Edessa north and south from the mountains of Armenia down through Arabia to Egypt. This international road, which goes eastwards, crossing Zagros Mountains reaches the region called Media. Passing through Ecbatna, this road reaches Merv not very distant from Oxus river. From Merv, the route becomes two; one is known as the Silk-route, going to central Asia, while the other branch turns towards India.

St Thomas might have taken this land-route, which was the common route followed by travellers and traders engaged in the trade of oriental articles and spices, to reach the Parthian kingdom. The Parthian Kingdom, where St Thomas came in 42 AD, during the reign of king Gondophores, included North India during this time. According to the recent study and research, St Thomas who first reached Broach (Bharuch or Barygaza) in Gujarat, a great trade centre of India, passing through Ujjain and Mathura must have also been to Taxila, the capital of the Parthian kingdom where too he preached Gospel and established Christian communities. He worked there till 48 AD when the Kushan dynasty overran and destroyed the Indo-Parthian Kingdom. Thomas must have preached gospel in many cities of North India. After the destruction of the city of Taxila he went back either to Palestine and made a second voyage to India in 52 AD.

ii. St Thomas lands at Muziris (Kodungalloor) in 52 AD

Kerala was visited by travellers and traders from ancient times. Ancient Kerala was famous for her spices and it is her fame as the 'land of spices' that brought peoples and cultures to her shores even from the third millennium BC, if not earlier. Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs and Jews had all trade contacts with Kerala. Spices were taken to the Mediterranean world using different trade routes and were widely used in the different countries of the Mediterranean. That is the reason why pepper is called '*yavanapriya*' (dear to the Greeks/Europeans). A number of early foreign writers point to the kingdom of Male or Malabar and its trade relations with foreign countries. Herodotus (484-413 BC) gives good description of trade with India. Megasthenes (306-289 BC), the Greek ambassador of the king Selucius Nicator at the court of Chandragupta writes in his description of ancient India about the rulers of Malabar or of the Cheras.

The author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* is of the opinion that Muziris and Barace (Purakad) were the chief ports of Kerala from where a great quantity of pepper, the chief product of Malabar was sent to Europe. Pepper was in great demand in Rome. Pliny writes about this pepper trade of the first century AD. This vigorous trade in pepper and other spices of India began to drain the Roman empire of its wealth. He writes that both pepper and ginger grow wild in their respective countries and yet here we buy them by weight like gold and silver. This Indo-Roman contact resulted in the flow of money from Rome into the ports of India. The great number of Roman coins discovered in different parts of India including South attests to this fact.

The final chapters of the *AoT* close with the apostle's journey overland into other parts of India. He appoints a deacon to preach Jesus and take his place in the land of king Gundaphar.⁶ Thomas then



went to another kingdom (of Mazdai) in India⁷ and there preached the gospel. There again the apostle's radical, ascetic teaching against marriage brought trouble. Some of the chief women of the kingdom including the queen are converted. The king becomes angry and accuses Thomas of bewitching them and orders his execution. He is led to a mountain outside the city where he was speared to death while praying.

3

THE INDIAN MISSION OF PANTAENUS

The visit of Pantaenus in India in 189 was the second Indian mission, after the one by St Thomas. A study of Pantaenus' visit in India is very important in the sense that it is an answer to many questions of historical speculation. Some historians write that *AoT* of the early third century is the first evidence or document to prove the Indian mission of St Thomas. And there is no other earlier or former

source to prove the Indian apostolate of St Thomas. The visit of Pantaenus is dated as 189 or 190 by all historians basing on documents. Therefore, his visit is the first evidence for the existence of an Indian Church. Some other historians say that the Church Fathers and early Patristic writers got the material from the *AoT* as it is the first testimony to the existence of the Indian Church. To them also this visit is an answer that the account of Pantaenus about the Indian Church could have helped the patristic writers to know about the Indian Church of the first two centuries. It is again answer to those who raise the question that Indian Christianity is due to the missionary work of the Edessan Church. The visit of Pantaenus and his account prove that there existed Christianity in India of course in the second century. But the Edessan intervention in India happened in a later period, in the early third century or even later.

i. Pantaenus, the head of the Theological School of Alexandria

Pantaenus was a remarkable figure in history. Born a Jew and thoroughly trained in Greek philosophy he was converted to the Christian faith and later moved to Alexandria. Clement of Alexandria calls him ‘the Sicilian bee’ in recognition of his diligent study habits. This erudite Stoic philosopher later became the head of the school of philosophy of Alexandria. As the principal of the catechetical school for the training of the priests he was soon acknowledged as the greatest Christian teacher of his time.

Among his disciples were Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Origen describes him as the first Christian who has fully availed himself of the stores of true learning and philosophy. In background he was a Stoic with a mixture of Pythagorean Platonism, but his fame in Christian studies was as an expositor of the Scriptures. Jerome, the Bible translator, acknowledges his debt to the many commentaries of Pantaenus, none of which unfortunately survive and Clement pays tribute to him as his last but best teacher. The bishop of Alexandria,

Demetrius sent him to India in 189 at the request of the native Christians. Jerome wrote in the fifth century that the great Church in Alexandria, centre of Egyptian Christianity, sent its most famous scholar, Pantaenus, head of the theological school in that city, 'to preach Christ to the Brahmins and philosophers there'.⁸ Demetrius was raised to the throne of St Mark as the 12th patriarch of Alexandria due to a vision his predecessor had. This Demetrius ruled the Egyptian church for forty two years and built the catechetical school attached to his cathedral into a world famous centre of learning under three great masters: Pantaenus, Clement and Origen.

ii. Origen and Jerome about Pantaenus' visit in India

Origen, disciple of Clement (who in turn the disciple of Pantaenus), considers Pantaenus as a great Alexandrian luminary. Jerome calls Pantaenus 'the most learned of all'. Eusebius writes that Pantaenus went among the Indians. Eusebius and Jerome should have depended on an Alexandrian tradition which is to be traced to Pantaenus and handed down in the Alexandrian Church through Clement of Alexandria and Origen. The Alexandria-Malabar connection (the commercial route between Alexandria and south India via Clysma, River Nile, Myos Hormos, Red Sea and Berenice) which facilitated the Indian mission of St Thomas was the prime factor which helped Pantaenus, the head of the Alexandrian theological school to visit the Indian Church and thus effected the second Indian mission in the person of Pantaenus.

Pantaenus is the first known patristic witness about the apostolic origin of Christianity in India. Pantaenus is the first known person from the west to visit the Church in India personally in the second half of the second century. He thus testifies to the fact that there existed Christianity in India due to the missionary work of an apostle. He was invited by the Indian Christians and he was sent by the Alexandrian bishop. This again makes clear that there existed



some kind of relationship between these two churches or places. This again confirms the Indian mission of Thomas whose city of embarkation was Alexandria according to the *AoT*. The Indian Christians' Edessan contact, therefore, should have started later than this event. If there had been earlier contact Indian Christians should have turned to them and not to the Alexandrian Church. Thus the first Indian mission due to the apostle Thomas founded a Church in India the second Indian mission due to Pantænus made the Indian Christians

confirmed in their faith. The second Indian mission is, therefore, no less important than the first one.

4

ST BARTHOLOMEW AND INDIA

When Eusebius writes about the Indian mission of Pantænus, he makes reference to the Christians who had in their possession the Gospel of St Mathew brought to them by St Bartholomew. Eusebius wrote: For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and left with them the writing of Mathew in the Hebrew language which they had preserved till that time.⁹ This account by Eusebius confused the historians with regard to the identity of India and also with regard to the identity of the apostle who preached in India. Pantænus visited the Proper India or some other countries like Arabia or Ethiopia, which were often confused with India by certain writers of earlier times; and whether it was St Thomas or St Bartholomew who evangelized India?

i. Eusebius and Jerome on Bartholomew's Indian visit

Eusebius is certain that Pantaenus visited India. The accounts of many Church Fathers confirm the same. The problem is then with regard to the Gospel of Mathew found in India which had been given them by Bartholomew. Both Eusebius and Jerome agree in this statement. The reason why Eusebius wrote so was that he was following the Alexandrian tradition. Alexandrian tradition does not connect St Thomas with India. According to them St Thomas preached in Parthia, and St Bartholomew in India. Parthia and India was the same that time or it was Indo-Parthia according to the modern understanding. Eusebius and Jerome simply confused India with Arabia and Persia as was often done by the classical writers of the time.¹⁰ They are not against the apostolic origin of the Indian Church. But they ascribe St Bartholomew as the apostle of the East including India. But St Bartholomew, 'the Apostle of Armenia' and missionary to Arabia and Persia, has nothing to do with India, is the opinion of most of the Indian historians¹¹.

ii. Bartholomew, the apostle of Armenia

Thomas is the apostle of India and Bartholomew is the apostle of Armenia. As Thomas preached gospel in some part of Persia and Syria, Bartholomew preached in Arabia and Persia. There are different interpretations for this 'Bartholomew riddle'. According to one interpretation, it supposes a lapse in communication between the Indian Christians and the Alexandrian scholar Pantaenus. When he asked the faithful whether they had a copy of Bible with them they answered him that they had a copy of St Mathew from the time of 'Marthoma'. But it was sounded in the foreign ears of Pantaenus as *bar-tholmai*. Thus was the origin of the story of Bartholomew as the apostle of India emerged through mistaken identity.

Another interpretation is as the following. St Thomas Christians were making pilgrimages to the tomb of St Thomas at

Mylapore. This was called pilgrimage to *Beth-thoma*, meaning 'house of Thomas'. This expression '*Beth-thoma*' could be sounded as '*bartholmai*' and he took it as 'Bartholomew'. Thus through Pantaenus this 'Bartholomew episode' spread in Alexandria. And from Alexandrian circle Eusebius and Jerome got this false identity of the Indian apostolate. Though we find some patristic writers connecting Bartholomew with India, the Bartholomew tradition in India is not a living tradition unlike that of St Thomas which is a very living tradition.

5

THE ACTS OF THOMAS

AoT which is an apocryphal work can be called a missionary travelogue of St Thomas in India, though not in the full sense of the term, but with a lot of fabulous narrations, mythical notions and legendary expressions. Gnostic puritan ideas are seen all throughout this work as this was used by the Gnostics of the early centuries. But these negative influences, by no means, lessen the historicity of the facts narrated in the work. This is true not only with the *AoT*, but also with *Acts* written in the names of Peter, Paul, Andrew or John, which are the five important *Acts of the Apostles* written in almost the same period. From the Gospels we get a lot of historical facts though they are not meant to be purely historical accounts. The same can be said about all the *Acts of the Apostles* in general and *AoT* in particular.

AoT is one of the important sources to study the history of the mission of St Thomas in India. It speaks about the apostle's voyage to India, his ministry, miracles, martyrdom and burial. According to *AoT* India where Thomas first arrived, was the India ruled by king Gundaphar, which can be called Indo-Parthia which corresponds to North West India before India's partition. Being an apocryphal work

it should be studied diligently and critically taking into account its peculiar literary genre. Divesting of the fictitious elements, the *AoT* gives the following account: St Thomas came to India, preached the Gospel in the kingdom of a certain Gundaphar and converted to Christianity the king along with many others. He then proceeded to another kingdom in India and converted the queen and several others. At the conversion of the queen, king Mazdai got angry and ordered the apostle to be slain. The apostle died a martyr. Thus the *AoT*, no doubt, contributes to the historicity of the Indian mission of St Thomas.

i. Historicity of *AoT*

It is historical in the sense that it was composed on a historical date and in a historical place and based its story on historical places, persons and events. It is written in Edessa in between 220-230 AD. Four important persons are here mentioned like St Thomas, Gundaphar, Abadgasses (Gad), the successor of Gundaphar and Habban. Gundaphar and his brother Gad are kings who ruled India or some Indian provinces such as Punjab, Indus Valley etc. From the coins and inscriptions it is clear that Gundaphar was a Parthian king who once ruled Parthian domain which included large parts of North India.

The coins and inscriptions again say that the year of beginning of his reign is 20/21 AD. As Gondophorus is mentioned in the *AoT*, in close connection with the Apostle, it is historically quite possible that the apostle visited that portion of India during the reign of this king. And since no other document has retained the mention of the name Gondophorus except and solely the *AoT*, until the recent discoveries mentioned earlier, it is quite legitimate to conclude that the mention of these two names, coupled as we find them in the *AoT* imply a well-grounded historical connection. It is during his reign that St Thomas the Apostle visited India and evangelized Indians.

ii. Contents of *AoT*

The early third century text called the *AoT* is one of the New Testament apocrypha, portraying Christ as the ‘Heavenly Redeemer, independent of and beyond creation, who can free souls from the darkness of the world’. It is a series of episodic acts that occurred during the evangelizing mission of Judas Thomas to India. *AoT* is rich in its biblical, theological, historical, educational, moral and symbolic aspects. Its theological richness consists in the presentation of the mysteries of salvation which deals with incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit.¹² The teaching on the meaninglessness of wealth, human earthly existence and the danger of power of evil, all contribute to the educational and moral content. *AoT* also makes use of symbolism as its way of presentation of its core message.

The contents of this work, consisting of 13 acts or chapters in 170 paragraphs, convey the mission of Thomas in India under various dimensions. It describes the adventures and martyrdom of the apostle whom it portrays as Jesus’ twin brother. This work is an entertaining literary work combining the genres of romance, travel journal and hagiography. It was apparently a popular work as it has survived in numerous manuscripts in several languages. In this work we can see the high influence of Gnostic ideas especially the negative idea regarding marriage and sex, which is against the Christian concept. The work provides dramatic narratives of Thomas’ miraculous evangelizing adventures in India. It ends with Thomas’ martyrdom as a result of the enmity of the king Mazdei/Misdeus whose wife and son have been converted by Thomas to Christianity. The main content of this work is Thomas’ presence and his missionary activities in India. A long narrative of this type cannot be a total fabrication or imagination. *AoT*, therefore, gives us an assurance of the mission of Thomas in India.

AoT is a collective endeavour of a believing community to explain how the faith in Jesus had been preached to them. St Ephrem and later St Gregory of Tours recognize as historical the incidents mentioned in *AoT*. But unfortunately this collective memory has been mutilated by the interpolations of the overzealous Gnostic groups. The substance of this book is of great antiquity and it seems that in its original form it was held in high esteem by the heretics of the first and second centuries. According to St Augustine and Epiphanes the *AoT* is seen in the hands of the heretics of the fourth and fifth centuries. Different Gnostic groups were reading the *AoT* in their assemblies. This discloses the fact that *AoT* and other *Acts* were made use of by these sects for a doctrinal purpose in order to set up some theory or tenet of their own which they sought to inculcate in their followers and propagate among others.

iii. A Syriac milieu

Egeria, who conducted a pilgrimage to Edessa on 19th April 384, in her travel diary called *Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta* mentions this book. She writes that the reading of it was condemned by Cyril of Alexandria attributing its composition to the Manicheans and she would have informed her writers of the presence of this Gnostic book in the holy place. The texts of Thomas which she found at the *Martyrium* in Edessa, where the relics of apostle was kept and venerated, narrates the mission of Thomas to India and his martyrdom there. The fact that either *AoT* or a part of it is kept in the holy place may be a testimonial to the fact that the Syrian Church did not consider *AoT* as heretic or Gnostic. Thus when we connect it with the mention of Ephrem about the apocryphal Acts we are forced to believe that *AoT* in its original form existed even before Ephrem and that he never considered it to be heretical. But the heretics had begun to use it to their advantage and that is why Ephrem tells that the disciples of Bardaisan engaged themselves in writing apocryphal Acts.

The general consensus is that it was written in the Syriac milieu, and most probably in Edessa – a city in Northern Mesopotamia, the centre of Syriac Christianity. Edessa, the centre of Syriac Christianity claims also the apostolic tradition of St Thomas. Thus Edessa has the distinction of being the first great city to become Christian. Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History* speaks about the evangelization of Edessa.¹³ Edessa has also the privilege to possess the body of St Thomas that had been brought from India. St Ephrem gives the details of the translation of body of St Thomas to Edessa in his *Carmina Nisibena*. Thus we can speak of a Thomas tradition prominent in Edessa.

Though it is written in Edessa the persons and places narrated in it are Indian. But the author does not give the details. Either he is ignorant of them or he did not care to describe them. If he had been ignorant how could he write on these persons and places of another land? He could not have simply fabricated them; he should have then made use of some existing documents prevalent in his own land. But he is not interested in the details. He is concerned with what he wants to impart his readers. The Syrian tradition had always upheld the Indian apostolate of St Thomas. So we need not feel astonished if a book written in Edessa deals with the mission of their apostle in another country. It also reveals to us that at the time of the composition of this apocryphal book, a certain tradition either written or oral of the mission of the apostle Thomas in India existed in and around Edessa.



A coin of Gondophares, with Greek and Kharoshthi inscriptions

6

PATRISTIC LITERATURE ON THE INDIAN MISSION OF ST THOMAS

Patristic literature is a vast world of literary writings. The writers of this period were well equipped with facts and figures to write about India and the mission of St Thomas in India. It is indeed surprising to see the amount of knowledge which some of the writers of this time had regarding India; its geography, climatic conditions, peoples, animals and plants. Many works of the different writers of this period help us draw a clear picture of the Indian apostolate of St Thomas in the first half of the first century of the Christian era.

i. Origen (186-255)

Origen writes that when the apostles divided the world for preaching by casting lots Parthia fell to Thomas. Origen's original work has been lost; but this statement has been preserved by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*. Origen associates the Apostle Thomas with Parthia in his *Commentary on Genesis*. It reads:

The holy apostles and disciples of our Saviour were scattered throughout the whole world. Thomas, as tradition relates, obtained by lot Parthia, Andrew Scythia, John Asia, but Peter seems to have preached to the Jews of the Dispersion in Pontus and Galatia and Bithynia, Cappadocia and Asia and at the end he came to Rome and was crucified head downwards, for he had demanded to suffer. What need be said of Paul, who fulfilled the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyria and afterwards was martyred in Rome under Nero.¹⁴

ii. *The Doctrine of the Apostles*

One ancient Syriac document of the early third century *The Doctrine of the Apostles* is considered to be an authentic teaching of

the apostles. This book deals with the customs and practices of the ancient Church, especially of the church in the Syriac world. We get a good deal of knowledge regarding India and Persia and the apostolic work of St Thomas in India and of Addai and Mari in some regions of Persia. In this book we read:

After the death of the apostles there were guides and rulers in the churches. They again at their deaths also committed and delivered to their disciples after them everything which they had received from the apostles; also what James had written from Jerusalem, and Simon from the city of Rome, and John from Ephesus, and Mark from the great Alexandria and Andrew from Phrygia and Luke from Macedonia and Judas Thomas from India; that the epistles of an apostle might be received and read in the churches.¹⁵

iii. *Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta*/ Egeria's Travel Diary

We find in many ancient writings frequent mention of the presence of the relics of St Thomas at Edessa. One such document is the *Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta*, which is commonly called 'Egeria's Travel Diary', written by a pilgrim lady named Silvia who visited the Shrine of Thomas in the last quarter of the fourth century in Edessa. She gives us report of the situation of the then Edessan Church, especially of the place where the relics was kept. We read from her report:

On arriving there we visited without delay the church and the *martyrium* of St Thomas the Apostle. In accordance with our usage we there performed our devotions and what else we are accustomed to do when visiting holy places. We also read portions of the *Acts of St Thomas* at his Shrine.¹⁶

iv. St Ambrose of Milan (333-397)

Ambrose, a great figure of the early period was a great scholar well acquainted with the Greek and Latin classics and adequately

informed about India. His famous book *De Moribus Brahmanorum* speaks a lot about India, its people, and also about St Thomas. Ambrose tells his readers why he writes this book. Since Palladius wants to know about India and its people, he tries to give him some knowledge of the country, customs and the life of the Brahmins. Ambrose writes that Museus travelled through nearly the entire region of Serica (the old name for Malabar) and visited the Brahmins. He also writes about the silk, wool, the garments made out of them and a pillar where Alexander's name was inscribed. His knowledge of India is based on the accounts of travellers as well as the Greek and Latin classics.

Ambrose also identifies St Thomas with India. According to him, 'even those kingdoms which were shut out by rugged mountains became accessible to them, as India to Thomas, Persia to Mathew...'¹⁷ Ambrose then narrates the journey of a certain Theban to India. There he mentions the famous city of India, Muziris, in the southern part of India. In this book we read that as the journey to India was very difficult he had to end the journey by half way and had to return. Though he could not reach his zeal he could achieve his aim, i.e. to know about India, with the help of other persons.

v. St John Chrysostom (347 - 407)

Chrysostom in one of his homilies which he made in Antioch in between 387- 397 says: *qui Romae sedet, Indos scit membrum suum esse* (he who rules Rome knows that the Christians in India are their members).¹⁸ This is a reference to the point that there were Christians both in Rome and in India and both of them were also known to him. The fame of the church in India is implied in this statement. He writes:

The apostles erected altars everywhere in the territory of the Romans, of the Persians, of the Schythians, of the Moors, of the Indians. With the evangelization of wild peoples the non-Greek speaking peoples like Schythians, Thracians, Moors, Indians, Sauromans and Persians became Christians'.¹⁹

Chrysostom does not expressly state that Thomas preached the Gospels to the Indians. One can legitimately infer that that apostle was Thomas, as it was the well-known fact that Thomas had preached in India. This was also the mind of the saint's contemporaries like Ephrem and Jerome, who were very clear in their writings with regard to the Indian mission of St Thomas. It was also a well-known fact that the relics of St Thomas were then at Edessa, a fact which Chrysostom himself attests elsewhere.

Chrysostom also writes about the tomb of the apostle which is in India. According to him no one knows where the bones of Aaron, Daniel or Jeremias are laid to the rest; but all do know the place of burial of Peter, John and Thomas.²⁰ For him it was sure that they were the founding fathers of these churches. According to Chrysostom, therefore, the apostle Thomas preached Gospel in India, died and was buried in a tomb there. And this tomb in India had become famous like those of Peter and Paul in Rome.

vi. St Gregory of Tours (538-593)

According to St Gregory the apostle suffered martyrdom in India. He gives a strong and clear testimony to the apostle's martyrdom and burial in India. In one of his works *In Gloria Martyrum* St Gregory writes:

Thomas, the apostle, according to the narrative of his martyrdom, is stated to have suffered in India. His holy remains (corpus), after a long interval of time, were transferred to the city of Edessa by the Syrians and were interred there. In that part of India, where it first rested stands a monastery as well as a church of striking dimensions, exquisitely decorated and structured. Now it is in this edifice that God sows a great miracle. The fire kept burning there before the tomb of the apostle shines without fail day and night by divine will, without anyone supplying oil or twig.... This, Theodore, who had been to the place, narrated to us.²¹

Gregory is sure of this thing as he personally met a pilgrim called Theodore, who had returned from a pilgrimage to the tomb of Apostle Thomas in India. He states that the body of the apostle had been brought to Edessa, but pilgrimage to his original burial place in India continued. It is also noteworthy that Gregory writes about the beautiful church built at the tomb of Thomas in Mylapore and the annual feast celebrated in that region in July with great concourse of people from different regions. As Gregory got this information from Theodore, an eye-witness, his testimony has undeniable historical value. By the sixth century it was a well known fact or a widely circulated popular belief that the Apostle Thomas died in India and his tomb was in India and his relics is later transferred to Edessa.

vii. St Isidore of Seville (560-636)

Isidore, a man of great learning, had very good knowledge of India. His *Ethymologiarum Liber* shows well his knowledge of the geographical positions of the different countries of the East like India, Persia and Mesopotamia. According to him:

India derives its name from the river Indus, by which it is enclosed on the West. It stretches out from the southern sea to the rising of the sun, and it extends on the north as far as the Caucasus mountain. It has many nations, towns and also the island of Taprobane which is filled with elephants. It has Chryse and Argyra which are rich in gold and silver, and also Tyle which is never wanting in foliage. It has both the rivers Ganges and Indus and Hyphasis which make the Indian famous.²²

Isidore testifies the fact that India is evangelized by St Thomas. He gives a list of nations preached by him. According to him Thomas preached to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Hyrcanians and the Bactrians, and to the Indians of the Oriental region and, penetrating the innermost regions and sealing his preaching by his passion, he died transfixed with a lance at Calamina, a city in India, and there he was buried with honour.²³

ST EPHREM AND ST JEROME ON ST THOMAS AND INDIA

i. St Ephrem

St Ephrem in many of his poems refers to the Indian mission of St Thomas. In his many hymns we find St Ephrem praising the Apostle Thomas and this testifies the fact that India is the field of his evangelization, death and burial. In particular he articulates the contemporary living tradition in Edessa on the relics of the Apostle and on his mission in India. Ephrem's concentration is on the theme of transfer of Thomas' relics to Edessa, which was a very great event in the history of the Edessan Church. That is the reason why Ephrem devotes a lot of time and energy for the description of this event in his various writings.

In the *Carmina Nisibena* 42 Ephrem sings of the transfer of the relics of the apostle from India to Edessa. This hymn consists of ten strophes and is composed in form that of Greek and Latin odes, with a refrain to be sung after each strophe. Ephrem composed most of his hymns so that they should be sung at the public services of the Church. They are like prayers or prayer songs. *Carmina Nisibena* 42 which is composed of 10 stanzas is a complaint from the part of the devil about his defeat in the work of redemption realized by Jesus and continued by his apostles. The first four stanzas deal with Thomas and the rest with the other apostles.

In three more hymns we find Ephrem praising St Thomas and India. These hymns are not given special titles. Therefore they are treated as *Madrasha* (Hymn) I, *Madrasha* II and *Madrasha* III. *Madrasha* I or Hymn I of St Ephrem is full with notes regarding Thomas and India. They are testimonies to the Indian mission of St

Thomas. This hymn contains seventeen strophes or stanzas. Of these Thomas is very clearly mentioned in the XI till XVII stanzas. These stanzas help us draw a more clear picture of the Churches of India and Edessa of that time. *Madrasha II* is another collection of hymns of St Ephrem, which are related to the Indian Church. *Madrasha II* consists of eight stanzas, except the IV and V, where also we read about St Thomas. *Madrasha III* of St Ephrem is another source to study the ancient history of the Indian Church. This hymn has all together six stanzas. In this hymn in three stanzas we find references to St Thomas and India.

There is still another collection of hymns called *Hymni Dispersi V, VI* and *VII*. These hymns too contain some references to St Thomas. The *Memre for New Sunday*, another set of hymns, also gives references to Thomas. It is a very beautiful, poetical and impressive text exalting the memory of Thomas. According to this text his behaviour was a kind of love for Jesus, which expresses itself by touching. Thomas is sad because the Lord appeared to the others and bestowed on them the joy to see Him and receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus responds to this love.

We find Ephrem extolling Edessa for having obtained the relics of the apostle Thomas from India, ‘a country celebrated for its pearls’. According to him Edessa has now acquired this pearl. The facts relating to the apostle with his mission and death in India are not attested by the one individual St Ephrem, but by the whole church of Edessa. Ephrem was not merely presenting his personal views on the subject, but putting forward through the hymns the knowledge and the beliefs of the people of a nation. Since most of these hymns were incorporated in the Liturgy of the Syrian Church, and were sung frequently in the churches, they give emphatic support to the fact of the Indian mission of St Thomas.

ii. St Jerome (340-420)

Jerome, a great scholar of ancient times, can be considered the most erudite of the Latin Fathers after St Augustine. Jerome, who knows many languages and has got good acquaintance with biblical, classical and patristic writings, has a good knowledge of geography and topography of India. Jerome mentions St Thomas in many of his writings. In his book *Epistola ad Marcellam* he writes that Jesus was indeed at one and the same time with the apostles during the forty days, and with the angels, and with the Father and in the uttermost ends of the ocean. He dwelt in all places, with Thomas in India, with Peter at Rome, with Paul in Illyricum, with Titus at Crete, with Andrew at Achaia (Greece), with each apostolic man in each and all countries.²⁴

We see again the mention of St Thomas in his *De Viris Illustribus* written in the year 392. There while writing about the achievements of St Thomas he was of the opinion that Thomas preached to many peoples, beginning with the Parthians and ending with the Indians. The Apostle Thomas, as it has been handed down to us by tradition, preached the Lord's Gospel to the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, Carmans, Hyrcanians, the Bactrians and the Magians. He slept in the city of Calamina, which is in India.²⁵ Jerome in his book *Adversus Jovianum* speaks about the Buddhists and Brahmins and describes their mode of life.²⁶

Jerome mentions India on another occasion when he writes about the visit of Pantaenus to India. Jerome at another occasion in *Epistola ad Paulinum* writes about the journey of Apollonius of Tyana to India. Apollonius reached first in Persia. Then crossing the mountains visited some wealthy nations in India and crossing the river Ganges came to the Brahmins.²⁷ In another work *Epistola ad Dardanum* Jerome writes about a traveller journeying to India through Palestine, Phoenicia, Syria, Osrohone, Mesopotamai and Persia.²⁸ In *Epistola ad Evangelium* St Jerome writes that the chief port of India to which the Romans came at that time was Muziris, situated in the pepper country of Malabar.²⁹

8

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST THOMAS AT MYLAPORE/CHENNAI

St Thomas the apostle who evangelized India established Christian communities in different cities both in North and South India during his two missionary journeys. During his second missionary journey he founded church in South India on both Coasts of Malabar and Coromandal. He became a martyr in 72 AD at Mylapore, the second important city in the South. Mylapore remained a Christian centre and the seat of the bishop of the St Thomas Christians in the early centuries of Christian era. The historicity of his martyrdom and his tomb at Mylapore is affirmed by the ancient writings including Patristic writings, archaeological evidences and reports of the visitors to the tomb. This tomb is held in high esteem at all times by all sections of the Christians in India and even by the non-Christians. The tomb plays a vital role in the spiritual life of the St Thomas Christians. The regular pilgrimages to the tomb was a well attested fact by many writers.

St Thomas travelled extensively in South India. The South-eastern and South-western coasts of India show living traces of apostle's missionary activities. In the South-eastern coast of India, which is known as Coromandal coast there are three places outstanding in their connection with St Thomas. They are San Thome de Meliapore alias Mylapore, Little Mount and St Thomas Mount. Commerce in those days was scarcely less brisk on the Coromandal Coast than on the Malabar Coast. Communication between these coasts was possible both by sea and land. The overland route was quite safe through the different passes like Palghat, Cumbum, Bodi etc. The vigorous trade carried on in these parts is more evident from the huge quantities of gold and silver coins of the Roman emperors discovered in Tamil

Nadu and Kerala. It is not difficult, therefore, to conceive of the missionary journeys of St Thomas in between these two coasts.

i. Santhome de Meliapor

The name Mylapore is differently interpreted. *Mayil-a-puram*, meaning peacock city and *malai-puram*, meaning mount city. It is known that the Romans drove a thriving trade in peacocks from this city. Malai-puram or mount city has more relevance to the apostle. This would mean either the Little Mount or the Big Mount otherwise known as St Thomas Mount, both of them are intimately connected with Thomas the apostle. *Malaipuram* subsequently became Maliapor and then Mylapore in English. Camoes, the Portuguese Shakespeare describes Mylapore in his *The Lusiads*. Ancient Mylapore was the capital of a mighty king. The old city was swallowed up in course of time by the encroaching sea. A similar phenomenon can be noticed even to this day at Mahabalipuram, about 35 miles south of Mylapore. When the Portuguese reached Mylapore in 1500, they found a locality called *Beth-Thuma* (means abode of Thomas) where it is believed that Thomas preached the Gospel. Portuguese changed *Beth-Thuma* into San Thome and christened the locality as San Thome de Meliapor.

San Thome is a suburb of the city of Madras, about four miles to its south. To the early muslim travellers from Arabia this place was known as *Beth-Thuma*, i.e., abode or town of Thomas. Portuguese christened it as San Thome due to the tomb, its time-honoured treasure. Centuries before the Portuguese arrived there, travellers and pilgrims from Arabia, Syria and from Europe were frequenting this city. Therefore, it is not a Portuguese fraud as some European historians blame.

The present day Chennai was known till recently as Madras. Mylapore is a part of the city of Madras/Chennai. The existence of a monastery at Mylapore gave Madras this name. The Syriac word

madrassa, madrasth, madrastha means monastery. The Arabic word ‘madrash’ also conveys the same meaning. Paulinus of St Bartholomew, in his *India Orientalis Christiana* spells Madras ‘Madrast’. The existence of a renowned monastery at Mylapore/ Madras/Chennai thus was the ground for this name of the city.³⁰ Later discoveries done in this city give emphasis to this fact. Many foreign travellers, missionaries and pilgrims to this city make reference to the existence of a monastery in the name of St Thomas in this city.

ii. Little Mount (*Chinna malai*)

Little mount, six miles from Fort St George and four miles south-west of Mylapore, is a hillock of 80 feet above sea-level. It is today called Little Mount, as its Tamil name is ‘chinna malai’. The Portuguese called it ‘monte pequino’. This is one of the three places on the Coromandal coast actively associated with the missionary activities of St Thomas. During the time of Thomas it was a place of wild growth of trees and shrubs. History says that this was the place which gave the apostle shelter when the local king, Mahadevan/ Mazdai according to *AoT* gave order to kill him. Though Thomas was a favourite of the king, the ministers were not for him. Sometimes they even handled him in this place where he was sometimes coming for prayer. A cave in this Little Mount, which exists even today, is considered to be the place which gave the apostle shelter.

iii. St Thomas Mount (*Peria malai*)

If Little Mount is the place which gave the apostle shelter, St Thomas Mount can be called the Calvary of St Thomas, which he climbed for the last time, after the manner of his master, to shed his blood on it for the cause of the Saviour. This mount is popularly known as ‘Big Mount’, from the Tamil ‘peria malai’ to distinguish from ‘chinna malai’. Some call it also ‘parangi malai’ due to the settlement of some Europeans around that place. The Portuguese

christened it 'monte grande'. To the historians and to the geographers it is St Thomas Mount. The trunk road connecting Madras with these two mounts, is called Mount Road, evidently because of these landmarks.

St Thomas Mount, nestling in the plains of the East Coast and overlooking the Bay of Bengal, rises nearly 300 feet above sea-level, about eight miles south-west of Fort St George, about six miles from San Thome de Meliapore and two miles from Little Mount. The sea-board is about four miles from it by air distance. The mount, or rather hill, is very steep on the eastern side and slopes gradually towards the west and stretches over 75 acres. During Thomas time it was dotted with gigantic trees, with undergrowth of wild shrubs, so that access to it was not easy.

It was to this hill that Thomas repaired, escaping from his shelter at Little Mount, when the murderers sought him there, and were on the point of seizing him. St Thomas made his abode on the top of the hill, for how long, we do not know. The traditional belief is that while the apostle was praying before the cross carved by him on a stone, which is seen to this day, an assassin suborned by king Mahadevan's priests and ministers, crept up stealthily and pierced him with a lance from behind. Thus did the apostle seal his mission with his blood for his Lord, as the other apostles. His disciples took his body to San Thome de Meliapore, then known as *Beth-Thuma*, and interred it there, his dear old place around the year AD 72. This hallowed spot of his martyrdom has ever since exerted a supernatural influence on people far and near. Pious pilgrims to this place have never ceased. The sanctity of the spot attracted many settlers to this place like Persians, Armenians and Syrians. House sites and tomb stones at the foot of the hill afford ample evidence of settlements from the earliest times.

9

THE TRADITION OF 'SEVEN CHURCHES' IN KERALA

It is a living tradition of St Thomas Christians that St Thomas converted Brahmins into Christianity in different places and established Christian communities in seven centres. These seven Christian settlements were Kodungalloor, Palayoor, Kokkamangalam, Kollam, Niranam, Nilakkal and Paravur. Of these Palayoor, Kokkamangalam, Kodungalloor and Paravur were in the Chera kingdom and Nilakkal, Niranam and Kollam in the Pandyan kingdom. Mylapore, another important Christian centre and the place of martyrdom of St Thomas, but on the Coromandal coast, was in the Chola kingdom. It is on the basis of the information given in *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* the territorial limits of Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms were ascertained.

Of these Christian settlements Kodungalloor, Palayoor and Paravur are located in the fertile valley of River Periyar and Niranam in the valley of River Pampa. Kokkamangalam is on the border of the backwaters of Kuttanad. These seven places and their adjacent regions were the prime Syrian Christian centers until their migration to other places in the first decades of the 20th century. Although some of these lost importance like Kokkamangalam and others like Nilakkal which ceased to exist, the Christians always held the tradition of the seven churches in high esteem.

Among these seven settlements Kodungalloor, Paravur, and Kollam were more exposed to the maritime trade links. It is also probable that some of the converts of these places were Greek or Jewish settlers; but the majority were indigenous people who were predominantly following Buddhism or Jainism, the principal religions

of South India in the early Christian Era. The new converts should have resorted to agriculture because of the increasing demand for agricultural products. This increasing demand created by Roman traders from the Mediterranean world brought them to experiment with new crops which ultimately led the Christian converts to develop cultivation as their major occupation. Generally speaking the settlements of the early St Thomas Christians were scattered around the expanding agrarian zone lying between Palayoor and Kollam.

The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* speaks of Naura, Muziris, Barake and Nelconda as the principal pepper ports of Malabar. Naura is identified with Cannore, Muziris with Kodungalloor, Barake with Purakkad and Nelconda with Niranam.³¹ *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* mentions also the river Baris which might be Pampa. The principal region where pepper was grown in large quantities was called *Kottanarike*.³² Both Pliny and Ptolemy write about *Kottanarike*, which should be Kuttanad or the regions surrounding Pampa river. In earlier times this seems to have been a vast pepper growing area, though now it is a waterlogged area on account of the frequent geophysical changes that took place on the coastal Kerala in general and in Kuttanad region in particular. There was a slow but gradual expansion of agricultural activities from Purakkad to regions south of Niranam and more and more areas were brought under pepper cultivation in this process.

i. Kodungalloor

Kodungalloor in former times was known as Maliankara, Muziris, Mahodayapatanam, Thiruvanchikulam etc and was the capital of the Chera kingdom where St Thomas landed to preach the Gospel. The early writers like Ptolemy, Pliny, author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* etc make references to this ancient famous city. Pliny refers to it as the '*primum emporium Indiae*.'³³ Jews, Romans, Greeks and Arabs were found in this city in ancient times. Later it

became the centre of Portuguese in Kerala. The church was destroyed and the Christian community was dispersed due to the invasion of Tippu Sultan in the second half of the 18th century.

ii. Kollam

Kollam which is also known as Quilon, Kulam, Kulam Male etc shared with Kodungalloor the distinction of being a famous Christian centre of ancient times where St Thomas preached and established a Church. Certain Church Fathers while describing the Indian mission of St Thomas write about Kollam as one among the ancient Christian centres. This was the second important city and a commercial centre of Kerala in former times. A number of travellers who visited this place have written about the Church and the Christians of this place. Kollam had trade relations both with the East and West. Till the 9th century a church of the St Thomas Christians existed in the town, which was destroyed by a flood. That the remains of it can be seen even today a few hundred meters away from the shore is the opinion of the locals.

iii. Paravur

Paravur which is also called as Palur or Kottakavu was an ancient Syrian Christian stronghold. This city was not far from the ancient capital city of Muziris (Kodungalloor) and was considered to be on the banks of the river Periyar. It was a port city and trading centre where St Thomas founded a community and it is the tradition that from Paravur he left to Mylapore, where he became a martyr. Though the ancient church was destroyed by Tippu Sultan in 1789, it remains a Christian centre today.

vi. Palayoor

Palayoor is the northern most of the seven ancient churches; while Kollam is the southern most. It was a Namboothiri (Brahmin)

village when St Thomas visited it. Since it was a trade centre there were also Jews living here in early times. He converted some of the Brahmin families into Christian.³⁴ The descendants of some of the ancient families are seen even today with the same family names. The archdeacons of the Church were always from one such family called Pakalomattam of Kuravilangad. It is the belief that St Thomas after having converted some Brahmin families converted a Hindu temple into a church. Other Brahmins cursed the place and left it for good. From then on this place was called Chavakad, a derivation of 'Sapakad' meaning 'place of curse'. The present church at Palayoor replaces the former one destroyed by Tippu Sultan in the 18th century.

v. Kokkamangalam

St Thomas after his mission in Kodungalloor traveled southwards and reached Kokkamangalam. There also he converted many into Christianity. But due to the objections it could not flourish. But the neighbouring regions like Pallipuram and Kaduthuruthy witnessed growth of Christianity.

vi. Niranam

Niranam was an international trade centre in the first and second centuries. It was also a port city. A trade route starting from Madura, the Pandyan capital ended in Niranam. The rivers Pampa, Manimala and Kovilar make this land fertile. Niranam had trade relations with Greece, Egypt and Rome. Pliny calls this city as 'Nikinda', Ptolemy as 'Neyconda' and *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* as 'Nelkinda'.

vii. Nilakkal

Nilakkal which was also called Chayal was an important town and a prominent trade centre of ancient Kerala. Nilakkal had a privileged position in Venad, which was the most important region

of Chera kingdom. It was the entrance to the Pandyan kingdom. The different books of the Sangam literature like *Chilapathikaram* and *Pathittupattu* help us study the status and place of this city in ancient times. During St Thomas' journey and missionary work in Kerala he should have founded a Christian community in Nilakkal too. St Thomas' journey to and from Mylapore should have been through this city as it was on the route from Kerala to Tamil Nadu. But the Christian community founded by the apostle could not withstand the test of the time in the coming centuries.

10

DISAPPEARANCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA EXCEPT IN THE MALABAR COAST

1. Ancient four important cities

In ancient India the important four cities were in the north Broach and Taxila and in the south Muziris and Mylapore. Of these Broach was the most important trade centre of that time, Taxila a centre of learning, Muziris the most important port city of India and Mylapore on the Coromandal Coast the gateway to the Far East. All these four are related with the missionary work of St Thomas. Broach was the city of disembarkation of the first journey of St Thomas and it was in Taxila that Thomas met Gundaphar, the king of Parthia. Muziris was the city of disembarkation in the second journey and Mylapore the place of his death and burial. Thus India can very rightly be called 'the land of St Thomas' or St Thomas as 'the apostle of India'. We know from history that besides these four there were many other cities connected with the Indian apostolate of St Thomas like Kollam, the second important city on the Malabar Coast, Niranam an

international commercial city, and Ujjain, Mathura and Pataliputra on the trade route between Broach and Taxila.

The Christian communities in and around these cities, except in the Malabar coast, could not survive the tides of time. It is no wonder to believe so since we see in history the same fate to the churches once existed in North Africa, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, China etc. ‘When did it happen?’ and ‘How did it happen?’ are not yet satisfactorily answered by the historians. They differ in their opinions regarding the demise of Christianity in many places in India. Recent discoveries of certain inscriptions like that of Udaipur and Archaeological excavations taking place in sites like Muziris, Kalyan etc give us further hope in this regard.

ii. The Kushan and the successive foreign invasions

North Indian Christianity instead started declining in the middle of the first century itself due to the attack by the Kushans. Due to this invasion by the Kushans Gundaphar lost the power and Thomas had to recline from the Parthian kingdom of Gundaphar where he was freely spreading the Gospel. The Kushans were supporters of Buddhism. Therefore the Christians either had to leave the land or to change their religion. Any religion irrespective of their place of origin, needs the political or royal support for their growth is testified in history. If no support, at least, a policy of toleration or of neutrality is necessary for the survival of any religion. The same is true with regard to Indian St Thomas Christianity. Christianity survived in Malabar especially because of the support of the native Hindu kings up to the English time.

In the beginning of the fourth century AD with the accession of Chandra Gupta I the Gupta dynasty came to power in North India. During Samudra Gupta there were a number of wars. Therefore, Gupta period was no good time for the then religions of India. An account

of Theophilus the Indian of 354 AD speaks about the existence of Christians in the coasts of Gujarat. Christianity which could survive the Gupta period and which was limited to a very few cities of North India disappeared fully with the Muslim invasions of the medieval period. The Muslim conquest of India began with Mohammed Ghazni and continued through Mohammed Ghori. With Delhi Sultanate and Mughal power Christianity disappeared fully in North Indian cities. These invasions but did not affect the Christians of Malabar Coast, where they were getting the protection from the Chera kings.

iii. Southward migration

Today it is almost a proved fact that due to these invasions and insecurities the Christians of North India migrated at different periods in many places. Historians agree in the westward and southward migrations of Christians of that time. But there are also some who hold an eastern migration as well; i.e. to China. Though it is not proved, it is possible as the Kushans came from China. Christians from Parthia could have gone southwards, first to Gujarat. Gujarat that time was ruled by the Sakas who were not against Christians as their enemies Guptas were not supporting any religion whether Christianity or Hinduism.

The Christians who went southwards should have joined the Christians of Broach in Gujarat. *AoT* alludes to the Christians in Broach, the place of disembarkation of the first journey of St Thomas. The migration should have also been to other places of the Gujarat coasts. Historians today give a number of evidences for the existence of Christians in and around Bombay, especially in Vasai, Kalyan, Thane etc. St Thomas Christians of Goa may also be the descendants of these migrant Christians from the North. St Francis Xavier in some of his letters written to his superiors makes mention of the existence of Christians in Goa, who should be the St Thomas Christians of the ancient period.³⁵ The recent discovery of St Thomas Cross in Goa is a good proof for the same.

iv. Migration from Coromandal Coast

There is again conjecture that Christians have migrated further southwards. And they might have reached even Malabar Coast passing through Konkan, Mangalore etc and have mingled with the local St Thomas Christians of Kerala. But migration from North to South was not as easy as from the Coromandal Coast to the Malabar Coast. The Christians of Mylapore and other cities of the Coromandal Coast should have migrated to Malabar Coast in the second and third centuries is a proved fact. Christians from West, i. e., from Persia have also migrated to South India in the fourth and fifth centuries due to the political problems in the land. The migrations from North, North west and West (Persia) are still themes of research among scholars. Christians from North and North west India might also have migrated to Central India, to regions like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa etc. The Udayapur inscription of the 11th century discovered recently in Sagar (Madhya Pradesh) is a good evidence.

v. Westward migration to Persia and vice versa

From North India there should have also migrations to the west, i.e., to the Persian kingdom. There were Christians, bishops and deacons in many regions in North west India from early times is the opinion of Mingana. The kingdom of Gundaphar was on the western boundaries of India. Therefore, the Christians in North India due to the intolerance of the invaders should have joined with the Christians of the neighbouring regions in the west. According to the historian Heras Kashgar and Ardasirpharid were ancient dioceses of that region. He is of the opinion that even during the time of Apostle Thomas the Parthian Jewish Christians might have migrated to Persia and joined with their brethren. They considered themselves superior to other Christians of that region, and they contributed later to the spread of Nestorain Christianity in China.

This migration continued only till the beginning of the Sassanid rule in Persia, i.e., in the sixth century. The Sassanids though



at first were not against the Christians gradually turned against them and began persecuting them. The reason behind this negative attitude towards Christians was that the Romans, their born enemies were supporting Christians. Thus finished this migration from North India to Persia and instead started migration from Persia to South India. Heras suggests that it was the presence of the Christians of St Thomas from North west India at Fars that became a driving force for the Christians of Persia or Fars to migrate to Malabar at the time of persecutions.³⁶ Therefore one can say that there happened in history migrations from North west India (Parthia) to South (Kerala) and West (Persia) first and then from West to South and also from East (Coromandal Coast) to the South or Malabar Coast.



MEDIEVAL PERIOD

11

BEGINNING OF PERSIAN CONTACT

The apostles preached the Gospels and founded churches in different countries of the world. They have also appointed deacons, presbyters and bishops to continue their missions entrusted them by the Lord. In the *AoT* in chapter 13 there is reference to the appointment of Zifur as a priest and Vizan as a deacon by St Thomas at Mylapore to take up the leadership of the Indian church founded by him. But later due to various reasons the church of the St Thomas Christians had to depend upon the Church of the East/Persian Church for the appointment and consecration of bishops.

Persia had trade contacts with South India from very early times, even before the birth of Christ. Till the eight century Syriac or Aramaic was the commercial language of the East. In the early centuries there emerged a spiritual relationship between the churches in the Persian Empire and the Church in South India. The reason for this relationship was due to the direct or indirect apostolate of St

Thomas. The church in Edessa is founded by Addai, the disciple of St Thomas, the church in Seleucia-Ctesiphon was founded by Mari, the disciple of Addai and the church in Persia by St Thomas the apostle. Thus from the apostolic period there emerged spiritual bond between the church in India and the churches in the Persian Empire. And they all consider St Thomas as their direct or indirect patron.

i. Emergence of Seleucia-Ctesiphon

In the early Christian centuries there emerged certain churches as important ecclesiastical centres due to their apostolic origin and favourable geographical and political situations. These centres later became metropolitan sees and then patriarchates. The small churches near to these important centres had to depend upon these ones. Thus within the Roman Empire Alexandria, Antioch, Rome and Constantinople and outside the Roman Empire Seleucia - Ctesiphon became in due course important Christian centres. In the synod of Mar Isaac of 410 conducted in Seleucia, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian Empire was acknowledged as the centre of the churches in the Persian Empire. The bishop of this city is declared the head of all the churches in the Persian Empire which consisted of Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia (Iran). During this time, i.e. in the fifth century the church in India, which had both cultural and spiritual relationship with the churches of the Persian Empire accepted the primacy of the 'Great Metropolitan' or 'Catholicos' of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

It became a necessity from the part of the St Thomas Christians to come into contact with the Church of the East in the Persian Empire. The early synods and councils made it a law reserving the election of bishops to the provincial synod canonically convoked and presided over by metropolitan. No Episcopal consecration was possible without the presence of the metropolitan and two other bishops or at least three bishops with the written consent of the

metropolitan. (Council of Nicea [325] canons 4, 6; synod of Antioch [341] canons 16, 19). Similarly the metropolitans had to be ordained by the catholicos or the patriarch. Therefore the small church of the St Thomas Christians which did not have a provincial synod and a metropolitan could not have elected and consecrated bishops without depending upon the nearby churches in the Persian Empire.

ii. A national Persian Church

There is no evidence of a developed episcopate in Persia till 300. The border regions like Edessa and Arbela were the Christian centres. The church in those places began centralized in the fourth century. The different congregations became a nationwide community in the first half of the fourth century, with no single head but with a few bishops, priests and deacons, separated geographically but in communion with each other. This network of recognized ecclesiastical command attempted a partially successful national synod (Synod of Seleucia) in the early fourth century. It was only with the first Persian synods of the fifth century, beginning with the Synod of Isaac in 410, the national authority was established and given to the bishop of the capital city, Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Some writers say there was no real unity in the Persian church that time as there were many heresies that time in that church. The years of relative toleration under the late Parthian and early Sassanid emperors would have furnished opportunity for visible, organized Christian leadership to emerge. In Edessa the first bishop in the Chronicle of Edessa is Qona, who is reported to have begun the building of the great cathedral there in 313. The first bishop of Nisibis is James of Nisibis.

iii. The See of Rew-ardshir

It might be in the fifth century bishops started coming from the Church of the East to the Malabar church which shared the same Thomistic spiritual heritage. But there might have taken place earlier

contacts between these two churches. The channel of Persian ecclesiastical authority was through the diocese of Rew-ardshir (Fars) which was strategically located on the direct sea route to India near the head of the Persian Gulf on its eastern side. This diocese was elevated to the status of a metropolitanate or archbishopric in between 410 and 420 and was given jurisdiction over the church/churches in India.

Their ecclesiastical language became Syriac, though even before that they may have ceased to use local dialects in their services. They sent their priests to Persia to study Syriac. The name of one of them is known from a reference in a commentary on Romans by Ishoyab of Merv written in 425. It is as the following: this epistle has been translated from Greek into Syriac by Mar Komai, with the help of the priest called 'Daniel the Indian'. About 470 to provide correct Nestorian theological education to the Indian clergy, the metropolitan Mana of Rew-ardshir sent 'to the islands of the Sea, and to India all the books he had translated' from Greek into Syriac. These were the writings of the two great Nestorian Fathers, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuetia and he included some of his own writings in Pahlavi (i.e. Sassanian Persian).

12

PERSIAN MIGRATIONS

i. Thomas of Cana

In the middle of the fourth century during the persecutions by the Sassanid Emperor Sapor II the Persian Christians were escaping from their lands to other countries including Malabar. But there is no clear evidence for the same. The only one evidence is the arrival of Thomas of Cana, a Persian merchant in India, together with a bishop

and 72 Christian families in 345. This event can be compared to that of the Zoroastrians, who in the eighth century, after the Moslem victory over the Sassanids migrated to India and founded the Parsi colony of Gujarat.

There is a strong local tradition which tells that the descendants of St Thomas' converts, numbering 160 families were deprived of priests for a long time and were reverting to idolatry. This situation however was revealed to the bishop of Edessa in a vision. This prompted the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon to send Thomas, a Christian merchant to India. Due to him thus the Indian church came into contact with the Persian Church and then started coming deacons, priests and bishops from Persia. This Persian merchant was in good terms with the local rulers, which in turn helped the Syrians to obtain from the rulers many privileges and concessions. The Thomas of Cana *Chepped* (copper plate) is a good proof for the same. Since there was a community in India when Thomas of Cana arrived, the historical origin of St Thomas Christians cannot be from Thomas of Cana. If Pantaenus met Christians in India in the second century there were Christians in India before the fourth century.

The Persian immigration under the leadership of Thomas of Kinayi is generally considered to be in 345. This immigration towards the middle of the fourth century was during the time of the persecutions of Christians in the Persian Empire under Sapor II. As part of the persecution in 341 Catholicos Mar Simeon Bar Sabba was killed in 341 and in 342 his successor Catholicos Shadost. And from then on the see remained vacant till 388. The Persian documents of the fourth and fifth centuries do not make any mention of the Indian Christianity of that time. From this we can conclude that Indian Christianity was definitely connected with the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon only after 450, at a time when the Mesopotamian or the Persian Church was itself being strongly established.

It is with the arrival of the Persian Christians in succeeding centuries happened the division of the Syrian Christians into two sections as Nordists (*Vadakumbhagakar*) and Southists (*Thekkumbhagakar*). The Southists regard themselves as descendants of migrants who came to India under his leadership and settled down in Malabar. The Southists call themselves preferably Knanaya community or Knanaites after Knai-Thomman or Thomas of Kinayi or Thomas of Cana.

ii. Sapor and Proth

From the ninth century onwards the Indian church was undoubtedly in regular contact with the Seleucian catholicate. According to patriarch Theodosius (853-858) the metropolitans living in far away places like India, were to send their letter of consent and communion every six years. It is the tradition that in 825 a group of Christians led by two bishops Mar Sapor and Mar Prot came to Kollam. These two names are given in different writings in different ways, such as Sabarisho and Peroz, Xaor and Aproit, Sapor and Prot, Gervasis and Protasis etc. The Tarisapally copperplate of Kollam is an evidence for the same. The belief is that Mar Sabarisho and Mar Peroz made a good number of conversions, built new churches and erected open-air crosses. The earliest testimony about them was that of the Chaldean Abuna in 1553. He wrote that about 700 years ago two saintly brothers, natives of Armenia, came to Kollam and from there they went to Kodungalloor and thence to Ceylon. One was named Xaor and the other Aproit. They brought from Ceylon big logs of wood belonging to a temple. They brought these to Kollam and made use of them in building a church on some land they obtained from the king of the place. The church stood there when Abuna gave his testimony.

According to the Portuguese writer Correa, the two bishops preached and converted many to Christianity. On the seashore there

was a stone near which they used to pray. On land they performed many miracles. They died and were buried in Kollam and their remains were still there. Another Portuguese writer Dionisio writes that they confirmed the Christians in faith and converted others and erected a church in Kollam.³⁷ Gouvea connects the so-called Christian dynasty with the prosperity of the Christians which followed the arrival of these two men. Bishop Francis Roz says that they landed in Maliankara. There is a tradition that these brothers have no money to pay the workers who had helped them to build the church, used to pay them as sand as wages and this turned at once to rice. They were buried in the church they had built. Some writers are of the opinion that either they are brothers or they are considered as brothers by the faithful.

iii. Persian Church getting intimate contact with the Indian Church

There are writers who confuse the story of these two bishops with that of Thomas of Cana. But the tradition is clear about their arrival. The tradition presents strongly Thomas of Cana and Sapor and Prot as the persons who were instrumental in bringing the Persian church into such direct and intimate communion with the Christians of India. When the Portuguese reached here they could understand this intimacy. Dionysio writes that this is why this Christianity has such affection and respect for the bishops who came from Babylon and Syria. Monserrate was of the opinion that it was the consequence of the arrival of Thomas of Cana that the Christians of Malabar accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian church and had great respect for those who belonged to their progenitors. While these authors give credit to the initiative of the Syrians for the beginning of the relation between the Persian and Indian churches, Barbosa gives its credit to the Indian church.

If with the first immigration the contact with the Persian church started with the second and third ones the bond with the Persian church was strengthened and the Indian church went on smoothly under the Seleucian patriarch. Syriac remained the liturgical language during this time. For the rest of the medieval period we have scanty information concerning the relationship between these two churches. In 1301 Zacharias Bar Joseph, a disciple of the Metropolitan of All India, Mar Joseph, writes about the then patriarch Yahaballah III (1281-1317). In the medieval period no Indian group of Christians ever came under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria or Byzantine.

13

INDIAN CHURCH IN THE 5TH AND 6TH CENTURIES

i. Situation of the Indian Church in the 5th century

Cosmos, the author of *Topographia Christiana*, visited India between 520 and 525. While writing about the travelling experiences he gives some relevant information about the church in India in the beginning of the medieval period. He writes:

The gospel has been preached throughout the world. This I state to be a definite fact, from what I have heard and seen in many places which I have visited. Even in Taprobane (Sri Lanka) there is a church of Christians with clergy and a body of believers, but I do not know whether there are Christians in the country beyond it. In the country called Male (Malabar) where the pepper grows, there is also a church and at another place called Kalliana (Kalyan, near Bombay) there is moreover a bishop, who is appointed from Persia.³⁸

Cosmos gives an account of the Roman trade in India and Ceylon. According to him Ceylon has a very central position and it is a great resort of ships from all parts of India and also from Persia and Ethiopia. He then gives the list of the then important commercial marts of India such as Sindhu, Orrhothra, Kalliana, Sibor, Male which has five marts to export pepper, Parti, Mangarouth, Salopatana, Nalopatana and Pudupatana.³⁹ Cosmos writes that Romans were still frequenting the ports of India. There is thus every indication that the trade between India and Rome continued throughout these centuries until the capture of Alexandria in 641 by Muslims and the Muslim domination in the East. Cosmos is very clear about the geography of India. He writes that Sindhu is, however, the beginning of India; for, the river Indus which is the Phison and which has mouths in the Persian Gulf, divides Persia from India.⁴⁰

ii. Situation of the Indian Christians in the 6th century

According to Cosmos there were Christians in the Island of Socotra. He was informed by the natives that their clergy were ordained in Persia. Cosmos is of the mind that the island is a Persian dominion and he is sure about the influence of Persian church in the island. Beith Qataraye writes about the actual evangelization of the mixed population of Socotra, consisting of Greeks, Arabs, Indians etc. It reads:

Socotra received a bishop from Catholicos Sabariso III. Their archbishop has nothing to do with the pope of Rome, for he depends upon the metropolitan of Baghdad. It was he (*jatolic of Baudac* = catholicos of Baghdad) who was sending bishop to Socotra. He was sending prelates to many other parts of the world, just as pope of Rome does.⁴¹

The Christians of Ceylon had a different origin. Cosmos speaks about the Christians of Taprobane in two places. In the first place he says that there is a church with its faithful and clergy; and in

the second place he is more accurate. He says that there was a church of Persian settlers with a priest ordained in Persia, a deacon and some minor clergy. The natives and the king belong to another religion. Therefore there was no real missionary centre in Ceylon but only an establishment of Persian traders, who were dwelling in place abounding in merchandise imported from China and Indonesia.

14

INDIAN CHURCH IN THE 7TH AND 8TH CENTURIES

i. Situation of the Indian Church in the 7th century

By the middle of the 6th century the Indian church was organized and well established with bishops, clergy and believers. It was strongly related to and dependent on the Persian church, which by then was Nestorian. But it was only a tiny minority community, a separated, distinctive cultural island in a vast non-Christian sea. But two other important facts must be recognized which add to the general picture. First, it was not a daughter church of the Persian hierarchy. It already had a long history of its own. The Persians were unanimous in recognizing the apostolic independent origins of Indian Christianity.

When the Islamic tides engulfed Persian church it did not affect the Indian church. More than that, early in the 7th century either during the patriarchate of Isoyab II (628-646) or Isoyab III (650-660) jurisdiction of the Indian church was taken from the metropolitan of Rew-ardshir and was given a new patriarchate newly created for India itself. Where it was located and how many Indian bishoprics were created under it are unknown. According to Mingana there was a time when there were between six and 12 suffragan bishops in India, that the metropolitan of India outranked that of China.

Creation of separate metropolitan see for India caused jealousy to the see of Rew-ardshir. The rebellious metropolitan of Rew-ardshir even blamed this act of the patriarch as an usurpation of the authority of Rew-ardshir on the Indian Church. Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the Persian capital and seat of the patriarch fell to the invaders in 637. A letter of the patriarch Isoyahn III written in the first years of the occupation confirms that the Nestorian connection with India had barely survived the Muslim conquest and was in danger of disappearing altogether.

ii. Situation of the Indian Church in the 8th century

The letters of patriarch Timothy give us more details about the hierarchical relations between India and Persian churches. In one of his letters he speaks about the possibility of intermarriages between Christians of Mesopotamia and India. In another letter he reveals that many missionaries were in the habit of travelling to India by sea spending hardly anything on their journey. It also gives evidences of the renewed intensification of Christian activity in India under patriarch Timothy. Timothy too struggled as Isoyahn against the separatist tendency of Fars.

This separatism fostered a schismatic situation in India. According to Barhebraeus, the reluctant bishops told the catholicos that they were the disciples of St Thomas and they had nothing to do with the see of Mari.⁴² This is the first allusion to the phrase 'Christians of St Thomas' which was so frequently used during the following centuries. Documents testify that from the time of catholicos Ishoyahn II (628-646) bishops and priests were sent to India. But it was patriarch Timothy who made the Indian church fully independent from Fars (South Persia) by giving it a metropolitan of its own. Abdiso, a contemporary writer, writes that the metropolitan of India held the tenth place and came before that of China in the list of episcopal sees.

15

EMERGENCE OF KOLLAM AS A CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Kollam, formerly called Quilon, was the second most ancient trading centre and port of Kerala. It was at one time a great commercial and political centre and also a center of Christianity. A number of travellers who visited this place have written about the Christians of this place and the church which existed in that city.⁴³ Kollam had trade relations both with the East and the West. It enjoyed a large trade with China and the Middle East. Its port has been described by early travellers as one of the largest in the world, and its market, the first in India. With the arrival of the Arabs and the Portuguese in Kerala and the rise of the ports of Kozhikode and Kochi as commercial competitors, its importance began to decline, its manufacturers became neglected, its harbour gradually lost its natural facilities for shipping and it came finally to be reduced to a third rate port.⁴⁴ The beautiful fort at Kollam, called Fort Thomas, which was built by the Portuguese, was also destroyed by the Portuguese themselves due to a clash between them and the Queen of Venad.⁴⁵

i. Visitors to Kollam

The travellers Abulfeda and Odoric describe Kollam as the extreme end of the pepper country of Malabar, and as situating at the extremity of the pepper forest towards the South. The Chinese traveller Ma Huan, an Arab-speaking interpreter who accompanied the Ming maritime voyages organized by Cheng Ho, writes that Kollam was known to the Chinese navigators of the Tang Dynasty (618-913 AD). According to him, the Muslims had a major mosque constructed by the merchant Khwaja Muhazzab. The Chinese junks used to anchor off the port of Kollam and frequent missions were exchanged between the king of Kollam and Emperor of China. Marco Polo while he was

servicing as a mandarin in the court of Kublai Khan visited Kollam as the king's representative. Yule, Barbosa and De Mailla all give evidences to the same. We know from Marco Polo's account that the King of Kollam had benefited largely from the Chinese trade. The chief articles of export from Kollam were indigo, pepper, ginger, cinnamon etc.

John of Monte Corvino, the first Roman Catholic missionary to China, on his way to China landed at Kollam. He gives a good description of the Christians of Kollam. Jordanus who was appointed bishop of Kollam in 1321 also writes about the flourishing city of Kollam. Ibn Batuta who visited Kollam in 1343 wrote that though the trade of Kollam was gradually on the decline, it was still important. According to him Chinese ships used to frequent the port. He describes Kollam as one of the fairest cities of Malabar with splendid bazaars and wealthy merchants. Nicolo Conti who reached Kollam in 1441 too declares Kollam to be a noble city and praises its flourishing trade.

When Albuquerque landed at Kollam, according to Portuguese historians, the trade at Kollam was more extensive than that of Cannore and Kochi, and vessel laden with rich merchandise came daily from Ceylon and Malacca. Albuquerque then comments on the Christians living in that city. According to him these Christians were from the time of St. Thomas. He was much impressed by the Christians of Kollam and also by their king.

'Thomas who reached Maliankara to preach the Gospel, after founding a church there, with the disciple Cepha came to Kollam and there too preached the Gospel' is the narration in *Ramban Pattu*. Certain Church Fathers while describing the Indian Mission of St Thomas write about Kollam as one among the ancient Christian centers. There are a lot of literary evidences too in this regard. Till the ninth century a Church of the St Thomas Christians existed in the

town, which was destroyed by a flood. The local people say that the remains of it can be seen even today a few hundred meters away from the shore.

Emigration of Sapor and Proth in the ninth century is a very good evidence of the presence of Christianity in the city of Kollam. Of the two Bishops from Persia who reached Malabar, Sapor (Sabariso) was intended to be the ruler of the Christians of Kollam and Proth, of Kodungalloor. Kollam was the second most important Christian centre of Kerala in the medieval period. The taking charge of this city by Sapor is considered to be the beginning of *Kollam Era*. John of Monte Corvino, the first Roman Catholic missionary to China and the first Archbishop of Peking on his way to China visited Kollam. In 1321 Jordanus, another Roman Catholic missionary, was appointed bishop of Kollam and sent to India by Pope John XXII. The details of these incidents and a fine description of the city of Kollam are all seen in his book called *Mirabile Descripta*.

John Marignoli, a Franciscan missionary from Florence arrived at Kollam in 1338. He was on his way back to Europe after his mission in China. It was Pope Benedict who appointed him as Chaplain to a section of the army of the Great King of China, called Kublai Khan. John Marignoli lived in Kollam for more than a year and preached in the town church. In his travel narrative we read that he received for his offices from the Christian congregation of Kollam 100 gold *panams* every month and a bonus of thousand gold *panams* on his leaving the place.

From these documents it is clear that Kollam at that time was an important city, in a flourishing state. Christians were behind the prosperity of the city. These plates throw light on the social condition of the Syrian Christians as well. They were a rich people and highly esteemed in the society. They were well versed in trade and agriculture which brought them fame and wealth. As they were

contributing much to the prosperity of the land they were granted certain privileges, honours and concessions. The Kollam copper plates speak about 72 privileges granted to the Syrian Christians of Malabar of the ninth century. These privileges today have not much social significance.

ii. Kollam Era (Quilon calendar)

The Kollam era or the so called 'Malayalam year' begins in the year 825 AD. There are many and varied views and theories regarding the origin of this calendar, which is in use - not so common-even today, especially among the elderly and the Hindu brethren. It is generally believed that it commemorates the foundation of the town of Kollam. But it is true that the city existed even before that.

There are writers who are of the opinion that there is a Christian beginning of this Kollam era. It is in the year 823 that the two Persian Bishops Sapor and Proth arrived at Kollam to rule over the Syrian Christians of Malabar. Mar Sapor who was intended for Kollam. Sapor was a very powerful and efficient person with good financial backing and prior experiences in many countries. Seeing his abilities he was asked by Stanu Ravi, the Chera emperor, to participate in the building up of this city as the capital of Venad. The Kulasekhara king who lost Vizhinjam to the Pandyan was at that time trying to raise Kollam as a big city and as the capital of Venad. In 824 the Chera king gave Sapor land and permission to build a church in the city and provided him with all necessary support to conduct trade attracting Persian and other traders.

The farsightedness, ability and determination of Sapor and the special geographical position of this place made Kollam the largest port in South India. The Arab traveller Sulaiman writes about the flourishing state of Kollam of this period. The presence of Sapor in Kollam was a boost for the Persian ships and traders to come to the

South Indian ports. Sapor gave all support and encouragement to the *Manigramam*, the trading agency of that time, to stay at Kollam to conduct trade at its maximum. Thus the coming of Sapor and his successful enterprises in Kollam resulted in the renaissance of the city.

It was necessary for the trade groups in Kollam to keep chronicles to help the trade. Due to the different calendars of the traders from different lands, the calculations sometimes became very difficult. In this context a new calendar was gradually developed from the mutual agreements of the native and foreign traders. Taking into account the results of the Persian astronomical researches and the rotation of the planets in the solar system, and basing on the day on which the sun comes over the city of Kollam in equal day and night distribution, the Kollam calendar was started on 15th August 825 AD. Gradually this calendar, evolved originally for trade purpose, began to be accepted by the rulers and the local people.

16

HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE CHURCH OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS

i. The role of the Chaldean patriarch in the Indian Church

The patriarch of the Church of the East was the canonical head of the St Thomas Christians. But he did not intervene in the administration of the church nor exercise any juridical power. His role was practically limited to the appointment and consecration of Indian metropolitan. He was a figure head, functioning as a convenient intermediary in her communion with other churches. The patriarch respected the identity and autonomy of the Indian church. In the

Church of East there were two kinds of metropolitans; electoral and autonomous or missionary. Electoral metropolitans were prominent in the day to day administration of the local church. The autonomous or missionary metropolitans were the metropolitans in other lands. Indian metropolitan was of the second type. That shows that the Indian metropolitans were fully autonomous.

St Thomas Christians considered the Chaldean bishops as 'the bishops of our own rite and nation'. The metropolitan was only a spiritual head and he was leading an ascetical and contemplative life without intervening in the temporal and secular administration of the church. The effective leader and real governor of the Indian church was the Archdeacon of all India. Archdeacon was always a celibate priest among St Thomas Christians who governed the church except in the appointment and consecration of bishops. He was ex-officio teacher of St Thomas Christians who enjoyed legislative, judicial and administrative powers. He had many rights and privileges like administration of the vacant See, the presentation of candidates to Holy Order, appointment of pastors and enthronement of bishops. Archdeacon was the unifying head of St Thomas Christians who promoted the individuality, identity and heritage of the church. This archdeaconate lasted till 1706; the last one was Matthew Pallil.

ii. Metropolitan of All India

In the medieval period the church of St Thomas Christians was an autonomous metropolitan church headed by metropolitan of all India, and governed by an archdeacon of all India. This 'metropolitan - archdeacon combination rule' was an effective organisation of the Indian church. The residence of the metropolitan of St Thomas Christians was not fixed to any particular place until 1565. The metropolitan could have resided in any Christian centre in India. He was using the title as 'Metropolitan of All India'. The other titles he was using were 'Gate of India', 'Metropolitan of the Orient'

and 'Metropolitan and Gate of All India'. The cities where the 'Metropolitan of All India' used to reside were Mylapore, Kollam, Kodungalloor and Angamaly. The first residence of the metropolitan was in Mylapore. When the Portuguese arrived in India the seat of the metropolitan was Kodungalloor. When the Portuguese erected fortress in Kodungalloor in 1504 and made it their centre many St Thomas Christians left that city and the metropolitan began to reside in Angamaly. Mar Abraham with the permission from Pope Pius IV transferred the residence of the metropolitan from Kodungalloor to Angamaly officially in 1568. Thus Angamaly became the center of St Thomas Christians and the seat of the metropolitan. But in 1606 Kodungalloor was raised a metropolitan see and thus it became again the seat of the metropolitan of St Thomas Christians. The titles of 'Metropolitan of All India' and 'Archdeacon of All India' were not mere empty titles because there were Christian communities in different regions of India like Kalyan, Thana, Gujarat, Mysore, Goa, Vijaya Nagar, Mangalore, Cape Comorin, Coromadal coast (including Mylapore), Sindh, Punjab, Orrisa, Patna, Malwa etc.

iii. Palliyogam (Synodal Governance)

Following the council of Jerusalem in 50 AD there developed in the early church synods or assemblies to deal with the problems of the church. Thus came in to existence the provincial synods. It is an assembly of the bishops of the same province convoked and presided over by the metropolitan. Such a synod enjoyed electoral, legislative, judicial and administrative powers. Later there emerged patriarchal synods. It is an assembly of metropolitans and bishops of the patriarchate convoked and presided over by the patriarch. In the early Indian context a provincial synod was not possible because there was only one bishop, sometimes no one. Therefore St Thomas Christians developed their own passive synodal governance called *Palliyogam*. *Palliyogam* enjoyed most of the powers of the ancient provincial

synods except the election of bishops. It was composed of clergy and laity who enjoyed equal rights and obligations. The archdeacon together with the *yogam* formed a kind of ‘Christian republic’. There are three kinds of assemblies: Parish *yogam*, Regional *yogam* and General *yogam*.

Parish *yogam* is the assembly of the heads of the Christian families and the priests of a parish usually under the presidency of senior priest. Each parish was an autonomous and self sufficient unit. The parish *yogam* enjoyed legislative, administrative and juridical powers. Regional *yogam* is the assembly of parishes and representatives of the Christian faithful of a region of at least four parishes. Administration of justice was the main duty of this body. General *yogam* is the assembly of the priests and representatives of the faithful of all parishes of the St Thomas Christians convoked and presided over by the archdeacon. Matters concerning whole community were not decided by metropolitan or by the archdeacon but by the general assembly.

17

THE FAITH AND COMMUNION OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS

The faith the St Thomas Christians practised and the communion which they had with the Chaldean Patriarch were seen differently by the Portuguese and through them the European writers. Western missionaries propagated in Europe a false notion of the faith and communion of St Thomas Christians. According to them St Thomas Christians got faith from apostle St Thomas. But later they abandoned their catholic faith and accepted the Nestorian heretical doctrines because of their relation with the Church of the East. Thus they broke

the communion with the Roman Pontiff. After several hundred years, Alexis Menesis, the Archbishop of Goa convoked the Synod of Diamper in 1599 and brought them back to the Roman Catholic faith and under the obedience to pope. This is the title of the book *Jornada* by Antonia Gouvea published soon after the Council. *Jornada* in Portuguese means journey; journey of archbishop Menesis in Malabar before the Synod of Diamper.

In the second part of this book we find in clear terms that the archbishop of Goa brought St Thomas Christians to the obedience of supreme Roman Pontiff. The publication of this book and its translation and circulation in Europe created a false idea in the west that the St Thomas Christians were heretics and schismatics before this synod. With the erection of the diocese of Goa in 1533 the Portuguese began this accusation of Nestorianism. In 1558 when Goa was elevated an archdiocese the accusations were intensified. In 1600 Angamaly, the metropolitan See of St Thomas Christians was declared a Portuguese Padrado See. Political motives were behind these acts.

i. True Catholic Faith

St Thomas Christians who had origin from Apostle Thomas was an independent church and not a daughter church of the Persian church or a branch of the same. They got true catholic faith directly from St Thomas. Only years after, they depended on the Church of the East and that too is only for the appointment of the bishops. They never became an integral part of Persian church and vice versa. Theirs was an autonomous church administered by an archdeacon with the assistance of the general assembly. They preserved the true catholic faith and spiritual heritage which they had inherited from St Thomas, and faithfully handed over to the generations. It is true that they benefited from the ministry of the Chaldean bishops.

The doctrinal position and theological vision of the St Thomas Christians could not always be identified with those of the Church of the East. Many European writers acknowledged the fact that St Thomas Christians always professed true catholic faith. Fr Francis Dionysio, the rector of the Jesuit seminary, Kochi in 1978 wrote about the true faith of St Thomas Christians.

ii. Real Communion with the Roman Church

St Thomas Christians were always in full communion with the Catholic Church. There exists no sentence of ex-communication of St Thomas Christians from the part of the Roman Church. We also do not find any document of reunion to the Catholic Church. It means that the St Thomas Christians were never ex-communicated nor reunited. But the communion couldnot have always been expressed through communication because of the political and ecclesiastical circumstances. The communion with the Roman pontiff cannot be identified with communication. Communion need not be always expressed through communications.

There is a Latin principle '*Nemo tenetur ad impossibile*'. According to this principle St Thomas Christians were not obliged to manifest the communion through the mutual exchange of letters or other means of communication as far as it was impossible. St Thomas Christians were not only simply Catholics but also the Roman Catholics, in full and explicit communion with the Roman Pontiff before the synod of Diamper. The *Travancore State Manual*, an important source book of Kerala history, calls St Thomas Christians as R C S C (Roman Catholic Syrian Christians) and the Latins as R C L C (Roman Catholic Latin Christians).

The only accusation the western missionaries made were about certain errors in some Syriac books found among Syrian Christians. These Syriac books were not theirs; they were of the

bishops who brought from Persia. These books thus do not reflect or determine the faith of St Thomas Christians. The westerners accused Nestorian errors in the books because of their misunderstanding and terminological confusions due to a different language, Syriac.

Following the middle ages in the beginning of the modern period the western ecclesiology was a militant, monarchic and triumphalist one. According to the western missionaries the Catholic Church was the Latin Church and there was place only for Latin rite and Latin jurisdiction. For them Latin Church was the perfect church, Latin rite the only pure rite and Latin jurisdiction the authentic jurisdiction. Therefore the western missionaries could not accept anything non catholic because non catholic is considered always heretical. That was a tendency to conform everything to the Trent Council.

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SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE OF ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Customs and practices reveal the identity of a community. Christianity has made many adaptations and cultural identifications in India. ‘Hindu in culture, Christian in faith and Oriental in worship’ is an apt expression to denote the Indian Christians of the Pre-Portuguese period.

i. The Community Organization

Though the St Thomas Christians were under different local kings geographically they were one community under the archdeacon. The ‘metropolitan-archdeacon combination rule’ was the speciality

of this community. Privileges from the kings show that Syrian communities had autonomy in the administration of justice. The ecclesiastical head was in charge of civil matters also. But naturally, since the bishop was a foreigner, a local leader, i.e., the archdeacon was in charge of temporal affairs.

Some historians refer to the existence of a Christian royal family identified as *Villarvattam* royal family among the St Thomas Christians. But it became extinct before the arrival of Portuguese. Some writers are of the opinion that Udayamperoor was the residence of this royal family. They are of the mind that after the decline of *Villarvattom* royal family the kings of Kochi came to rule over the Christians.

ii. Social Status

The belief is that St Thomas converted the high class or the Brahmins. St Thomas Christians were known as *Nazrani Mapilas* or noble Christians. They had been granted many privileges by different local rulers such as to ride elephants, use palanquins, construct roofed gates, sit before kings on carpets, use day-lamps etc. These privileges were given written on copper plates. These copper plate grants show their high rank in society, their role in the trade, their high moral standard and acceptance by the local rulers. To preserve the dignity the Christians never touch a person of lower caste, not even a Nair. It was the belief that the touch of Christians would purify the vessels, wells and other objects that are polluted by the low castes. Brahmins and kings used to give residence to Christians near their houses.

iii. Privileges

Privileges were given in written documents or in the form of copper plates. The four important copper plates are those of Thomas of Cana, Iravikorthan and two Quilon plates. They give firm guarantee

of the grants given by kings to the Christians. In history books we read that the Syrian Christians were granted seventy two privileges.

iv. Festivals

Christians also celebrated the festivals of the nation like Onam and Vishu. Processions were very common during festivals and feasts. Many of these practices were common to both Hindus and Christians like *muttukuda*, *panchavadhyam*, *venchamaram*, lighted candles, decorated elephants etc. *Margamkali* was an adaptation of Brahmin *yatrakkali*. During feast days Christian girls used to perform *margamkali* around the lighted lamp called *nilavilakku*.

v. Occupations

Mar Thoma Nazranis were very hard working; they cleared the forests and hill tops, drained the marshy lands and turned them agriculture fields. According to the Portuguese writers all the pepper was in the hands of the Thomas Christians and most of the pepper which was exported to Portugal was given by them. They were mainly agriculturists. They were not only competent in pepper cultivation but also in other types of plantations. Together with agriculture Mar Thoma Christians were also good at trade.

Like the Nairs St Thomas Christians were also good in military service. They were excellent soldiers and warriors. Gouvea writes that St Thomas Christians rarely eat meat but they are fat and strong men and they were the best warriors. They went about with swords and shields. They were very loyal to the kings and they fought for kings at the time of war. The destiny of war of a king is determined on the basis of the participation of Christians in the war. As reward they got plenty of lands from kings. Christian women remained at home and did the household works as the women of higher class. Monserrate, the Portuguese writer says that these people are of high rank and greatly reputed, well formed and of good behaviour.

vi. Administration of Justice and Punishment

The yogam (assembly) had the power to decide over the cases and punishments over their subjects. In accordance with the gravity of errors it would be punished by Parish, Regional or General *yogams*. Civil case was decided by bishops and archdeacons, although in some places criminal cases were taken to kings.

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CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES RELATED WITH FAMILY LIFE

Mar Thomas Christians led a life centred on Christian faith. Their life at home was regulated by Indian customs and Christian beliefs.

i. Rites related with Birth

Christians have adopted many rites of the Hindus in family life. The *Travancore State Manual* describes the *Jatakarma* or birth-ceremony. The mixture of a small quantity of honey and ghee is put into the mouth of child by his father with golden spoon by reciting Vedic hymns. This Hindu practice was well adapted by Christians also. But the Christians used the words *Maran Iso Mishiha* and also child's name is uttered into the ears of new born baby. This is called *Namakarama* or naming ceremony. In this ceremony, on the day of baptism food which is blessed by priest is given to child and declared the baptismal name before going to church for baptism.

Vidyarambham is done at the age of five. Using the child's ring-finger the teacher draws a cross and writes some letters on rice

spread on the floor in front of the Mar Thoma Cross. The teachers were often Hindus who taught the forefathers the real Christian faith.

ii. Dress and Ornaments

The dress of Thomas Christians both men and women is modest. But during feasts they used to wear, especially women, solemn dress. The dress pattern manifests nobility and modesty of women. Women used to wear different ornaments like *mçkkâmôtiram*, *kammal patakkamâla*, *vala*, *tala*, *ealas*, *aranjânam* etc. The dress code of their forefathers was really a Christianized form of the Indian ways. They took up the traditions of a noble group and they followed those traditions. It was very helpful in having good relations with other communities.

iii. Food

Boiled rice and curries are the main dishes of Malabar Christians. Most of the curries are of vegetables and it consisted of a mixture of herbs and spices. Meat was used rarely, but they never used flesh of pork. They eat with fingers and they used plantain leaves as plates. They crouch on long mats for having food. Some edibles especially *neyappam*, *aini*, *kozhukkotta* were special to Syrian Christians.

iv. Cleanliness

All men and women on Wednesday and Sundays smear their head with oil and wash themselves at river. They have many ablutions and purifications. Before going to the church they had to take bath and wear new clothes.

v. Architecture of houses

They are considered a noble caste, but different from other

castes. Houses are built usually around the church. The houses were made of wooden walls and the roof is thatched with plaited palm leaves. In villages the houses of St Thomas Christians faced the east or north but in town this was not the usual custom. Thomas Christians followed the ritual of choosing the place for the well and cow-shed very close to house. The plantations of different kinds serve the house for the food items.

vi. Death Customs

They do not have the sacrament of anointing. When the death is imminent a priest is brought home to bless the sick person and a mixture of soil from the tomb of St Thomas at Mylapore and blessed water were given. After the death, body is washed in warm water and no food was prepared at home until the burial is over. After the burial the priest should bless the house of the deceased. According to the degree of affinity relatives mourn over the dead from seven days to one year. *Pula Adiyanthiram* and *Chatham* were also observed.

vii. Marriage Customs

Child marriage was a usual custom among the Nazranis in earlier period. The parents choose the partners. Maternal uncles had a great role in conducting their marriage. There was an active preparation before the marriage. The custom of *pennukânal* was adapted from Hindu tradition. The rite of sending the ring is to seek the consent of bride groom and bride. The free consent of bride is expressed by accepting the ring. If she denies the ring then consent of bride groom is not expressed. Priest has a greater role in the marriage and the marriage is seen not just as a work of the couples but of the entire church. Other customs related with marriage are *chantham chartal*, *mailanchiyidal* and *maduram kodukkal*. On the day of marriage before going to the church couples would receive blessings from the parents and elders.

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LITURGICAL AND SACRAMENTAL LIFE IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

i. The role of bishops and priests

Malabar Church adopted the styles of East Syrian Church with necessary modifications. Bishop was the centre of ecclesial life. But the archdeacon had a great role in the community. Clergy is designed for the community and for which they have been ordained. Transfer of priests was not common. The bishops coming from Persia were the spiritual heads of the community. Archdeacon who is called *Jathikku Karthavian* was the head of community. His title was 'Archdeacon of All-India'. According to Joseph Maria Sebastiani archdeacon is like the prince and head of the Christian community. A Portuguese document 'Noticias do Reyno do Malabar' reports that archdeacon was considered the first among the seventy-two princes of Perumpadappu (the kingdom of Kochi) and he has the right to crown the king. Archdeacon was the political, social and religious leader of the St Thomas Christians.

There is no clear evidence whether priests were also coming with bishops from Persia. They were known as *Cathenars* or *Casanars* or *Qasisa*. All the ecclesiastics below priests are known as *Samas* or *Chemas*. The St Thomas Christian clergy were married but were not marrying after the death of their first wife. In Malabar church there were eleven types of minor orders. Priests were ordained for parishes and not for diocese. Priests had a long loose trousers and long loose gown with wide sleeves. They usually have beard and used loose outer caps when going out.

ii. Divine Office

St Thomas Christians had great veneration towards cross. Their life is centred on the Liturgical celebrations, divine offices and sacraments. The ecclesiastical language was always Syriac. As the Malabar Church is dependent on the Chaldean Church for hierarchical and liturgical matters, she followed the traditions of Chaldean Church in reciting the divine offices also. Priests are normally attached to church and their main duty is to recite divine offices in the choir. But it is not obligatory for priests to recite the liturgy of hours. People also took part in the prayers. These prayers included psalms and antiphons and are divided according to seasons and hours. They started the prayer by giving kiss of peace to one another by receiving from the eldest priest and then pass to one another. They assembled in the church before sunset and recited psalms.

iii. Sacraments

St Thomas Christians had the sacraments of Baptism, Ordination and Eucharist. Confirmation and Extreme unction were not known to them. Baptism usually took place after forty days after the birth. There were a number of customs related with birth and baptism. They have also no idea of Confession. In the church there were certain practices of forgiveness of sins and repentance. For serious sins they were excommunicated from the community. Then they could not participate in the prayers in the church and his house would not be visited by the priest until the penance pronounced by the *yogam* be completed. A proper remuneration is also to be paid for the reentry into community. The rite of private confession is usually called '*pizhamoolal*'. Though the sacrament of anointing is unknown to them they were preparing the sick and the dying person for imminent death.

Marriage is considered more a social ceremony than a sacrament. The bride and bridegroom were taken to church through a solemn procession. Before the *talikettu* consent is again asked by priest to both parties. *Thali* is hung upon a thread which symbolizes the spirit. The thread is taken out of *Manthrakody*. Christian *Tali* made of gold is different from Hindu *Tali* by the cross. The cross is made of twenty one small gold beads. After the death of husband or the wife, *Tali* is given to the church. There are a number of customs related with marriage.

Eucharistic celebration was frequent among the Malabar Christians but not daily. Before the celebration they had to fast. As they used the salted bread for the sacrament they consecrated sufficient bread for all those who were in church. Long sermons were made by priest after the Gospel. It helped the people to live according to the traditions and in pure faith. They exchanged peace at the beginning of Anaphora. The kiss of peace was given each other by the command of deacon. Holy Communion was in both species. Everybody present in the church could receive the communion.

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MORAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

Life is the expression of one's faith. Faith of a community is portrayed in its different customs and practices, belief and worship. As ancient a community is, so many and varied are its customs and practices. Many of them are today irrelevant or even insignificant. Her different practices tell us what sort of spiritual and moral life their forefathers had in the past.

i. Honesty and simplicity

Expression of faith should not be confined to certain religious ceremonies, pious practices or liturgical celebrations. The manners, appearance and the behavioral patterns of a person tell who he is and what his faith is. When we study the different practices or customs of the St Thomas Christians we can find a number of qualities in their personal lives which make explicit their faith. Ananthakrishna Ayyer in his book *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* write that the Syrian Christians are a fine race of people and are mostly like the Nayars in their physical characteristics. According to him, the early converts to Christianity and their descendants retain all the characteristics of their forefathers.⁴⁶ It is the general view that the Nayars are in a better position among the Hindus with regard to the personal qualities like straightforwardness, honesty, decency etc. The Syrian Christians, therefore, abound in such qualities is the mind of many writers on the St Thomas Christians of Malabar.

ii. Respect towards elders and courtesy towards strangers

The early Portuguese writers like Monserrate, Penteado etc are of the opinion that the Syrians are very courteous towards the strangers and foreigners. The way the Malabar Christians received the Portuguese might have induced them to hold such a view. They remark that the Syrians show respect towards the parents and elders. By elders is meant teachers, governors and spiritual leaders. Showing respect to others is so common that they are particular not to sit in the presence of their parents, seniors, elder brothers or superiors of any kind. In their assemblies none speak except their superiors or if asked by them. These courteous manners and respect towards the authorities helped them to keep peace and unity in the land.⁴⁷

iii. Modesty in dress and simplicity in life

The St Thomas Christians, especially their women, were modest in their deportment and which added to their qualities is the opinion of many writers. Gouvea, the Portuguese historian remarks that women are extremely honest both in life and in their dress.⁴⁸ This indeed helped them to have a high moral standard in their life and practice. As an instance when they go to the Church or pay visit to their bishops they cover themselves with a long white cloth which is drawn over the head and reaches to the ground leaving nothing but the face to be seen. Their dress and deportment correspond very much with their character. Their women do not eat with the men; wives and husbands are not an exception to this. A woman does not address or speak of her husband using the latter's name. In the house women always keep to their quarters. They never appear before men-guests unless they are their near relatives. Women of higher castes do not move about freely or visit the houses of others unless they are her nearest relatives.

iv. Sincerity and truthfulness in business

The St Thomas Christians in former times were mostly merchants trading with foreign countries on a large scale. They were also considered equal to the Jews who were also then traders here. The reason for granting a number of high privileges to the Syrians may be the services they rendered to the country in the field of business. Service to the nation was the important purpose of business. By trade they were doing real service to the country. Profit was only a secondary motive. These merchants were considered the protectors of the land. They were giving clear details of their business accounts to the state and Church authorities.

The early Portuguese writers were of the opinion that the Syrian community was a flourishing community, whose main occupation was business. But their prosperity is mainly due to the

religious tolerance of the native governments and the protection and patronage of the early Hindu rulers of Kerala as is evidenced by the copper-plate grants. The Church was granted land as gift to the Church. Certain merchant families were allowed to settle there to conduct business. Business, a matter of service to the nation, was promoted both by the State and the Church.

v. Fidelity to and regard of truth

The most essential virtue needed in one's political life or in one's relationship with the country is the regard to truth which is rarely seen today. St Thomas Christians were always esteemed and patronized by their rulers as much for their general fidelity and regard to truth as for their skill and military prowess. Most of the early Portuguese writers accept the fact that the Syrians are opened to truth and they have much regard to truth.

vi. Loyalty to the king and to the nation

It is a well-documented fact that the St Thomas Christians were always loyal subjects of the rulers of Cochin and Travancore. It is clear in the words of Gouvea, who writes that although the Christians of St Thomas are subjects of gentile kings in whose lands they live, and pay them their taxes, and obey their rulers and observe their laws".⁴⁹ When the Portuguese reached India, the local Christians received them cordially and remained loyal to their authority. That may be the reason why they presented the red staff mounted with gold and three silver bells of last Christian ruler as marks of submission to them. Though the Syrians received no compensation from them, they still remained loyal to the Portuguese authorities. St Vincent Maria writes that he was highly esteemed as a king by the Syrians. He is of the opinion that the ambition and intolerance of the Jesuits really provoked the Syrians to turn against them.

As loyal subjects of the kings in whose territories they lived they took up arms in times of war. The success in war of a king often depended on the number of his Thomas Christian subjects. This made the non-Christian kings build and endow Churches with land tax free. The Thomas Christians rendered their obedience to their kings directly and immediately with no regard for intermediary officers. Many served the local kings as ministers and counselors and the kings were pleased with them all. The reason of showing so much consideration to the St Thomas Christians of Malabar from the part of the state authorities is the fact that they were a trustworthy people.

vii. Peace-loving and dedicated to the work

They were engaged in three principal ones: agriculture, trade and military service. That the St Thomas Christians were predominantly agriculturists is amply supported by many documents. Pepper-growing was almost their sole monopoly. In none of their reports we find any allegation against the Christians of Malabar with regard to their occupations is a proof that they were loyal to their work and enterprises. Simplicity in life and deep trust in God are their virtues, which are natural qualities of agriculturists, is attested by many writers.

viii. Nobility of character

St Thomas Christians have always had a very high social status. In ancient times when rules of caste were rigid they were considered equal to the Hindu nobility; hence the appellation *Nazrani Mapila* (noble person). They enjoyed a number of privileges which were testimonies of the high position they had in the society. One can normally ask why the kings were so generous to the Christians of Malabar in ancient times. They were a higher caste and at the same time they lived up to their status. Virtues make a man noble. If so, the virtuous life of the Syrians kept them in higher status.

ix. Responsible to God and man

While describing the culture of the Christians of Malabar the Portuguese writers remark that the St Thomas Christians rarely eat meat and they always shun beef. Alcoholic drinks were considered unbecoming to their high social status. It is important to note that they were always trying to keep up their standard by leading a life proper to their status. As loyal subjects of the kings in whose territories they lived they were ready to take up arms for the nation in times of necessity. They showed their obedience to the kings by rendering this military service.

22

ECCLESIAL LIFE

i. Attachment to clergy and parish

The priests and bishops enjoyed much prestige and had powerful influence over the faithful. The priests were from respectable families. They were maintained by the parish and by the generous offerings of the faithful. The bishops though foreigners were enthusiastically received by the Christians of Malabar. The great respect they showed to their clergy especially their prelates was a wonder to the Portuguese. The ceremonious reception they were receiving was often quoted in many of their writings. The reason was that they (the Persian bishops) were ready to accept the Church and its customs and practices as they were. They did not really intervene unnecessarily in the affairs of the Malabar Church.

ii. Punishments for the violations of laws

For the transgressions of the laws there were strict sanctions. Portuguese historian Dionysio gives us the following information as far as punishments are concerned:

The crimes against the state were punished by the king of each country; the crimes against the commandments of the Church were punished by the bishop, if they were grave; if not, by the cathenar and the parish council composed of the principal Christians of the place. The punishment usually consisted in paying some money to the church, and when the culprit refused to pay it, they excluded him from the church, and if still refused, he was excommunicated and the other Christians were asked not to communicate with him.⁵⁰

When the offender is a priest he too was punished according to the prescriptions of the Church. Whether the fear of the punishments was the reason behind the strict observance of laws of the Church is a point to be discussed.

iii. A church-centered life

Life of the Christians was church centered was the opinion of many writers. The church leaders, parish church and the parish system were all beloved to them. They have great reverence to matters concerning church and religion. The preparations to go the church and their comportment in the church etc are expressions of their faith. Before going to the church the Christians washed their bodies and put on freshly washed clothes. The belief behind this was that only those who were clean of body and clothes were worthy of entering the church.

On their way to the church they would not allow themselves to be touched by persons of any other caste. At the entrance of the church they washed their feet from a well and such wells could be

seen at the entrance of every church. On entering the church they made a profound inclination of their heads, the heads touching the floor. When the prayers were over they went to kiss the hands of the priest. They all seem to be very religious with a great composure and the same they do to children, by bringing those in the laps placing before the prelate. These practices though they seem irrelevant, convey us great meaning and significance.

iv. Lovers of fasts

The attachment of the St Thomas Christians to their father St Thomas was clear in the fact that Octave of the Easter (New Sunday) was their most important feast of the year. Next important one was July 3. The early Portuguese accounts show that the Christians of Malabar were also celebrating November 21 to commemorate the arrival of St Thomas in Malabar. Malabar Christians were having a number of days of fast. They had fasts on lent, advent, fifty days fast of apostles, the fast of Ninivites, the fast before the nativity of our lady, the fast before the feast of apostles Peter and Paul, the fast of Wednesday and Friday, the fast of twelve Fridays after Christmas, the fast of Elias, the fast of virgins, the fast of transfiguration, vigil feast of Nativity of our Lord, Pentecost-vigil fast, and vigil-fast of Ascension. On the fast days they abstain from meat, fish, extracts of milk, wine, chewing betel leaves and from conjugal-rights.

The Thomas Christians took their fasts very earnestly is attested by many writers. Dionysio calls them lovers of fasting; Carneiro remarked that they kept them perfectly; according to Joseph the Indian they did not take food from Good Friday to Easter. On fast days they ate (as principal meal) only after sunset. Monserrate writes that they did not consider the fast broken by eating *Kanji* (rice porridge) in the morning nor by eating fruits; and they even ate rice twice in their ignorance.

v. Sincerity of faith and practice

The Christians of St Thomas were devout people, very faithful in the practice of religion is evident from many Portuguese testimonies of the 16th century. Some writers remark that the Thomas Christians as a whole were leading a fairly good Christian life to their knowledge in the circumstances in which they were. They frequented the churches and sacraments as far as it was possible to do so, exhibited special devotion toward Mary and St Thomas, venerated the Cross, made pilgrimages, fed the poor, scrupulously observed the fasts prescribed by their laws. In the 16th century when the Portuguese forced them to begin Lent on Ash Wednesday only, and to eat fish and drink wine during Lent they ran away from the Portuguese settlements. Hence we have a good proof for the sincerity of their faith and practice. There are also references that the people take seriously their prayers at home and they used to pray thrice at home: morning, noon and evening when they hear the bell-ringing from their parish churches.

vi. Practice of brotherly love

Attached to each church there were a large number of clerics, whose main occupation was to say the divine office in the choir. On Sunday mornings and Saturday evenings, so also on feast days all the people gathered in the church to join the priests in the recital of the office; on other days a few attended. The custom might have been different in different localities. Extending peace one another beginning from the priest by touching his hands was a beautiful practice prevalent in the community shows the Christian brotherly love.

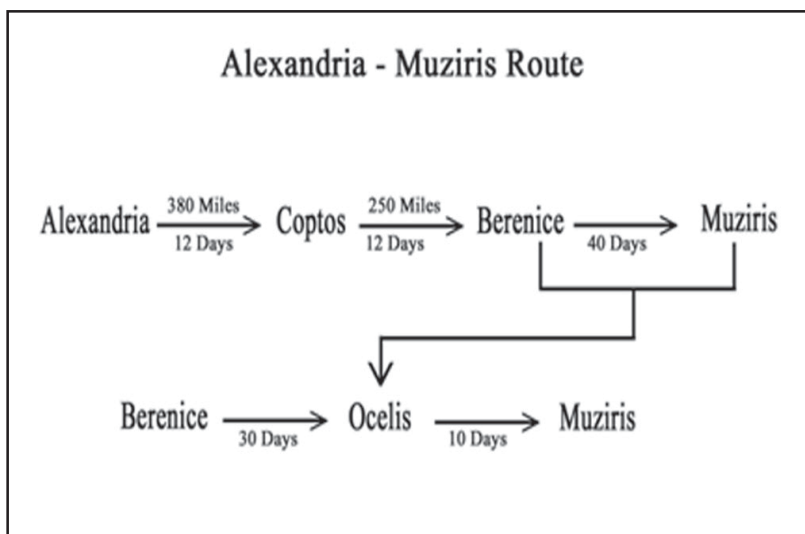
A very good instance to show the practice of Christian love is narrated in *Jornada* by Gouvea:

All of them gather themselves on certain days in the porches of the churches, and they dine in common arranging a dinner, or the management of the church, or some rich men who make a

vow to the church to give this dinner, in which the rich and the poor eat equally, and they call it *nercha*, and in the funerals or solemn rituals which they hold for the dead, they give the same dinners which they call *chatam*, observing still in this the customs of the Christians of the primitive church.⁵¹

vii. Sacraments, means of expressions of faith

All the sacraments are expressions of faith of a community or a Church. Eucharistic sacrifice which they call Qurbana was an excellent expression of their faith. The Syrian Christians had the practice of communicating in double species, but the Portuguese could not accept it calling it an error. Together with Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion were administered. They believed that only with the reception of Holy Spirit and acknowledging the communion with the community through Holy Communion they become full members of the Church. The god-parents were considered vigilant guardians of faith and purity of the child and they shared with the parents the grave responsibilities of the Christian education.



Marriage was regarded as a religious act of the very highest kind. It is instituted by God and is subject to the Divine Law and therefore cannot for that reason be rescinded. It is natural in purpose, but divine in origin. The Thomas Christians on that reason gave a religious nature to the marriage and considered it indissoluble. There was in no case divorce among the Syrians. Though widows can remarry, very seldom do those of any respectable family with children think of a second marriage.



MODERN PERIOD

23

BEGINNING OF PORTUGUESE RULE IN INDIA

In the beginning of the modern period, i.e. in the middle of the 15th century, the two Christian countries like Portugal and Spain started discovering and conquering new lands and peoples. The renaissance spirit of that time gave them an adventurous mind to undertake maritime explorations and geographical discoveries. These two good catholic countries of Europe received all support and patronage from pope, the then important sovereign of Europe. In the history of Europe, in the medieval period, the popes were exercising great power over the Christian rulers of Europe.

i. Discovery of new sea-route to India in 1498

The Portuguese enterprise began in India with the discovery of a sea route to India by Vasco da Gama. He landed in Kappad, near Kozhikode on 21 May 1498. After having established friendly relationship with the king of Kozhikode he went to Kodungalloor

and entered into a treaty with its king. On 20 November 1498 he left Kodungalloor and on 10 July reached Lisbon. The purpose of this first expedition was not evangelization but to 'discover' India and to promote the commercial interests of Portugal through the trade. Following Gama, Pedro Cabral and his men including a number of Franciscan missionaries arrived at Kozhikode on 30 August 1500. Following a conflict with the king of Kozhikode Cabral and his men sailed to Kochi. Joao do Nova followed Cabral in 1501 bringing with him more Franciscan missionaries.

In 1502 Vasco da Gama had a second arrival in Kerala and in 1503 came Francesco do Albuquerque. In 1503 Portuguese built a fortress in Kochi, one in Kodungalloor in 1504 and another one in Kozhikode in 1513. Kochi was the centre of all Portuguese activity in Kerala and the seat of the Portuguese Viceroy from 1503 until it was transferred to Goa in 1530. It was in 1510 that Alfonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa.⁵² In 1530 Portuguese Viceroy Nuno da Cunha transferred the Portuguese administrative capital from Kochi to Goa. From that time, the central govt. consisting of the Viceroy (governor), chancellor, secretary and chief justice, was settled in Goa. The number of Christians increased day by day thanks to the policy of encouraging inter-religious marriages and the conversion of non-Christians effected by moral force and effective charitable and social activities. Christianity gradually extended also to the neighbouring places like Kanara Coast, Chaul, Diu and Daman. Gradually Goa became the chief ecclesiastical centre not only of India, but also of the whole Portuguese East.

ii. Portuguese Padroado

Portuguese ecclesiastical authority in India is known as Portuguese Padroado Jurisdiction. Padroado is a Portuguese word meaning patronage or right of patronage. Portuguese Padroado means the privileges and rights given to the Portuguese kings in the

administration of church matters by the popes. In other words Portuguese padroado means the sum of concessions granted to Portugal as a recognition of its role in the missionary enterprises in the far off countries newly discovered. This right or privilege is based on the recognition of the Church towards her benefactors.⁵³ The Portuguese kings therefore have received authority from the popes to evangelize the peoples, to erect churches, to found new dioceses and to take care of the souls in their territories. It was also the privilege of the Portuguese king to present before pope the persons to be appointed and consecrated bishops.

These privileges and rights (also some obligations) were granted to the Portuguese kings through a number of papal decrees (bulls). The first bull in this regard was issued by Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) on 18 June 1452, called *Dum diversas*. This papal document granted the king of Portugal and his successors the full authority to invade, conquer and subjugate the lands of the infidels and to possess their temporal goods.⁵⁴ The same pope has issued another bull called *Romanus Pontifex* on 8 January 1454. The rights and concessions to the king of Portugal and to his successors were further extended through the bulls *Inter caetera* of March 13, 1456 by Pope Callixtus III (145-1458), *Clara devotionis* of August 21, 1472 by Sixtus IV (1471-1484), *Cum sicut* of March 26, 1500 by Alexander VI (1492-1503) and *Sedes apostolica* of July 4, 1505 by Julius II (1503-1513). The royal patronage was confirmed by Pope Leo X with two encyclicals: *Dum fidei constantiam* of June 7, 1514 and *Praecelsae devotionis* of November 3, 1514. Thus the king of Portugal using the Padroado Jurisdiction began to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction in all the Portuguese territories already conquered or yet to be conquered.

The right of patronage carried with it a religious monopoly of Portugal in Asia and Africa with the grave consequences of forbidding the entrance of any missionary in those territories who

was not sent by Portugal. Besides Franciscans (1500), Jesuits (1542), Dominicans (1548), Augustinians (1572) started missionary work in India in the Portuguese territories. Francis Xavier reached Goa in the beginning of May 1542.

iii. Portuguese dioceses in India

Pope Leo X (1513-1521) with the Bull *Pro excellenti* dated 12 June 1514 erected the diocese of Funchal in the Madeira Islands as a suffragan diocese of the archdiocese of Lisbon (capital city of Portugal) and placed the whole of India under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Funchal. The diocese of Funchal comprised, in addition to India, all the other Asian and the African territories under the Portuguese patronage. On 31 January 1533 Pope Clement VII (1523-34) raised the diocese of Funchal to the rank of an archdiocese and on 3 November 1534 declared Goa a diocese, the first Latin diocese in India, as a suffragan of Funchal with the Apostolic Bull *Aequam reputamus*.⁵⁵ The territory of Goa stretched from the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to China in East Asia.

On 4 February 1558 by the apostolic constitution *Etsi sancta* Pope Paul IV (1555-1559) elevated Goa to the status of an archdiocese and by *Pro excellenti* erected the dioceses of Kochi in India and Malacca in Malaysia as suffragan sees. The diocese of Kochi included the Malabar Coast (excluding the territory of the St Thomas Christians), Coromandal Coast, Madura Mission, Karnatic Mission and Ceylon. (The diocese of Malacca included Molucas, China and Japan). The first bishop of Kochi was Jorge Temudo. On 4 August 1600 Pope Clement VIII with the Bull *In supremo* declared Angamaly a diocese (for the Mar Thomas Christians).⁵⁶ On the recommendation of the king Philip of Portugal, on 9 January 1606 Pope Paul V (1605-1621) bifurcated the diocese of Kochi and erected the diocese of Mylapore. The diocese of Mylapore consisted of Coromandal Coast, Bengal, Orissa and Burma.

The king of Portugal was not only the political authority but the supreme ecclesiastical authority in the Portuguese territories. The erection of dioceses, appointment of bishops, nomination of parish priests and missionaries, as well as the whole ecclesiastical governance ultimately depended on him. Goa was the capital of Portuguese political and ecclesiastical empire in the East. The territory and jurisdiction of the archdiocese of Goa extended to all the territories conquered by the Portuguese in Asia and Africa. In course of time, in addition to the three dioceses in India (Kochi, Angamaly and Mylapore) and the diocese of Malacca in Malaysia (1558), the dioceses of Macao in China (1576), Funai in Japan (1588), Mozambique in East Africa (1612) and Peking and Nanking in China (1690) were erected outside India as suffragans of the archdiocese of Goa. During this time the St Thomas Christians were ruled by the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction centering the diocese of Angamaly (from 1608 onwards Kodungallor), but dependent on the archbishop of Goa.

24

THE PSEUDO-SYNOD OF DIAMPER (1599)

i. Last Persian bishops

When the Portuguese arrived in Kerala the metropolitan of St Thomas Christians was the Persian bishop Mar Thomas. In 1504 the Chaldean patriarch Eliah V sent four more bishops named John, Jaballah, Denha and Jacob to Kerala. Of them John was intended for Kerala and the other three as bishops of China, Mahacina and Dabag respectively. That time there were 2,00,000 Christians in Kerala under the metropolitan distributed in the kingdoms of Kannoore, Travancore, Kochi, Kodungalloor and Kollam. A joint letter of these bishops sent

to the patriarch in 1504 gives a lot of information regarding the situation of the Malabar church of that time and the way how the St Thomas Christians welcomed the Portuguese as their own brethren. In the coming years following the death of Jaballah, Denha and John the other two bishops Thomas and Jacob ruled the St Thomas Christians as bishops Kollam and Kodungalloor. Kodungalloor was that time the centre of Portuguese authority. The relation between the Portuguese authorities in Kodungalloor and the Mar Jacob the bishop of the St Thomas Christians residing at Kodungalloor was very cordial. In 1524 Mar Jacob even wrote a letter to the Portuguese King Joao III.

But gradually the relationship between the Portuguese missionaries and the Persian bishops began to lose the ties. There were a number of reasons for the same: Forced mixed marriages from the part of the Portuguese civil authorities, creation of the dioceses of Goa and Kochi, negative attitude of certain Portuguese missionaries, dislike of the Persian bishops, colonial attitude of the time, imposition of Latin practices etc. It was in the second decade of the 16th century that the relationship between the Portuguese and the Mar Thoma Christians began to suffer. Mar Jacob died in 1550.

ii. Background of the synod

After an interval of six years the Chaldean patriarch Abdiso sent two more bishops named Joseph and Elias to Kerala. But on their way to Kerala they were detained in Goa by the Portuguese authorities. After a period of suffering though both arrived in Kerala in 1558 Mar Elias died. Mar Joseph had already been appointed the bishop of St Thomas Christians by the Goan Portuguese authority. But soon the Portuguese authorities turned against him. He was removed from office and deported to Portugal. Though there was a comeback there was a second deportation also, but to Rome where he died in 1569.

Mar Abraham was the next bishop sent to Kerala by the Chaldean patriarch who reached Kerala in 1563. Out of fear of the Portuguese he took another way to Kerala. Though he was invited to the Provincial synod of Goa of 1575 he declined. While in rule in Kerala Mar Abraham was in good terms with the Jesuits. In 1583 he convoked a synod at Angamaly with the help of Jesuits. As part of that he allowed the Jesuits to start a seminary at Vaipicotta. During all this time he was communicating everything with Rome and Portugal. On 9th June 1585 was the third Goan Council in which Mar Abraham took part as is demanded by Pope Pius IV. The third session of this council was fully on the Church of the St Thomas Christians. 10 decrees were passed in this session.

Mar Abraham had to agree with the same. All these decrees were intended to bring the Malabar Church under the Portuguese padroado rule. Fr Francis Roz SJ was appointed his assistant. Mar Abraham was really against this appointment because he had already the plan to appoint the Archdeacon as his assistant and successor. Accusation of Nestorian ideas on the bishop was another reason for the drift between the Bishop and the Portuguese authorities. According to a letter dated 7th January 1595 the Goan archbishop was entrusted by Pope Clement VIII to intervene in the Malabar church to see whether any heretical doctrine is in circulation in the church and whether the metropolitan Mar Abraham himself a Nestorian heretic. The Goan archbishop was again asked to check the arrival of any heretical bishop from Persia in Kerala claiming the office of metropolitan. In another letter dated January 21, 1597 Pope Clement VIII has written that in case of death of Mar Abraham a vicar apostolic appointed by the Goan archbishop would be the administrator of the church of St Thomas Christians. Mar Abraham died before this letter reached Kochi. Following the death of the metropolitan as it was the custom the archdeacon began to function as the administrator which in turn was totally against the Portuguese project.

iii. Death of Mar Abraham

The death of Mar Abraham, the last Chaldean metropolitan, in January 1597 was a good occasion for the realization of the Portuguese project of separating the St Thomas Christians from the Chaldean jurisdiction. It gave them also a good chance to incorporate the archdiocese of Angamaly in the ecclesiastical province of Goa as its suffragan. After the death of Mar Abraham, according to the ancient custom archdeacon George of the cross began to govern the Church as administrator.

As soon as Dom Alexis de Menezes, the archbishop of Goa (1595-1610) had received the news of the death of Mar Abraham, decided to go to Malabar for the materialization of the long cherished Portuguese project. According to Menezes three things were important: the nomination of Latin bishop in the archdiocese of Angamaly, the gradual extinction of the Syriac language and the introduction of Latin in its place as well as the reduction of Angamaly to a suffrage of Goa. As a man of the state, Menezes was much devoted to the expansion of the Portuguese empire in India. He could understand that among the St Thomas Christians there were excellent soldiers. He thought of winning them too in subjecting them to the Portuguese ecclesiastical authority.

iv. Preparation of the synod

On 27 December 1598 Menezes set sail from Goa to Malabar. On reaching Malabar in February 1599, as first act he commanded the archdeacon and the priests under the pain of excommunication not to mention the name of the Chaldean patriarch in the Eucharistic celebration and in the Divine Office. He won over the local kings, who were eager to obtain Portuguese support against their rivals, with threats, bribes and heavy presents. He canonically visited the churches, celebrated the sacraments especially Confirmation. Within

four months he ordained to priesthood more than a hundred young men who had no formation, in order to create a group favouring him. Menezes could make the St Thomas Christians obedient to him with the weapon of excommunication. Having thus prepared the ground the archdeacon George of the Cross was constrained under threat of excommunication to subscribe to the ten points prepared by Menezes, among the promise to convoke a council.

The archdeacon had to sign them all as he had no other alternative to ‘save his people’. Thus the archbishop of Goa (a Latin ordinary) forcefully entered the archdiocese of Angamaly (of Eastern Rite) and with the help of the local princes and with the Portuguese civil and military help convoked the pseudo Synod of Diamper from 20 to 26 June 1599, contrary to the norms of the canon law of that time. About 153 priests and 660 lay delegates from the Malabar Church participated. After the synod, the missionaries informed Rome and the West that the St Thomas Christians had been ‘reduced’ to the Catholic faith and ‘brought’ to the obedience of the Roman Pontiff.

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CONSEQUENCES OF THE SYNOD

The synod was intended to bring the St Thomas Christians under the Portuguese authorities. That was the high need of the time. The legislations made in the synod thus were against the St Thomas Christians and their Church. The consequences of the synod were many and desperate.

i. Condemnation of Law of Thomas

The synod condemned the Law of Thomas, which was very dear to the St Thomas Christians. It was declared that the law of Thomas

contained error and heresy. The Law of Thomas, in its original and authentic form, rich in its ecclesiological content and incomprehensible to the western missionaries of that epoch, had nothing to do with any heresy or error. In the profession of faith conducted on the second day of the synod, the St Thomas Christians were obliged to confess that they admit and receive all the customs, rites and ceremonies received and approved of in the Roman Church, in the solemn administration of the said seven sacraments...⁵⁷

ii. Conformity with the Latin Church

The mind of Menezes was to bring the Malabar Church under the Latin Church. Therefore, he tried to conform their rites and ceremonies with the Latin Church. The synod, ‘desiring that in all things this Church may conform herself to the customs of the holy mother, the universal Church of Rome’ made about forty changes in the Eucharistic liturgy. The priests are enjoined to wear Latin vestments in the administration of the holy sacraments.

iii. Suppression of Eastern jurisdiction

It was the intention of Menezes to appoint a Latin bishop for the St Thomas Christians. In the profession of faith conducted on the first day of the synod the St Thomas Christians were made to condemn, reject and anathematize as being a Nestorian heretic and schismatic the Chaldean Catholic patriarch Simon Denha (1581-1600), who had obtained ecclesiastical communion and pallium from Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585). The synod further ordered that this bishopric shall not have any dependence upon the said patriarch of Babylon and prohibited all priests to name the patriarch during any liturgical celebration. The jurisdiction began on 20 December 1599, when Pope Clement VII appointed Francis Ros SJ, as successor to metropolitan Mar Abraham in the St Thomas Christian see of Angamaly. Bishop Ros received Episcopal consecration at Goa on 28 January 1601 and

on 1 May 1601 he reached Angamaly and took possession of the diocese. The Latin jurisdiction continued until the erection of three vicariates and the appointment of native vicars apostolic on 28 July 1896.

iv. Suppression of the metropolitan status of the See of St Thomas

One of the main points of the Portuguese agenda was to suppress the metropolitan status of the See of the St Thomas Christians. In accordance with the Portuguese project, six months after the synod, on 20 December 1599 Pope Clement VIII (1592-1603) suppressed the metropolitan status of the archdiocese of Angamaly, reduced it to the status of a simple diocese and made it a suffragan of the archdiocese of Goa. Pope Clement VIII in the document *In supremo militantis* of 4 August 1600 (extension of the Portuguese patronage) and Pope Paul V (1605-1621) in the bull *Romanus pontifex* of 22 December 1608 (re-establishment of the metropolitan status) explicitly referred to the reduction of the archdiocese of Angamaly to a simple suffragan of Goa.

v. Imposition of Portuguese patronage over the St Thomas Christians

Already the provincial council of Goa in 1575 stipulated that it is convenient that the diocese of the St Thomas Christians be governed by a prelate presented by the king of Portugal and not by the patriarch of Chaldea. The synod of Diamper also made possible the extension of the power of His Majesty the king of Portugal, ‘the only Christian king and lord in India’ over the St Thomas Christians. Conforming to the Portuguese strategy, Pope Clement VIII not only made the archdiocese of the St Thomas Christians a suffragan of the archdiocese of Goa, but also imposed upon it the patronage of the king of Portugal on 4 August 1600.

vi. Angamaly is incorporated in the ecclesiastical province of Goa

The suppression of the metropolitan status of the archdiocese of Angamaly and its incorporation in the ecclesiastical province of Goa as its suffragan under the Portuguese patronage naturally provoked great consternation and scandal among the St Thomas Christians. Several petitions were sent to Rome showing their deep sorrow and bewilderment over such a drastic act and pleading for the restoration of the autonomous metropolitan status. Bishop Francis Ros supported this cause of the St Thomas Christians as he desired to get a metropolitan title. He also wanted to transfer the seat and residence of the bishop from Angamaly to Kodungalloor as it was a Portuguese centre with safe Portuguese fortress. Accordingly in consultation with the king Philip of Portugal Pope Paul V (1605-1621) on 22 December 1608 with the apostolic letter *Romanus Pontifex*, the see of Angamaly was liberated from the metropolitan right of the archdiocese of Goa and reestablished its metropolitan status with all rights and privileges as if it had not been suppressed and it was decided to transfer the see Kodungalloor, which was at that time under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Kochi.

vii. Suppression of All India Jurisdiction

With the apostolic letter *Alias pro parte*, persuaded by the supplications of the king Philip of Portugal, the pope confirmed and ratified the separation and dismemberment of Kodungalloor from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Kochi and the transfer of the seat of the archdiocese of Angamaly to the said city. With the apostolic letters *Cum sicut* of 3 December 1609 pope mandated Menezes, the metropolitan archbishop of Goa, to set definite limits and boundaries for the archdiocese of Angamaly with respect to the diocese of Kochi and Mylapore. With the apostolic letter *Alias postquam* of 6 February 1616, Pope Paul V approved and confirmed the delimitation of the

territory of the archdiocese of Angamaly and the boundaries of the dioceses of Kochi and Mylapore.

viii. Syrian Archdiocese of Angamaly becomes a Portuguese Latin diocese

At the beginning of the 17th century there were only three Latin dioceses in India: the archdiocese of Goa and its suffragans Kochi and Mylapore. With the synod of Diamper the Portuguese exterminated the Eastern jurisdiction in India and imposed Latin jurisdiction and Portuguese patronage upon the Church of the St Thomas Christians. Consequently the St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Angamaly began to be considered simply as one of the four Latin dioceses that existed in India that time under the Portuguese patronage.

ix. Territorial conflicts

That the division was not on ecclesial basis is also evident from the fact that some of the parishes of the St Thomas Christians such as Kochi, Mattancherry, Palluruthy and Purakad came under the Latin

Peutinger Table
A medieval copy of an ancient map of the road network in the Roman empire shows the Malabar coast



diocese of Kochi, whereas the Latin parishes of Kozhikode, Kodungalloor and Pallipport were placed under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Angamaly. With the determination of the boundaries of the archdiocese of Angamaly the all India jurisdiction of the Church of the St Thomas Christians was

terminated. According to the decree of Menezes the territory was limited to a small part of Malabar and to some places in Mysore, Madura and Karnatic region.

26

THE REVOLT OF 1653 AGAINST PORTUGUESE RULE

The first three Latin Jesuit bishops who ruled the St Thomas Christians under Portuguese padroado were Francis Roz (1599-1624), Stephen Britto (1624-1641) and Francis Garcia (1641-1659). Archdeacon George of the Cross died on 25 July 1640 and archdeacon Thomas Parambil succeeded him. In accordance with the decrees of the Synod of Diamper and the Portuguese project all the aforementioned Latin bishops tried their best to convert the St Thomas Christians to the Latin rite. In order to bring them under their control and authority the bishops especially Garcia attempted to exclude the archdeacon completely from the church administration. On the other hand the archdeacon was fully determined to defend his ancient rights and privileges. Hence from the very beginning Garcia's rule as marked by a bitter and constant power struggle between himself and the archdeacon.

i. Reasons for the synod

The reasons for the revolt of 1653 could be enumerated as the following: synod of Diamper and the termination of the relationship with the Chaldean Church, the stigmatization of the St Thomas Christians as heretics, schismatics and pagans, the imposition of Latin jurisdiction against their will, the suppression of the autonomous metropolitan status of the archdiocese of Angamaly and its reduction to a simple suffragan of Goa, the imposition of Portuguese patronage, the restriction of all India jurisdiction, the curtailment of the special authority and privileges of the archdeacon and general church assembly, the strenuous attempt to suppress the Law of Thomas and the Eastern rite, the elimination of the immemorial traditions and

christianized Indian social customs, the exclusion of other religious Orders from Malabar by the Jesuits as well as the measures taken to suppress the Indigenous religious Congregation of St Thomas the Apostle founded on 5 February 1626 at Edapally caused great dissatisfaction, despair, affliction and agony among the St Thomas Christians.

In 1647 through some Carmelite missionaries the archdeacon sent letters to the Roman Pontiff and to Propaganda Fide concerning the problems of the Malabar Church. Since he did not receive any reply, during 1648-49 the archdeacon also wrote letters to the Chaldean patriarch in Mesopotamia, to the Syrian patriarch of Antioch and to the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria describing the grievances of the St Thomas Christians. These patriarchs were also requested to send Oriental bishops to India, as these Christians were without a bishop of their own rite and ecclesial heritage.

ii. The immediate reason

When the letter of archdeacon Thomas requesting a bishop reached the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria in 1649, Cyril Mar Ahtallah Ibn Issa, a Catholic metropolitan of the Antiochean Syrian Church, staying in Cairo. He reached Mylapore on 25 August 1652, but he was detained at the Jesuit College on the order of the Inquisition of Goa. Four pilgrims (3 clerics and a layman) from Malabar, who were that time in Mylapore, happened to meet this bishop. When they returned to Malabar they brought a letter of this bishop with the notice that he was sent by Pope Ignatius to govern the St Thomas Christians. Basing on the letter of the bishop and the reports of the pilgrims the St Thomas Christians were of the mind that he was sent by the Roman Pontiff to govern them. The Portuguese authorities, however, decided to deport him to Goa, via Kochi and then to Portugal. The St Thomas Christians held a meeting at Diamper and decided to send a letter to the archbishop Garcia requesting his collaboration to bring the

Alexandrian bishop to Malabar. They were not even allowed to meet him to examine the credentials to verify whether he was sent by the Pope. This event added to the fire of agony already enkindled in the hearts of St Thomas Christians and aggravated the situation.

The Portuguese exiled Mar Ahtallah to Goa without showing him to the archdeacon and his collaborators who reached Kochi. Subsequently the outraged archdeacon, priest and the people entered the Church of Our Lady of Life at Mattancherry and took an oath in front of a Crucifix with lighted candles touching a Bible. They took the oath that they would no longer obey archbishop Garcia or any other prelate from the Society of Jesus, nor would ever again admit the Jesuits into Malabar or to their churches. Further they chose archdeacon Thomas as their governor and assigned to him four prominent priests as councilors and invited all to meet again at Edapally on the three-day fast of Jonas. This event which took place on Friday, 3 July 1653 is generally known as the Coonan Cross Oath.

iii. Archdeacon becomes Mar Thoma I

In accordance with the aforesaid decision, a large number of priests and people gathered for the celebration of the feast of Jonas (*moonnu nombu*) at Edapally which lasted for three days. On 5 February 1653, the last day of the feast it was declared that Archdeacon had all powers of jurisdiction to govern the Malabar Church. From that moment the archdeacon began to exercise all powers of Episcopal jurisdiction. With regard to the power of jurisdiction of the archdeacon people were told that the archdeacon had received a letter with directives to be implemented in case the patriarch would be impeded by death or by other causes from coming to Malabar.

After having received the news about the deportation of Mar Ahtallah from Goa to Portugal, on 22 May 1653, during the feast of Ascension 12 priests imposed their hands on the archdeacon and

conferred on him 'episcopal consecration' in accordance with the rite of a Chaldean Pontifical found in Malabar. This event took place at the Church of Alangad. Thereafter the archdeacon began to be called metropolitan Mar Thomas.

27

BEGINNING OF PROPAGANDA RULE IN INDIA

i. Origin of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide

The popes granted the Portuguese and Spanish kings the permission to do missionary works in their newly found countries when the Holy See had no organization, nor resources to conduct missionary activities in the non-Christian world. Towards the end of the 16th century many were thinking about the institution of a central office or even a congregation for the propagation of faith and to coordinate the missionary work undertaken by various religious congregations. Pope Gregory XV erected the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fidei*) on 22 June 1622 by the papal document *Inscrutabili divinae*. This Congregation had the task of directing and supervising missionary activity all over the world and of appointing ministers to all the missions to preach and teach the Gospel and to watch over Catholic doctrine. This congregation had the full authority to take all the decisions regarding the missionary activity all over the world.

Towards the end of the 16th century there started problems in the Portuguese padroado territories. There were both religious and political problems. Padroado failed to fulfill the religious obligations in India. The whole territory of India (East Indies) was divided among the four Portuguese Padroado dioceses of Goa, Kochi, Kodungalloor and Mylapore. According to the principles of Padroado it was the

exclusive right of the Portuguese king the erection of dioceses in the newly discovered lands and to present to the Roman Pontiff worthy persons for the appointment of bishops in the dioceses thus erected. Since the whole of India was covered by the four Portuguese dioceses the Holy See could not have erected dioceses nor appointed bishops in India without the consent of the Portuguese Crown and the knowledge of the metropolitan of Goa.

ii. Appointment of vicars apostolic

In these circumstances without revoking the *ius patronatus* of the Portuguese Crown the Holy See adopted a provisional measure of erecting vicariates apostolic and appointing vicars apostolic depending directly on the Pope. The vicars apostolic were titular bishops with jurisdiction directly from Rome to work in regions within the existing Padroado dioceses. The Propaganda Fide erected the first vicariate apostolic of Bijapur or Idalcan in 1637, extended later to Golconda and Pegu (1669) and to the whole of Mogul Empire (1696). Then in 1700 the vicariate apostolic of Malabar (later Verapoly) was created, especially for the St Thomas Christians. The intervention of Propaganda Fide in India prepared the ground ready for a long jurisdictional battle between the missionaries of Propaganda Fide and those of the Padroado, who accused the Holy See of unilaterally infringing upon the rights of the Portuguese.

In 1633 by the Brief *Ex debito pastoralis* Pope Urban VIII formerly abolished the religious monopoly of Portugal and gave complete freedom to the heralds of the Gospel to go to the missions through whichever way they found best and anyone who prevented them was threatened with excommunication. In addition to the religious Orders already present in India, in the course of the 17th century the Discalced Carmelites, Capuchins, Theatines and Paris Missionary Society arrived in India. Evangelization progressed in different parts of India under the supervision and direction of the

Propaganda Fide Congregation, in spite of the bitter conflicts and controversies between the two evangelizing agencies of Padroado and Propaganda.

From the second half of the 17th century Portuguese power in India began to decline as other European colonial powers Dutch, English and French seized the main centres in India. At the beginning of the 19th century the Portuguese political power was reduced to very limited areas like Goa, Daman and Diu, owing to the establishment of English supremacy in India centering on Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The decline of political power and the lack of financial resources prevented Portugal from carrying on the evangelization in India. Due to the anti-religious policy of the new government Portugal broke her diplomatic relation with the Holy See in 1833. Thus the Portuguese Government failed to fulfil the obligations of *ius patronatus* in India.

28

INTERVENTION OF PROPAGANDA JURISDICTION IN THE MALABAR CHURCH

In order to heal the wounds caused due the Oath against the archbishop Garcia and the Padroado jurisdiction, Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667) sent two groups of Carmelite missionaries under the jurisdiction of the Propaganda Congregation. These two groups were guided by the Apostolic Commissaries Fr Joseph of St Mary Sebastiani OCD and Fr Hyacinth of St Vincent OCD. Sebastiani traveled through the Middle East and reached Malabar in February 1657. He could make the Malabar Christians understand that Ahtallah was not sent by the pope and the consecration of archdeacon was not a valid one. Thanks to the efforts of Sebastiani many priests, churches

and faithful abandoned the archdeacon and returned to the mother Church, but they were unwilling to accept Francis Garcia, against whom the oath was made, as their bishop.

i. Arrival of Fr Joseph Sebastiani OCD in Kerala

On 7 January 1658 Sebastiani left for Rome from Kochi to propose appropriate remedies for the solution of the crisis in Malabar.⁵⁸ The other apostolic commissary Fr Hyacinth who traveled through Lisbon could reach Malabar only in March 1658, since the Portuguese authorities did not permit him to proceed to India for more than two years. His efforts to bring the archdeacon and more faithful back to the true fold were rather fruitless owing to various ecclesiastical and political circumstances. Because of serious sickness he died on 10 February 1661 and was buried in the cathedral of Kochi.

On 22 February 1659 Sebastiani reached Rome and submitted his report about the Malabar Church to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Based on the recommendations of the Congregation Pope Alexander VII decided to appoint him titular bishop of Hierapolis and send him back to Malabar as apostolic commissary and administrator of Kodungalloor. On 15 December 1659 he was secretly consecrated bishop in the private chapel of the pope, lest the king of Portugal might take offence, since his appointment was contrary to the prescriptions of *ius patronatus*. According to which pope could not appoint any bishop in Portuguese territory, unless presented by the king. In the Instructions given to Sebastiani by the Congregation there was the mandate to substitute the Eastern rite of the Indian Christians with the Latin rite. To suppress the Law of Thomas and the Eastern rite was the means proposed by the missionaries to save the Indian Christians.

ii. Sebastiani becomes vicar apostolic of Varapuzha

When Sebastiani reached Malabar in May 1661 Francis Garcia was already dead (on 3 December 1659). So his mission became easier. Many faithful who in good faith followed the pseudo-bishop returned to the true fold after the arrival of Sebastiani as the apostolic administrator and thus the vast majority remained in the Catholic Church. As a consequence of the Portuguese intervention since 1599, by this time the St Thomas Christians were divided between three jurisdictions. A small group remained under the Portuguese padroado jurisdiction in the archdiocese of Kodungalloor and in the diocese of Kochi. The vast majority accepted the authority of the Carmelite apostolic administrator Sebastiani of the Propaganda Fide congregation. The rest of the Christians followed the pseudo bishop.

On 7 January 1663 the Dutch captured Kochi, the Portuguese stronghold on the Malabar Coast and ordered all non-Dutch Europeans to quit Malabar. Since Sebastiani (an Italian Carmelite) could not remain in Malabar, with the order of Pope Alexander VII on 1 February 1663 he consecrated Alexander Parambil, as titular bishop of Megara and the vicar apostolic of Kodungalloor. After the consecration Sebastiani publicly and definitely excommunicated archdeacon Thomas (pseudo-bishop Mar Thomas) and his companion Anjilimoottil Ittithomman from the Catholic Church. After the excommunication, in course of time, bishop Thomas and his followers became Syro-Orthodox or Jacobites following the Antiochene tradition. Sebastiani left Malabar on 14 February 1663 and reached Rome on 6 May 1665.

29

ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS UNDER DOUBLE JURISDICTIONS IN THE 17TH CENTURY

i. Mar Chandy Parambil the first native vicar apostolic

Sebastiani before leaving Kerala convened a meeting of the church representatives at Kaduthuruthy. The council nominated Chandy Parambil to the episcopate and Sebastiani appointed him the vicar apostolic of Malabar and the titular bishop of Megara. His investiture took place on February 1, 1663 at Kaduthuruthy. It was the fulfillment of the dream to have a bishop of their own which had been cherished by the St Thomas Christians for generations. Bishop Chandy Parambil (Palliveetil), also known as Alexander de Campo, was the first ethnic bishop to head the Malabar Church. He appointed a certain Fr George as the vicar general. His headquarters were at Kuravilangad. Of the 110 churches in Kerala 64 churches fully and 20 partially accepted the new bishop while 24 were with the Archdeacon Mar Thoma I. Mar Alexander Parambil, elected and consecrated according to the directives of the Propaganda, was obviously of the Propaganda Fide jurisdiction. Despite the troubles caused by the excommunicated pseudo-bishop, Mar Alexander governed the Church sufficiently well and the Christians were satisfied with the bishop of their own rite and nation. He also brought back many from the separated community to the mother Church. In spite of the peaceful administration of Mar Parambil, the Carmelite authorities were not pleased with an indigenous bishop in Malabar. They always stressed the need of sending European bishops to Malabar.

On 30 March 1675 Pope Clement X (1670-1676) deputed four Carmelites to elect a coadjutor for bishop Parambil. By the same apostolic letter pope ordered them to elect the archdeacon Thomas as the bishop or in his absence or unwillingness to elect George, vicar

of Muttom or any other Malabar priest, more suitable, reliable, prudent and zealous according to their conscience and insisted that whoever elected should be an Indian.⁵⁹ These missionaries - of the 4 only 2 reached Malabar - were of the opinion that it would be a great mistake to entrust the Malabar Church to an indigenous bishop. Finally they elected Raffael Figueredo del Salgado, a Latin Portuguese born in India, as titular bishop of Adrumentum and coadjutor to Mar Alexander with the right of succession. Though Mar Parambil did not like him as he was not a worthy candidate and a foreigner, Parambil was constrained by circumstances to consecrate him on 8 May 1677. The election of Figueredo diminished the confidence of the Malabar Christians in the Carmelite missionaries. In 1678 Mar Parambil nominated Mathew Pallil as the archdeacon of Malabar and George of St John as the vicar general.

ii. Kodungalloor is vacant from 1659-1701

The new coadjutor bishop caused grave confusion and bewilderment in the archdiocese because of his imprudent, non-canonical, scandalous and criminal actions. In the meantime bishop Parambil died on 2 January 1687. Propaganda Fide deputed bishop Custodius de Pinho, vicar apostolic of Bijapur-Golconda (Great Mughal) to investigate the acts of Figueredo. Pope Innocent XII (1691-1700), on the basis of the report of Propaganda, took the decision to suspend Figueredo on 16 January 1694. But on 12 December 1695 Figueredo died, before the suspension order reached him. After the death of Figueredo archdeacon Mathew Pallil administered the Church for about six years (till 1701).

During this period the St Thomas Christians were practically under Propaganda Fide jurisdiction alone, because after the death of Francis Garcia in 1659 the Padroado see of Kodungalloor remained vacant for 42 years (till 1701). Those bishops whom the Portuguese government nominated to the archdiocese of Kodungalloor either did

not accept the nomination or did not take charge of the office for various reasons. Since there was nobody to exercise jurisdiction at the Padroado see of Kodungalloor, practically all the St Thomas Christians depended on bishop Alexander and Figueredo of Propaganda Fide Jurisdiction.

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ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS UNDER DOUBLE JURISDICTIONS IN THE 18TH CENTURY

i. Appointment of Angelus Francis as vicar apostolic

Because of the opposition of the Dutch the Portuguese padroado bishops of Kodungalloor and Kochi could not have entered the dioceses nor exercised jurisdictions in territories under Dutch control. In the meantime, the Holy See negotiated with the Dutch government and on 1 April 1698 obtained permission to send one bishop and twelve priests of the Carmelite Order. Italians, Germans or Belgians were allowed to reside in the territories controlled by the Dutch but not in the town of Kochi.⁶⁰ Upon the proposal of Propaganda Fide, on 20 February 1700 Pope Innocent XII appointed Angelus Francis of St Theresa OCD, who was in Malabar for 24 years, the titular bishop of Metellopolis and the vicar apostolic of Malabar till the archbishop of Kodungalloor and the bishop of Kochi had personally occupied their respective dioceses.⁶¹

The two Portuguese bishops present in India that time – Augustine of Annunciation, the archbishop of Goa and Perfdo Pacheo, the bishop of Kochi since 1694 – refused to consecrate Angelus Francis, as they considered his appointment an infringement upon the rights of patronage held by their king. That time Mar Simon of Ada, a Chaldean

Catholic bishop sent by the Chaldean patriarch, as response to an application made by the St Thomas Christians after the death of bishop Figueredo in 1695, was present in Malabar. According to the request of the Carmelite missionaries, Mar Simon of Ada consecrated Angelus Francis on 22 May 1701. As vicar apostolic of Malabar he resided in Varapuzha. The vicariate apostolic of Malabar was an interim device for the pastoral care of the Christians in the archdiocese of Kodungalloor and the diocese of Kochi, since the bishops of these dioceses could not have entered their dioceses because of the opposition of the Dutch.

ii. Beginning of Padroado-Propaganda conflict

The archiepiscopal see of Kodungalloor was vacant for 42 years since the death of Francis Garcia SJ in 1659. The king of Portugal considered the appointment of Angelus Francis as the vicar apostolic of Malabar as an infringement upon his rights. Very soon he presented John Ribeiro SJ, the rector of the Jesuit seminary at Ambazhakad, as the archbishop of Kodungalloor to Pope Clement XI, who appointed him on 5 December 1701, according to the provisions of the padroado. He was consecrated bishop on 29 July 1703. As the St Thomas Christians did not favour the Jesuits – the root cause of the Coon Cross Oath – the majority favoured the vicar apostolic. But in June 1704 bishop Ribeiro officially informed Angelus Francis that he took possession of the office and asked him not to exercise Episcopal jurisdiction. Therefore from 29 June 1704, complying with the above mentioned papal directive Angelus Francis did not exercise jurisdiction but lived as a simple missionary.

The Portuguese Jesuits archbishops of Kodungalloor after Ribeiro (1701-1716) were: Antony Pimental (1716-1752), Vasconcellos (1753-1756) and Salvador Reis (1756-1777). The Carmelite vicariates apostolic of Malabar under Propaganda after Angelus Francis (1701-1712) were: John Baptist (1714-1750, Italian),

Florence of Jesus (1750-1773, Polish), Francis Sales (1775-1779, German) and Aloysius Mary (1784-1802, Italian).

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ST THOMAS CHRISTIANS UNDER DOUBLE JURISDICTIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

i. Cariattil-Paremakkal delegation to Rome-Lisbon

The *puthenkuttukar*, St Thomas Christian faction newly formed with the Coonan Cross Oath and who accepted the leadership of the archdeacon, were later ruled by Mar Thomas I and his successors (Mar Thomas II, III, IV and V). The attempts for the reunion and reconciliation of all the St Thomas Christians under one head continued also during Mar Thomas VI (also known as Dionysius I). Since the Carmelite missionaries (foreign ecclesiastical) in Malabar did not show any interest in this matter, in 1778 the Catholic St Thomas Christians sent a delegation to Rome and Lisbon to negotiate directly with the Propaganda and Padroado authorities about the matter. The delegation was under the leadership of Fathers Joseph Cariattil and Thomas Paremakal. While they were in Lisbon, on 16 July 1782 the Portuguese Queen Francesca Maria nominated Cariattil archbishop of the vacant padroado see of Kodungalloor.⁶² On 17 February 1783 Cariattil was consecrated bishop in Lisbon. After a long stay in Lisbon he received from the Roman authorities all the faculties to receive Mar Thoma VI and his community to the Catholic Church. In April 1785 both Cariatiil and Paremakal embarked on a ship for their return journey from Lisbon to India. Unfortunately before reaching the archdiocese, Cariattil died in Goa on 10 September 1786.

With the nomination of Cariattil as archbishop of Kodungalloor in 1782, all the St Thomas Christians passed over to the Padroado jurisdiction, although he never took possession of his see. After the death of Cariattil, his companion Paremakkal was nominated administrator of the archdiocese in 1786 and all the Catholic St Thomas Christians remained under his jurisdiction until his death on 20 March 1799. During this period in the vicariate apostolic of Malabar under the Propaganda jurisdiction of the Carmelite bishop Aloysius Mary there were only Latin Christians.

ii. Able leadership of Paremakkal as governador

After the death of the last Jesuit archbishop Dom Salvador dos Reis in 1773 there were only administrators in the archdiocese of Kodungalloor. Since there was no one to perform Episcopal ministry, during the administration of Paremakkal a delegation went to the Chaldean patriarch in Baghdad requesting a bishop, as was the custom before the 16th century. This resulted in the so called Pandari schism which lasted only a few months in 1800. The schism ended with the appointment of George Sankoorikal as administrator of Kodungalloor who died in 1801.

The Catholic St Thomas Christians reunited into one flock under Paremakkal, after his death, were again divided between Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions, due to various political and ecclesiastical reasons. The parishes were allowed to select between the Propaganda vicariate apostolic of Malabar and the Padroado archdiocese of Kodungalloor. As before, the Propaganda Carmelite bishops occupied the vicariate apostolic of Malabar.

iii. Jurisdictional conflict between Padroado and Propaganda

From the beginning of the 19th century the vacant Padroado diocese of Kodungalloor was put under the immediate jurisdiction of the

archbishop of Goa, who at times nominated administrators. After the death of Sankurickal in 1801 Portuguese priests were appointed administrators (*governadors*) to the see of Kodungalloor except for a short period of the Portuguese bishop Thomas Aquinas OP (1821-1823). The appointments were made simply to maintain the status quo and some of the administrators did not even come to the archdiocese. This was really a period of disorder and quarrel, due also to the intervention of the bishop of Kochi who wanted to show the overlordship of Padroado over the archdiocese of Kodungalloor. The conflict of jurisdiction suffocated and confused the faithful, for whom there was no escape. Both jurisdictions were in search of victory, to get the greatest number of parishes.⁶³

The vicars apostolic of Malabar in the first half of the 19th century had to face a very difficult time due to the jurisdictional conflicts between Padroado and Propaganda. In the initial years of the 19th century the vicar apostolic of Malabar was Aloysius Mary of Jesus (1784-1802), an Italian Carmelite belonging to the Roman province. On July 30, 1771 he was deputed for the Malabar mission and on February 7, 1773 he reached Varapuzha. He was appointed *Episcopus Usulensis* in partibus and apostolic vicar of Malabar on March 30, 1784, was consecrated bishop at Pondicherry on November 25, 1785 and assumed the office on February 10, 1787. The next vicar apostolic was Raimond of St Joseph (1803-1816). He was a member of the Carmelite province of Piedmonte. In 1783 he was deputed for the Malabar missions. In 1787 he reached Bombay and in 1789 in Malabar. On March 1, 1803 he was appointed the vicar apostolic of Malabar with the title *Episcopus Surensis* in partibus and was consecrated on January 3, 1808 at Bombay.

Milesius Prendergast (1821-1827) was the third vicar apostolic in the 19th century. After Raimond who died in 1816, with an intervening gap of five years, the Irish Carmelite, Monsignor Prendergast was appointed vicar apostolic of Malabar. However, the

period between these two apostolic vicars was one of constant change of authorities, effecting passive results in the apostolic vicariate of Malabar. Maurilius Stabellini (1827-1831) was the next vicar apostolic. He was born in Ferrara, in Italy on November 20, 1777. In 1821 he was deputed for the Indian missions and he reached Bombay in January 1824. In August 1824 he was appointed coadjutor to Bishop Alcantara, apostolic vicar of Bombay and on May 5, 1827 he was appointed interim apostolic vicar of Malabar. Monsignor Francis Xavier of St Anna (1831-1844) the next vicar apostolic of Varapuzha was born in Liguria in Italy on April 25, 1771. He was deputed for the missionary work in Bombay in 1798 and he reached Bombay on August 22, 1799. When Stabellini had to leave Malabar due to the fisherman problem, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide appointed Francis Xavier as vicar apostolic of Malabar on February 20, 1831. Ludvicus 1844-1853, Baccinelli (1858-1868) and Mellano (1868-1886) were the vicars apostolic of Malabar till the separation of the Syrians from the Latins.

32

FIRST SUPPRESSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KODUNGALLOOR

i. The vacant Padroado dioceses

The four Portuguese dioceses in India remained vacant for a long period of time. The Church in India was in a desolate and deplorable situation and it was generally believed that the Indian Catholicism would become extinct if the Holy See did not intervene. Therefore many other vicariates were created in spite of the strong

protest of the Portuguese government and the ecclesiastical authorities. Thus Pope Gregory XVI - the former Prefect of the Propaganda Congregation - erected the vicariates of Madras (1832), Bengal (1834), Ceylon (1834) and Coromandal (1834). Obviously all these vicariates apostolic were superimposed on the pre-existing Padroado dioceses without explicitly derogating from the Padroado jurisdiction.

With the apostolic letter *Multa Praeclare* of 24 April 1838 Pope Gregory XVI suppressed the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction in India and China except in the archdiocese of Goa and granted all the vicars apostolic exclusive and proper jurisdiction over their territories. The archdiocese of Kodungalloor which had been the ancient see of the St Thomas Christians was suppressed together with the Padroado diocese of Kochi. Consequently all the Christian faithful of these dioceses, both St Thomas Christians and Latins were ordered to become members of the vicariate of Malabar (Varapuzha). The Portuguese religious and political authorities publically and resolutely disobeyed the apostolic letter *Multa Praeclare*, launching thus the so-called 'Goan schism' and a grave battle between the two jurisdictions.⁶⁴ Such difficulties did not affect the St Thomas Christians, because in accordance with the provisions of the apostolic letter, all the parishes of the Portuguese archdiocese of Kodungalloor declared obedience to bishop Francis Xavier (1831-1844), the vicar apostolic of Varapuzha. Thus the St Thomas Christians, who were divided under two conflicting jurisdictions, again came under one Latin bishop.

ii. *Multa Praeclare* of 1838

The bull *Multa Praeclare* expresses clearly the mind of Rome to suppress the Padroado rule in India. The text reads:

For the same reason we order that those regions which are contained within the boundaries of the dioceses of Cranganore and Cochin and which have not yet been committed to a vicar

apostolic, must be united to the vicariate apostolic, established in the Malabar region, whose seat is in the town of Verapoly, and that all jurisdiction and authority, ecclesiastical and spiritual, in those regions shall pertain to the Venerable Brother Francis Xavier, bishop of Amata, the vicar apostolic residing in Verapoly and to his successors. And that Malacca, as well as the region beyond the Ganges may also receive the benefits of our apostolic solicitude, and that we may provide for the safety and increment of religion in that region, we in the same provisional way subject that entire region to the jurisdiction of our Venerable Brother Federici Cao, bishop of Zama, vicar apostolic of Ava and Pegu.⁶⁵

As part of the suppression of the Padroado rights all the documents published from Rome for the Portuguese Crown were declared derogated. The Padroado regions in India then come under the Propaganda Fide jurisdiction governed by the vicars apostolic.

Gravely disappointed and frustrated by the suppression of their archdiocese, the St Thomas Christians implored the Holy See, at least, to grant the title of archbishop to their vicar apostolic of Malabar, which was conceded in 1840. Thus Francis Xavier of St Anna OCD, the then vicar apostolic was named 'titular archbishop of Sardica'. After the death of Francis Xavier in 1844, Propaganda Fide appointed Ludovicus OCD (1844-1853) archbishop vicar apostolic. Since the vicariate apostolic of Malabar was very vast owing to the addition of the territories of the suppressed Portuguese Padroado dioceses, in 1853 it was divided into three, vicariates apostolic of Kollam, Varapuzha and Mangalore. The vicariates of Kollam and Mangalore were exclusively for the Latins. In the vicariate apostolic of Varapuzha together with the St Thomas Christians, there were also Latins as in the former vicariate apostolic of Malabar. The vicar apostolic of Varapuzha maintained the title of archbishop.

While the battle for jurisdiction continued Pope Gregory XVI and Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) erected several vicariates apostolic

such as Agra (1845), Patna (1845), Madurai (1846), Jaffna in Sri Lanka (1849), Mysore (1850), Visakapatanam (1850), Coimbatore (1850), Pondicherry (1850), Krishnagaar (1851), Hyderabad (1851), Mangalore (1853), Quilon (1853), Punjab (1880) and Kandy in Sri Lanka (1883). The Latin Church was thus growing fast in India.

33

EXTINCTION OF THE SEE OF KODUNGALLOOR

i. Kodungalloor is revived in 1860

Diplomatic relation was reestablished between Holy See and Portugal in 1841. According to a concordat of 21 February 1857 the Portuguese Crown was allowed to continue the exercise of the rights of patronage in India and in China. The treaty was ratified on 6 February 1860 and was published on 30 May 1860. The concordat confirmed the Portuguese patronage in the metropolitan see of Goa and reestablished the Portuguese dioceses of Kodungalloor, Kochi, Mylapore and Malacca, which together formed the ecclesiastical province of Goa. The concordat even recognized the right of Portugal to constitute new dioceses under its patronage. Thus the Portuguese royal patronage was fully reestablished with all its rights and privileges, as if it had not been suppressed. In fact, the aforementioned four Portuguese dioceses covered the whole of India and hence there was no territory free.

Thus the St Thomas Christians were again divided between the Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions. After this division there were 104 churches in the vicariate apostolic of Varapuzha (Propaganda), 37 in the archdiocese of Kodungalloor (Padroado) and 16 parishes

divided under both jurisdictions. After the reestablishment in the archdiocese of Kodungalloor there were only administrators from 1864 till 1886. In the Propaganda vicariate apostolic of Varapuzha after the death of Bernardine Bacinelli on 5 September 1868, Leonard Mellano OCD was nominated vicar apostolic (1868-1886).

ii. Final suppression of Kodungalloor in 1886

Even after the reestablishment of Portuguese patronage in India in 1860, the diplomatic contacts and negotiations between the Holy See and the Portuguese government continued. As a result there was another concordat signed on 23 June 1886 by Pope Leo XIII and the Portuguese King Don Luis I to foster and promote the greater progress of Christianity in India. According to this new concordat the archbishop of Goa would be elevated to the dignity of honorary patriarch of the East Indies. The archbishop of Goa would obtain the privilege of presiding over national provincial councils, which should ordinarily meet in Goa. Well-defined boundaries were to be set for the ecclesiastical province of Goa, which would consist of Daman [Damao], a new diocese to be created near Goa and the sees of Kochi and Mylapore.

iii. Kodungalloor goes to Daman

The St Thomas Christians archdiocese of Kodungalloor would be suppressed and its title was to be granted to the new diocese of Daman. Thus the bishop of Daman got the title of archbishop of Kodungalloor. The king of Portugal would retain his full patronage rights and obligations over the four Padroado dioceses (Goa, Daman, Kochi and Mylapore) in India and would obtain the right of presenting candidates even to the four Propaganda dioceses to be erected, namely Bombay, Mangalore, Kollam and Madurai. The main advantage of this concordat was that the territorial boundaries of the four Padroado dioceses was determined in such a way that the rest of the territory

remained outside the Padroado jurisdiction. In such territories of the East Indies, the Holy See would enjoy complete liberty to erect dioceses, nominate bishops and to determine other matters opportune for the good of the faithful.

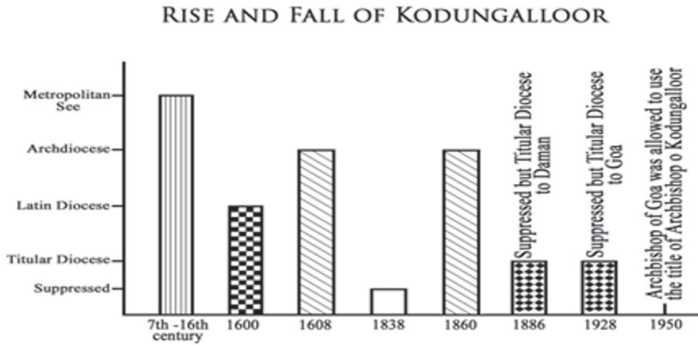
In accordance with this concordat on 1 September 1886 Pope Leo XIII with the apostolic letter *Humanae salutis* established the new Latin hierarchy in India under Propaganda Fide. The Portuguese Padroado archdiocese of Goa became the patriarchate *ad honorem* of the East Indies. The ancient St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Kodungalloor (Padroado) was suppressed and its title was given to the Portuguese Padroado bishop of Daman, a new diocese erected near Goa. When the diocese of Daman (Damao) was suppressed in 1928 and part of its territory was united with the archdiocese of Goa, thus becoming one Goa-Damao, this new diocese also received the title of Kodungalloor.

iv. Goa retains the title of archdiocese of Kodungalloor

On 15 August 1947 India obtained independence and on 26 January 1950 became a sovereign republic. The intervention of a foreign government in the appointment of bishops in a sovereign state was inappropriate. Hence the government of India decided to end the Portuguese patronage, and upon the demand of India the Holy See and the Portuguese Republic signed another concordat on 18 July 1950, terminating the patronage.

According to the concordat the Portuguese government renounced the rights and privileges of patronage and it was relieved of the obligations of endowment in the dioceses of Kochi and Mylapore. The Holy See achieved complete freedom for the erection of dioceses and the appointment of bishops anywhere in India. The only thing Portugal obtained in accordance with this agreement was the preservation of the metropolitan and patriarchal dignity of the

See of Goa, which was the capital of the Portuguese political and ecclesiastical empire for several hundred years. The diocese of Goa remains still today an archdiocese (without any suffragan), immediately subject to the Holy See, and retains the title of the patriarchate *ad honorem* of the East Indies.



34

ROLE OF CARIATTIL AND PAREMAKKAL IN THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

i. Archbishop Mar Joseph Cariattil

They are two great sons of the Indian church who could feel and share the pulse and aspirations of the mother church. Their selfless love for the church at any expense gained them the confidence of the whole St Thomas Christian community. Cariattil is a champion and martyr of the reunion movement in India. His words to Mar Dionysius I (Mar Thoma VI): ‘I will do all I can to gain this end, even if I have to go to Rome once again for you, sacrificing my life to God’ (*Varthamanapusthakam*, 69) is a testimony to his greatness, sanctity and love of the church.

Joseph Cariattil was born at Alangad (also known as Mangatt) on May 5, 1742. When he was a seminarian he was chosen by the then vicar apostolic Florence of Jesus to be sent to Rome for studies. He reached Rome in April 1755. He was the first one from the Syro-Malabar church as a student in the Urban College of the Propaganda Fide Congregation. He was ordained priest on March 15, 1766. After twelve years of stay at Rome he started the return journey in April 1766 and reached Kochi on November 10, 1767. In January 1768 he joined as a professor (malpan) of Syriac and Moral Theology in the seminary at Alangad, in his own place. From the very beginning the Carmelite missionaries were not ready to accept his scholarship and love of the church. In 1773 and 1774 there were two unpleasant events in the church; the first one was a rebellion against the Italian Carmelite missionaries in Varapuzha in 1773 and the other was the transfer of the seminary from Alangad to Puthenpally. In 1778 was his second European journey to visit pope and the Portuguese crown. He died on 9 September 1786 at Goa and buried at the St Catherine's cathedral the following day.

ii. Governador Thomas Paremakal

Thomas Paremakal was born in Kadanad, near Pala on 10 September 1736. He did his seminary studies at Alangad and was ordained priest in 1761. When he was selected as a companion to Cariattil in the European trip he was the vicar of his own parish of Kadanad. On returning from Rome he served the church as the governor for twelve years from 1787 to 1799. His headquarters was first at Angamaly as with the former metropolitans of the St Thomas Christians. During Tippu's invasion he moved to the Vadayar church built by Mathu Tharakan for his safe stay. Later he moved to Ramapuram where he breathed his last on 20 March 20 1799. *Varthamanapusthakam*, the first ever travelogue in an Indian language, authored by Thomas Paremakal is a masterpiece in Indian literature. Even after many centuries this book remains unparalleled in many of

its qualities. The antagonism he and Cariattil had to face and their struggles and agonies to undergo during the journey are vividly depicted in this book.

Paremakkal served the St Thomas Christians as the administrator of Kodungalloor from 1787 to 1799. He took up in right earnest the reunion efforts launched by Cariattil. He convened a plenary meeting of the community at Angamaly in 1787. Clergy and representatives of 87 churches took part in this *yogam*. The resolutions of this assembly on matters of church administration are famously known as ‘Angamaly *padiyola*’ (document).

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ROLE OF MAR ABRAHAM PANDARI AND MATHU THARAKAN IN THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

The unexpected death of Mar Cariattil and the failure of the reunion attempt made the community again desperate. Unity of the ‘Pazhayakoor’ and ‘Puthenkor’ communities still remained as their great need and a noble dream. When Paremakkal was in authority as the goverandor the faithful tried a third time as well, but this time with the help of the foregone Persian leadership.

i. Delegation to Baghdad

In November 1796 a group of four persons (Paul, Paul Anthony and Joseph) from Malabar reached Baghdad to meet the Chaldean Patriarch, Joseph IV. They carried with them two letters, one of the clergy of Malabar and the other of the Diwan of king Rama Rajah of Travancore. The purpose of this delegation was clearly

stated in these letters. The grievances of the Christians of Malabar, their complaints against their foreign ecclesiastical authorities, the unfulfilled dream of the reunion of their separated brethren, to get a bishop of their own rite, otherwise the faithful would become schismatics or heretics were the main themes of these letters.⁶⁶

In the absence of the patriarch Joseph IV, who died a few years back, Mar John Hormez, the administrator of the patriarch received the delegation from Malabar. On 25 November 1796 Mar John wrote to the Propaganda Fide Congregation asking for permission to interfere in the case of the Malabar Church and to do something to solve the pathetic situation of the faithful on Malabar. On 20 December 1796 he wrote another letter too to Rome asking the Holy See for the necessary faculties to consecrate a bishop for Malabar. As he got no reply from Rome for his both letters in February 1798 Mar Hormez consecrated Paul Pandari (one of the four in the group) as bishop and sent him to Malabar. First he was ordained priest and then consecrated bishop *in partibus* as Mar Abraham. He was consecrated as the titular bishop of the monastery of St Behnan near Mosul, which was almost in ruins but had once bishops. In March Mar Paul Pandari (Mar Abraham) reached Malabar via Basra and Bombay, accompanied by two Chaldean priests Hormizd Bekana d' Armuta and Joseph d' Ainkawa.

The letter of Mar Hormez dated 25 November 1796 reached the Congregation of Propaganda Fide on 17 March 1797. But as Rome was besieged by the French Revolutionary Army that time the Congregation was not functioning in Rome (but in Padua, as an interim arrangement) and could not send reply in time to Baghdad. On 10 May 1799 the Congregation send him the reply expressing its regret in the unlawful act of Mar Hormez in consecrating and sending a bishop to Malabar. In this letter Rome clearly stated that Mar Hormez had no right to do so, as Malabar Church was directly under Rome due to the decree of the synod of Diamper and the Chaldean patriarch

had no authority to interfere in the affairs of the Malabar Church. Rome, therefore, asked Mar Hormez to call Pandari back to Baghdad or to suspend him from the Episcopal functions. Mar Hormez received the letter from Rome with this explanation on 16 September 1799 and on 30 October 1799 Mar Hormez wrote to Rome with the explanations for this act. He wrote again to Rome on 20 January 1800 heeding to the demands of Rome and agreeing to do accordingly.⁶⁷ Mar Pandari who reached Malabar in March 1799 was welcomed neither by the vicar apostolic Aloysius Mary OCD (Propaganda jurisdiction) nor by Thomas Paremakkal the governor (Padroado jurisdiction). He was asked to remain as a simple priest (according to the orders from Rome) until he would get the orders from the Holy See.

On 19 March 1799 Paremakkal, the ecclesiastical administrator of Kodungalloor died. As it was the custom, the members of the General *Yogam* met and decided to elect one among the list of 12 eminent priests of the Malabar Church. Accordingly, Kathanar Kattakayam Abraham of the parish of Pala was elected successor to Paremakkal. But it was not a valid election as it was against the norms of the Synod of Diamper though it was the age-old custom of the St Thomas Christians. On 13 April 1799 representatives of some parishes met in a church near Changanassery and recognized Pandari as their bishop. Mar Paul Pandari, though an illegitimate bishop since he was not authorized by Rome to exercise the Episcopal powers, began to function as bishop as he was supported by the new vicar general and the lay leader Mathu Tharakan.⁶⁸

ii. Reunion attempt of Mar Dionysius I

One important event happened during this time was the attempt for the reunion of Mar Dionysius I (1772-1808) of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Mar Dionysius had already attempted twice for a reunion with the Catholic Church. But the foreign ecclesiastical

authorities were not in favour of the same. Therefore, with all hope and expectation he took the initiative for a third one. With the hope of receiving Mar Dionysius and his group into the Catholic Church, representatives of both groups - Catholic and Orthodox - met in the Holy Cross Church in Alappuzha on 20 May 1799. According to the prescriptions of Pope Urban VIII Mar Dionysius abjured the old faith and took an oath to follow the faith of the Catholics according to the synod of Diamper. On 11 June 1799 Mar Dionysius formally embraced the Catholic faith at St Michael's Church, Thattampally, before Mar Pandari and declared the acceptance of the synod of Daimper.

By this time Goan ecclesiastical authorities intervened and appointed a new vicar general in the person of Geevarghese Sankoorickal in Kodungalloor. Consequently the pseudo-vicar general Abraham Kattakayam has no more right to remain in office as the vicar general of Kodungalloor. Pandari was also deserted by all including Mathu Tharakan as all the faithful willingly and joyfully accepted the new vicar general from the land itself. Mar Dionysius too lost all his former supporters. He could then understand that what he had accomplished in Thattampally had no meaning at all, owing to the lack of competency of the presumed heads of the Church who had received him into the Catholic Church. Mar Dionysius could also not find anyone from the Latin authorities of the Catholic side well-disposed to promote his cause. Fully aware of his helpless situation in December in the same year 1799, i.e. after six months of Catholic life he reverted again to the former schism.

iii. Mathu Tharakan (1742-1814)

Thachil Mathu Tharakan was an eminent lay leader of the St Thomas Christians in the second half of the 18th century. As an appreciation of his contribution in many fields to the country, King Rama Varma of Thiruvithamkore gave him the title 'Tharakan'. His father Thachil Tharyathu was the minister to the king of Alangad.

Mathu Tharakan had an excellent rapport with Colonel Munro, the Diwan and the British Resident in Travancore. Tharakan and the governor Paremakkal worked tandem for the good of the Syrian community. He was also behind sending the Cariattil-Paremakkal delegation to Rome and Lisbon for the induction of Mar Dionysius I into the Catholic fold. He had also the plan to propose to Joseph Solidade bishop of Kochi to appoint Dionysius as the bishop of Niranam or as auxiliary in the Padroado see of Kodungalloor if he proved himself worthy of that august office. But it all did not happen.

He was also a great businessman; business of wood and spices. But in the politics he had a setback. Velu Thampi Dalawa took vengeance on him and imposed a heavy amount as punishment. English East India Company did not pay him the amount due to him by the Company. Thus he lost much of his wealth. He got only a small amount from the king and the amount which he invested in the Company (ca. Rs 10000) for the good of the Syrian community, which according to many later came to be called 'Vattipanam' (money lent on interest). In order to protect the Governor Paremakkal from the invasions of Tippu he built the church and bungalow at Vadayar. Palayam church and presbytery were also his contributions. He gave leadership for the struggle for the indigenous bishops for the Syrian Christians. His attempt to bring Dionysius I at Thattampally, Alapuzha with the help of bishop Paul Pandari in 1799 did not bear fruit. It was his plan to rebuild Alapuzha a good port city like Kochi too was not materialized.

36

ROKOS AND MELLUS SCHISMS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY

i. Rokos schism

Even after several years of Latin governance the St Thomas Christians always nurtured a desire for bishops of their own rite. They sent often petitions to Rome, Lisbon and to the Chaldean Catholic patriarch at Baghdad. When Bernardine Baccinelli (1859-1868) was the vicar apostolic of Varapuzha he refused to ordain the seminarians trained in *malpanate*. That time a Chaldean priest called Dhanah Barjona was in Malabar. Under his influence some St Thomas Christians came together and decided to send a delegation to Baghdad under the leadership of two priests, Anthony Kudakachira and his friend Anthony Thondanat. Their plan was to request the Chaldean patriarch Joseph VI Audo (1848-1878) to provide them with a Chaldean bishop. The delegation started for Baghdad in 1857. Kudakachira died on the way, but Thondanat continued the mission. The patriarch, who was interested in reestablishing his jurisdiction in Malabar, ordained a Chaldean priest Thomas Rokos as bishop and in 1861 sent him to Malabar as a visitor, accompanied by Thondanat. The great majority of the parishes followed Mar Rokos, since he claimed to have been sent by the patriarch at the order of the Roman pontiff. He visited some churches and ordained several priests.

On 8 June 1861 the vicar apostolic Baccinelli nominated Chavara Kuriakose, the superior general of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) as vicar general and brought him in battlefield against Rokos. Though the Propaganda proposed him to be consecrated bishop the vicar apostolic refused to do so. Responding to the letter of Chavara dated 19 June 1861, Pope Pius IX sent a brief a on 5

September 1861 to the St Thomas Christians in which it was made clear that the patriarch sent Rokos to Malabar against the explicit order of the pope and hence he had no authority, but only usurped ecclesiastical jurisdiction. On the order of pope Rokos was excommunicated on 30 November 1861. Chavara worked hard and forced Rokos to return to his country in 1862. Thondanat accompanied Rokos, received Episcopal consecration from the non-Catholic (Nestorian) patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East Mar Simon and returned to Malabar as bishop Mar Abdiso. But he was converted and then lived as a simple priest.⁶⁹

ii. Mellus schism

Against the explicit prohibition of the pope, in 1874 the patriarch sent the Chaldean bishop Mar Elias Mellus, who reached Kerala on 2 October 1874. Anthony Thondanat (Mar Abdiso) joined Mellus. Some thirty parishes of the Padroado jurisdiction, two of the propaganda and two Latin parishes followed Mellus, who also ordained some priests. In accordance with the order of pope Pius IX, on 25 October 1874 the vicar apostolic Leonardo Mellano excommunicated Mellus. The patriarch, threatened by censures from Rome called Mellus back. At the departure of Mellus and later, many who supported him returned to the mother Church. A few still persisted in the schism. They later formed another Church called the Nestorian or the Assyrian Church of the East with its headquarters at Trissur. This Church, together with the Assyrian Church of the East follows the Syro-Oriental or Chaldean liturgical tradition.

37

ROLE OF FR MANI NIDHIRI IN THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY AND AUTONOMY

The modern period in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church is one of struggles against the foreign rulers, both Portuguese and Roman. Bishop Alexander Parampil, Archbishop Joseph Cariattil, Monsignor Thomas Paremakal, Fr Mani Nidiri, St Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Mathu Tharakan are the important persons of this period.

i. Fr Mani Nidihri (Nidhirikal Manikathanar)

It is against the deplorable situation of the St Thomas Christians Fr Mani Nidhiri had to emerge himself as a leader of the community and to stand for their causes. Mar Thoma Christians divided under double foreign jurisdictions during the colonial period lost their good position in the land and were treated as inferiors by the foreign ecclesiastical authorities. This wounded their self image. After the suppression of Padroado in 1838 St Thomas Christians fell under the Propaganda jurisdiction alone which added misery to their old situation. This is the background of Fr Nidhiri who thought of doing something for the community, both Catholic and non-Catholic.

Fr Mani (Emmanuel) Nidhiri, known in history as Nidhirikal Manikathanar, the first Pontifical Vicar General of the Syro-Malabar Church was born on 27 May 1842 at Kuravilangad, as the second son of Nidhirickal Ittiyavira and Rosa. He had his early studies at his residence – in a ‘Kalari’ – under the guidance of a disciple of Benjamin Baily. After the school education at the Old Seminary, Kottayam he had the priestly training under the *malpanate* system. Born in a rich agrarian family at the age of 19 he entered the service of the church as a deacon. For 16 years he remained a deacon and during this time he served the community in many ways. During this time he first

served as the secretary to the Padroado governador Antonio Koilo and then as secretary to the apostolic vicar Leo Meurin. He knew a number of languages both Indian and foreign. When he was a student in the seminary he was also the teacher of languages in the seminary of Varapuzha. He was ordained priest in 1876. He was an eminent educationist, orator, organizer, writer, teacher and a champion of ecumenism. Fr Nidhiri died on 20 June 1904 at Kuravilangad and was buried at the St Mary's church there.

He was vicar in the parishes of Kuravilangad, Alapuzha and Muttuchira. He fought against Mellus schism and attempted hard for the reunion of the *Puthenkoor* section. The ecumenical association called the *Nazrani Jathiaikya Sangham* (the Syrian National Union Association of Malabr) organized by Nidhiri and Mar Dionysius, the Syrian Jacobite metropolitan, was one of the important happenings in Syrian Christian history. They also planned to start schools, colleges and even a seminary jointly for both sections. In 1889 he was appointed the vicar general of the vicariate of Kottayam.

ii. His contribution to the church and society

He led the community against the European hegemony over the Nazrani Christians. In his book '*Suriani Christianikalude Satyavisvasam*' he gave answer to the European missionaries to the question of the Nestorian heresy of the St Thomas Christians. He thus became the undisputed leader acceptable to different factions in the Kerala church. He wrote three books in Malayalam. He was a key figure to start English education in Kerala for the Syrians. He asked the priests to start English schools. It is he who started St Mary's English school for boys at Kuravilangad in 1894. He was the founder and the first editor of the first Malayalam daily 'Deepika' and was instrumental in the founding of yet another newspaper, Malayala Manorama. He was actively involved in the functioning of the reputed monthlies 'Bhashabhoshini', and 'Satyanadha Keralam'. He was the

moving spirit behind the *Malayalee Memorial*, one of the first steps in the social transformation of Kerala, founded in 1891. Fr Nidhiri was a leading figure in the struggle to free the church of St Thomas Christians from the foreign rule and to get indigenous bishops.

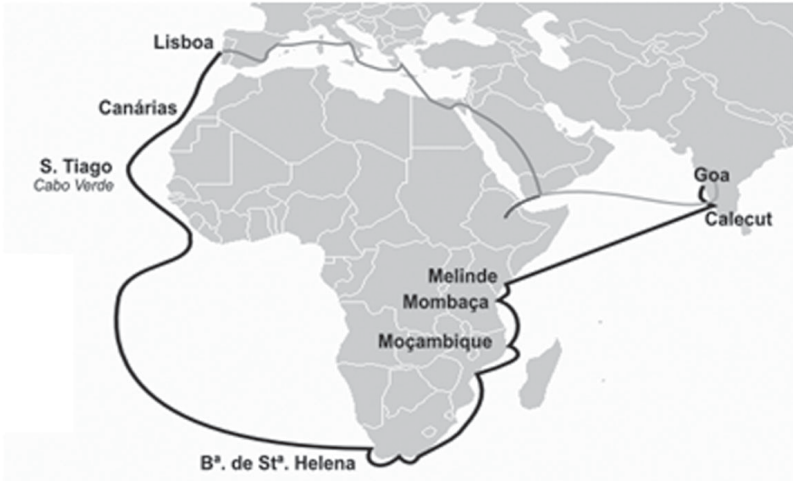
38

ROLE OF SAINT CHAVARA KURIAKOSE ELIAS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY AND AUTONOMY

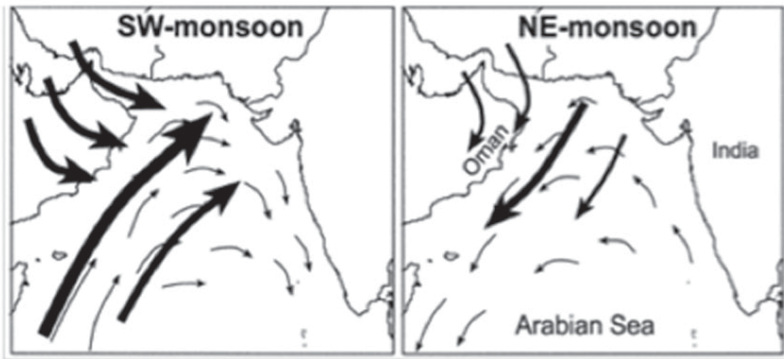
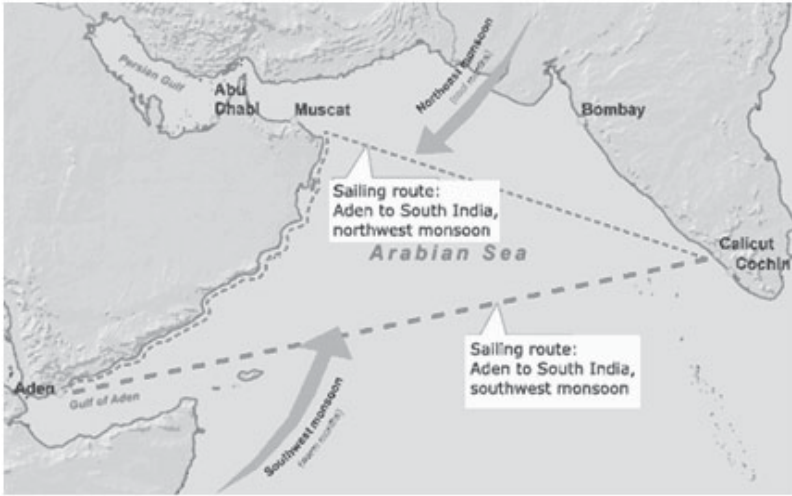
Fr Chavara Kuriakose Elias was on 16 February 1805 at Kainakary. His parents were Kuriakose and Mariam. At the age of eleven he joined the seminary at Pallipuram and in 1829 at the age of 24 he was ordained priest. He knew a number of languages both Indian and foreign. With the approval of Bishop Stabellini, the vicar apostolic of Varapuzha, Fr Chavara planned to start a religious congregation together with Fr Thomas Porukara and Fr Thomas Palakal. The bishop suggested him to start a monastery instead of a religious congregation. The foundation stone was laid on 11 May 1831 at Mannanam and in 1833 under the name *Amalotbhava Sangham* a congregation was started and on 8 December ten persons including Fr Chavara took oath. Thus the first indigenous congregation was started. Later houses were raised at Koonamavu, Elthuruth, Plassanal, Vazhakulam, Pulincunnu, Ambhazhakad and Mutholy. He started seminaries attached to the monasteries at Pulincunnu, Vazhakulam and Elthuruthu.

He was a pioneer in many respects especially in the field of education. He started a press at Mannanam in 1844. The *Daily Deepika* and the *Karmalakusumam* were published from there. He started schools attached to every parish when he was the vicar general. In

1846 he started a Sanskrit school related to the monastery at Mannanam. In 1865 he was appointed as the vicar general for the Syrians and he was assigned the task of eradicating the Rokos schism. In 1865 together with Fr Leopold he started the first religious congregation for women at Koonamavu. Later this congregation was divided into two: CMC for the Syrians and CTC for the Latins.



He started the first house for the Aged and the Helpless at Kainakary. He was a strong devotee of Blessed Sacrament and Blessed Mary. It is he who started the forty hour adoration and the one hour adoration. He was a prolific writer and a poet. His important works are: *Atmanuthapam*, *Nalla Appanthe Chavarul*, *Rokos sesmayude charithram*. He died on 3 January 1871 and was buried at Koonamavu. Later in 1889 when the Syrians abandoned Koonamavu, his relics were transferred to Mannanam. His beatification procedures were commenced in 1957; on 7 April 1984 he was declared Servant of God, on 8 February 1986 he was named Blessed by John Paul II at Kottayam and on 23 November 2014 saint by Pope Francis. Today the CMI congregation with large number of members is doing remarkable service to the nation and church in many respects.



South West and North East Monsoon winds

CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

39

APOSTOLIC VISITORS TO MALABAR

The last vicar apostolic of Varapuzha was Leonard Mellano of St Louis OCD (1868-1886). From 1700 till 1853 the vicariate apostolic in Kerala was called vicariate apostolic of Malabar and from 1853 till 1886 it was known as vicariate apostolic of Varapuzha. During this time the reports of the Carmelite missionaries were the only means of information concerning the Malabar Church for the Propaganda Fide. The Carmelite missionaries were against a separate administration for the St Thomas Christians and absolutely opposed to the appointment of native bishops. Mellano too had the same mind.

After the three schisms, especially the Rokos and Mellus schisms, many letters and petitions flocked into the Holy See highlighting the root cause of the divisions and schisms. Lack of a bishop of their own rite was the most important problem they highlighted. These letters were, therefore, requests for a separate vicariate. Consequently, disregarding the objections of the vicariate apostolic Mellano, Propaganda Fide decided to take instant steps to grant the St Thomas Christians right to self rule.

i. Leo Meurin, first apostolic visitor

Rome sent bishop Leo Meurin SJ, vicar apostolic of Bombay, as apostolic visitor of Malabar.⁷⁰ The Brief of his appointment was *Oportet Romanum Pontificem* dated 24 March 1876. Meurin reached Malabar on 6 May 1876. After due consultations and investigations he recommended the necessity of a territorial division of the vicariate apostolic of Varapuzha with separate bishops. He informed the Congregation that the only remedy for the predicaments in Malabar was to nominate a separate bishop for the Catholic St Thomas Christians. He gave the Congregation a clear picture of the tragic situation of the St Thomas Christians.

ii. Ignatius Persico, second apostolic visitor

The Holy Father sent a second visitor to Malabar in the person of Ignatius Persico, who reached Malabar on 23 February 1877. He soon prepared a report of the situation of the church in Kerala and sent it to the Holy Father. According to Persico the earnest desire of Malabarians to have a bishop of their own proper rite was age old and exhibited many times. The longing became intense due to the abandoned state in which the Suriani Catholics of India found themselves estranged from the missionaries, who for the lack of or little knowledge of the language, not only disregarded the Suriani Catholics but treated them with haughtiness and rudeness. Added to

this was the antipathy of the Suriani Catholics towards the apostolic vicar Mellano, who never showed any concern of their behalf, but, on the contrary, was known to prefer the Latins to the Syrians. For the Latins, in fact, stabilized schools and charitable institutions had been established, while for the Syrians little or nothing was being done, but they were left in ignorance and almost abandoned to themselves.⁷¹

In his report Persico proposed a division according to rites, forming two different vicariates, one for the Latins and the other for the Syrians. He also emphasized the necessity of giving Suriani Catholics a proper bishop. Berardi Marcelline OCD was suggested as the bishop for the Suriani Catholics. Accordingly the Holy Father Pope Pius IX with the decree *Iuris Pontificii de Propaganda Fide* appointed Marcelline as coadjutor to the vicar apostolic Mellano, exclusively for the pastoral care of the Syrians. He was consecrated at Varapuzha on 21 October 1877.

The appointment of another European Carmelite with the charge of the Suriani Catholics did not satisfy them. They continued to send petitions to the Holy Father claiming their right to have a bishop of their own rite and emphasizing that their community was exposed to schisms and dangers because of the lack of a leader of their own. After considering such petitions the Propaganda asked Marcelline to take a vicar general and four counselors from among the Syrian priests, to consult with them in ecclesiastical affairs. But Marcelline did not follow the directives of the Congregation; he neither appointed the vicar general, nor the counselors.

iii. Anthony Agliardi, apostolic delegate

On 23 September 1884 bishop Antony Agliardi was appointed the first apostolic delegate of East Indies. He visited the St Thomas Christians in 1885 and he understood well that the cause of all the

disturbances in Malabar was their desire for a bishop of their own rite at any cost. In his report to Rome he pointed out the advantages of dividing the Suriani Catholics of Varapuzha into two separate vicariates. But he informed Rome that it did not seem to him prudent to appoint native bishops because it would seem a victory of the St Thomas Christians over the Carmelite Order, and it would have the appearance of being seen at this moment not as a favour from the Holy See, but as the vindication of one of their rights. But later he changed his opinion and favoured the appointment of native bishops.

Despite the reports and recommendations of Meurin, Persico and Agliardi, when the new Latin hierarchy was erected on 1 September 1886, no special provision was made for the St Thomas Christians. The ancient St Thomas Christian archdiocese of Kodungalloor was suppressed and its title was granted to the new Latin diocese of Daman. Hence all the Catholic St Thomas Christians remained members of the Latin archdiocese of Varapuzha. Bishop Mellano OCD, until then vicar apostolic, was appointed the first archbishop of the archdiocese of Varapuzha, who governed the faithful till 1897.

40

ERECTION OF KOTTAYAM AND TRISSUR AS SYRO-MALABAR VICARIATES

It was only in the General Meeting of Propaganda of 20 December 1886 that the cardinals discussed the measures to be adopted for the Syrian Catholics of Malabar, following the erection of the Latin hierarchy in India. The mind of the cardinals in the General Meeting was affirmative about the separation of the Malabarians of the Suriani rite from the Latins; and having made the ritual or territorial

division, let one or two apostolic vicariates be erected to be entrusted to Latin bishops who should appoint Syrian Catholic vicar generals and elect four other priests from the rite and people, whose counsel is to be made use of in all the ecclesiastical affairs.⁷²

It was then decided to ask the apostolic delegate Agliardi to discuss with the prelates of the Bangalore meeting whether it was expedient that the apostolic vicariate be two or only one. The same General Meeting of Propaganda had also taken important decisions concerning the relationship of the Suriani Catholics with the Chaldean Catholic patriarch and the jurisdiction of the Carmelite missionaries over them.

i. Apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* erecting the first two vicariates

The meeting of the archbishops and bishops of South India held on 25 January 1887 in Bangalore under the presidency of Agliardi discussed the two questions concerning the Syrian Catholics and declared their full support for Propaganda's resolutions. In accordance with the resolution of the Congregation and the opinion of the assembly of bishops in Bangalore, through the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887, Pope Leo XIII separated the Eastern Christians from the Latin Christians of the archdiocese of Varapuzha and constituted for them two Syro-Malabar vicariates: Trichur and Kottayam. This division is according to the natural limit of Aluva river, which divides the region from Malayatoor to Kochi.

In harmony with the apostolic letter the Catholic St Thomas Christians were separated from the Latin archdiocese of Varapuzha and the vicariates apostolic of Trichur and Kottayam were constituted exclusively for them. In the apostolic letter *Quod iampridem* the word 'Syro-Malabar' is officially coined to designate the Catholic Church of the St Thomas Christians. The name 'Syro-Malabar' would be

consistently used in the future in such a way that the expressions ‘Syro-Malabar Church’ and ‘Syro-Malabar rite’ would become common.

Even though two vicariates were made exclusively for the Syrians two Latins were to be appointed vicars apostolic. The Carmelites who ruled the Syrians for more than two centuries reported to the Congregation that the Syrian Christians were naturally incapable of governing themselves because of low intellectual and moral levels, hereditary priesthood as well as divisions and factions. The St Thomas Christians made it clear to the papal delegate Andrea Aiuti that they appreciated the care and solicitude of the Holy Father, but they did not want to be anymore under the yoke of the Carmelites.

ii. Lavigne and Medlycott as vicars apostolic

Although the mind of Propaganda was to terminate the Carmelite government, owing to various circumstances, the general assembly held on 25 July 1887 decided to propose to the Holy Father two Carmelites as vicars apostolic: Marcelline for the vicariate of Trichur and Fr Polycarp for the vicariate of Kottayam. But Pope Leo XIII, being informed of the desire of the St Thomas Christians, personally intervened in the matter and annulled the decision of the Congregation. On 23 August 1887 the pope appointed Fr Charles Lavigne SJ as vicar apostolic of Kottayam and Adolf Medlycott, a diocesan priest, vicar apostolic of Trichur. Medlycott took possession of the vicariate on 18 December 1887 and Lavigne in April 1888.

According to the apostolic letter each Latin vicar apostolic should appoint a Syro-Malabar vicar general to whom should be given the privileges of exercising in his own rite pontifical ceremonies. Similarly the letter prescribed the vicars apostolic to choose four consultors from the Syro-Malabar Church, who were to be consulted in all ecclesiastical affairs. Complying with the apostolic letter Fr

George Mampilly (Trichur) and Fr Emmanuel Nidhiri (Kottayam) were appointed vicars general. Both vicars apostolic also nominated four native priests as consultors. Thus the century-long wish of the Thomas Christians of separation from the Latins became a reality and their separate identity was recognized by Rome. In 1890 Charles Lavigne, the vicar apostolic of Kottaym transferred his residence to Changanacherry with the official permission of the Holy Father. He established his headquarters and other necessary structures in Changanacherry. Even though the residence was shifted, the official title of the vicariate remained Kottayam.

41

APPOINTMENT OF NATIVE BISHOPS

St Thomas Christians still continued with their attempts to obtain native bishops. The western missionaries, the Propaganda Fide Congregation and the apostolic delegate in India were sensible of the urgent need and the legitimate desire of the St Thomas Christians for native bishops. On 30 November 1892 the then apostolic delegate Ladislaus Zaleski wrote to Cardinal Ledochowski, the Prefect of Propaganda that the source of the continuous disturbance among the Syrians of Malabar was their desire to have native bishops. He again wrote that but it would not be prudent to grant them the native bishops because they were not capable enough to be ruled by themselves. However in another letter to the Propaganda dated 7 October 1893 the apostolic delegate recognized the truth: It cannot be denied that the Syrians governed by Latin bishops find themselves in an abnormal and transitory condition and that in some way they have the right to demand bishops of their own rite.⁷³

i. Further attempts

During the period 1892-1894, under the leadership of some prominent priests a movement was started with the objective of obtaining native bishops at any cost. The main thrust of their project was to bring a Chaldean bishop to India and to consecrate two or three native bishops. It was almost certain that if a Chaldean bishop had come and consecrated native bishops the majority of the clergy and faithful would follow them. The result would be then another schism. In this context the general assembly of Propaganda on 7 January 1895 considered various options and decided positively on the question of granting native bishops. On 17 January 1895 Holy Father approved the decision of Propaganda and Cardinal Prefect Ledochowski communicated it to the apostolic delegate Zaleski and the apostolic vicars Medlycott and Lavigne.

The apostolic delegate Zaleski was absolutely and intransigently against granting the St Thomas Christians native bishops. Through his copious reports he informed the Holy See that among their numerous clergy there was not even a single man capable of being elevated to the episcopate and that the concession of native bishops would be the greatest disaster, not only for Malabar but for the whole Indian mission, because the Latin dioceses also would begin to ask for native bishops. In conformity with his position, the apostolic delegate did not present any candidate to the Holy See. Responding to the letter of the Cardinal prefect, on 22 February 1895 Lavigne, the apostolic vicar of Changanacherry presented three candidates: Frs Mathew Makil, George Thayyil and Aloysius Pazheparampil. Medlycott, the vicar apostolic of Trichur proposed George Mampallil, John Menacherry and Joseph of St John of the Cross TOCD.

In the meantime Chaldean patriarch Mar George Ebed-Jesus Khayyath wrote to Holy See that the desire of the St Thomas Christians was for bishops of their own rite, viz., the Chaldean rite and not so much for native bishops. For resolving the problems in Malabar he suggested the appointment of Chaldean bishops or native bishops

under his jurisdiction. The apostolic delegate Zaleski also agreed that granting St Thomas Christians Chaldean bishops would be a lesser evil than conceding native bishops.⁷⁴ The general meeting of Propaganda met on 23 March 1896 discussed the issues whether to grant native bishops or to annex the Syro-Malabar Church to the Chaldean patriarchate.

After considering the pros and cons of both projects the assembly decided to concede the St Thomas Christians some bishops of the proper rite and nation directly dependent on the Holy See. Decision was also taken to divide the present territory of the vicariate of Kottayam into two vicariates (Changanacherry and Ernakulam) and to appoint three native priests John Menacherry (Trichur), Mathew Makil (Changanacherry) and Aloysius Pazheparambil (Ernakulam) as vicars apostolic. On 28 March 1896 Pope Leo XIII with the apostolic brief *Quae rei sacrae* erected the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry.

ii. Dreams fulfilled

The quest of the St Thomas Christians for 'bishops of their own rite' began already in 1599 when the Portuguese Padroado jurisdiction was imposed upon them. In course of time this quest changed into the desire for bishops not only of 'their own rite' but also of 'their own nation'. After 286 years of Latin jurisdiction, in spite of the intransigent opposition of the apostolic delegate Zaleski and the western missionaries, especially the Carmelites and notwithstanding the desire of the Chaldean patriarch to reestablish his jurisdiction in India, the Propaganda Fide was in a way forced to recognize and ratify the right of the St Thomas Christians to have bishops of 'their own rite and nation'. On 25 October 1896 the apostolic delegate Zaleski himself consecrated the three Indian bishops in the cathedral church at Kandy. Thus the centuries-long efforts of

the St Thomas Christians for bishops of ‘their own rite and nation’ bore fruit.

In 1890 the vicar apostolic of Kottayam transferred his residence to Changanacherry, but without officially changing the name of the vicariate. In this apostolic brief the vicariate was officially designated Changanacherry and hence the name Kottayam disappeared. The new name ‘Syro-Malabar’, appeared in *Quod iampridem*, was again confirmed in this document. The pope explicitly stated that the three vicariates immediately depended on the Holy See, thus not on the Chaldean patriarch, nor on the archbishop of Varapuzha. In fact, with the erection of three vicariates and the appointment of native bishops, the Chaldean claims for jurisdiction over the Malabar Church was permanently terminated. When two vicariates were erected in 1887 the exact outer limits of the vicariates were not determined. The apostolic delegate Zaleski asked the prefect of the Congregation to clearly define the territorial limits of the three vicariates. Accordingly in the apostolic brief *Quae rei sacrae* well defined territorial limits were set out for the Syro-Malabar Church. As a result from that time onwards the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church outside the territory of these three vicariates remained subject to the Latin Ordinaries of the place and in the course of time were enrolled in the Latin Church.

42

SEPARATE VICARIATE OF KOTTAYAM FOR THE KNANAITEs

According to the tradition in 345 reached in Malabar Thomas of Cana with 72 Christian families from Babylonia and settled in Kodungalloor. Since they have their own priests, churches and

parishes they kept aloof from their brethren St Thomas Christians keeping their ethnic purity and identity. In *Quod iampridem* of 20 May 1887, constituting the two vicariates, Pope Leo XIII decreed that the territorial division of the said vicariates be made according to the natural boundaries of the Aluva river, not making the division according to caste. Accordingly the Southists or Knanaites, who numbered about 15000 with 21 priests and 12 parishes, remained in the vicariate of Kottayam.

i. Desire for a separate vicariate

After the erection of two separate vicariates for the Thomas Christians, on 21 November 1887 the majority of the Southist priests requested the Holy Father to place them under Mellano OCD, archbishop of Varapuzha or under the coadjutor Marcelline OCD, who had the pastoral care of the St Thomas Christians. Archbishop Mellano, bitterly disappointed by the separation of the St Thomas Christians from his archdiocese and the appointment of non-Carmelites as vicars apostolic, fomented the discontent and separatist tendency among the Southists with the intention of preserving them in the archdiocese of Varapuzha or of creating a separate vicariate to be entrusted to a Carmelite.

Propaganda remained true to its decisions. Regarding the same Propaganda wrote in clear terms to Andrea Aiuti, the apostolic delegate on 15 December, 1877:

it is not possible to make modifications in the disposition of the most recent Brief *Quod iampridem*: and much less would it be possible to modify them in the sense of erecting a third Suriani apostolic vicariate exclusively for the Suddists, because in such a way it would, I would say almost, canonize the division of caste which is a grievous sore of that country; and for which one should have all the interest to eliminate it, if that is possible.⁷⁵

ii. New vicar general for the Southists

The Congregation of Propaganda Fide thus rejected any modification in the *Quod iam pridem*. But for pacifying the Southists, with the permission of the Holy Father, the vicar apostolic of Kottayam Chalres Lavigne nominated Mathew Makil, the leader of the Southist community as his second vicar general in 1889 exclusively for the Southists and appointed two counsellors from among them.

On 28 July 1896 when Holy Father erected the three vicariates apostolic of Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, the Southists were found only in the last two vicariates. There were about 90,000 Northists and 13,000 Southists in the vicariate of Changanacherry and 65,000 Northists and 2,000 Southists in Ernakulam. Although the vast majority of priests and faithful of the vicariate of Changanacherry were the Northists the Southist vicar general Mathew Makil was appointed its vicar apostolic. This created tension and unrest in the vicariate.

iii. New vicariate exclusively for the Southists

In order to restore peace in the vicariate of Changanacherry, based on the suggestions of the three Syro-Malabar vicars apostolic, on 21 August 1911 with the apostolic brief *In universi* Pope Pius X separated all the Southist parishes and churches from the vicariates of Changanacherry and Ernakulam and erected the new vicariate exclusively for the Southist community.⁷⁶ The vicar apostolic of Changanacherry Mar Mathew Makil was transferred to the new Southist vicariate of Kottayam and Fr Thomas Kurialaserry was appointed vicar apostolic of Changanacherry. By this provision, the vicar apostolic of Kottayam was granted the faculty of personal jurisdiction over all the Southists within the boundaries of the vicariates of Changanacherry and Ernakulam.

ERECTION OF SYRO-MALABAR HIERARCHY

i. Syro-Malabar Church comes under the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches

By the year 1911 the Syro-Malabar Church had four vicariates ruled by indigenous bishops. Still this church remained under the Roman Congregation of the Propaganda Fide as all other Churches in the mission countries. When Pope Benedict XV erected the 'Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches' with the motu proprio *Dei providentis* of 1 May 1917, the Syro-Malabar Church came under its authority. This indicates that even after three centuries of Latin governance the Syro-Malabar Church was recognized an Oriental Church.

Following the appointment of native bishops the Syro-Malabar Church made marvelous progress in the number of faithful, spiritual life, priestly and religious vocations, as well as in the social, charitable and educational fields. After considering the progress of the Syro-Malabar Church, upon the recommendation of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, by the apostolic constitution *Romani pontifices* of 21 December 1923 Pope Pius XI established the Syro-Malabar hierarchy with Ernakulam as metropolitan see and Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam as suffragan dioceses.

ii. Romanus Pontifex

The papal document establishing the Syro-Malabar hierarchy underlined the motives for granting a stable hierarchy: able administration of indigenous prelates, high moral life, singular

devotion of the Syro-Malabar Christian faithful towards the Blessed Virgin Mary as well as deep reverence for the clergy, bishops and the apostolic See. The Holy Father, then, traced the history of the Syro-Malabar Church from the time of the preaching of the Apostle Thomas until the creation of the vicariates and the appointment of indigenous bishops.

The hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church was not constituted in the manner of an Eastern hierarchy with a common head (patriarch, catholicos or major archbishop) and a synod of bishops, consonant with the sacred canons and authentic Eastern traditions, but as a metropolitan province in accordance with the Latin *Code of Canon Law* of 1917. Like the other metropolitan provinces of the Latin Church, the Syro-Malabar Church in 1923 remained a province directly dependent on the Holy See. Although the new Syro-Malabar hierarchy remained *de jure* Oriental, in its form and hierarchical grades of order and jurisdiction it was similar to the Latin hierarchy, and as in the Latin Church the Roman Pontiff directly appointed the metropolitan and the bishops. The metropolitan had to receive the pallium of the Roman Church. Practically, the metropolitan and the bishops had all rights, privileges and obligations prescribed in the Latin Code.⁷⁷

The erection of an indigenous hierarchy contributed to the phenomenal growth of the Syro-Malabar Church. Consequently Pope Pius XII erected three more dioceses for the Syro-Malabar Church. He bifurcated the diocese of Changancherry and created the diocese of Pala on 25 July 1950 by the apostolic constitution *Quo Ecclesiarum*. On 31 December 1953 the pope erected with the apostolic constitution *Ad Christi Ecclesiam*, the diocese of Tellicherry for the Syro-Malabar Christian faithful who had migrated to the northern parts of Kerala. Again on 29 July 1956 the same pope divided the archdiocese of Ernakulam and erected the diocese of Kothamangalam with the apostolic constitution *Qui in Beati Petri*.

EXTENSION OF THE TERRITORY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR VICARIATES

Until the 16th century the ‘metropolitan of all India’ had jurisdiction over the St Thomas Christians in the whole of India. When, in 1610 archbishop Menezes determined the territory of the archdiocese of Kodungalloor (Angamaly) with respect to the dioceses of Goa, Kochi and Mylapore, the territory of the ancient see of St Thomas Christians was practically limited to a small part of Malabar. Even then the archbishop of Kodungalloor had jurisdiction in some parts of the present states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. When two vicariates were constituted for the Syro-Malabar Church in 1887 the territory was determined as the two sides of the Aluva river, without any indication of the external boundaries, which were precisely determined only with the creation of the three vicariates in 1896.

i. The role of Cardinal Eugene Tisserant in the extension of the territory of the Syro-Malabar Church

In order to cater to the spiritual needs of the faithful outside the proper territory and to foster the missionary activities of the Syro-Malabar Church in the proper rite the Congregation for the Oriental Churches considerably extended the territory of this Church through four decrees issuing on 25 April 1955. This was mainly due to the efforts of the then Secretary of the Oriental Congregation Cardinal Eugene Tisserant, a great lover and benefactor of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Pope Pius XII with the decree *Multorum fidelium* dated 25 April 1955 extended the jurisdiction of the bishop of Changanassery to the South till Cape Comorin covering the Latin dioceses of Kollam,

Trivandrum and Kottar. With the decree *Saepe fideles* on the same day the diocese of Trissur was enlarged to the whole territory of the neighbouring Latin diocese of Coimbatore. Similarly with the decree *Pro fidelibus* the territory of the diocese of Thalassery was amplified to encompass the neighbouring Latin dioceses of Mysore and Mangalore. The fourth decree, issued on the same day, *Suddistica gens* granted personal jurisdiction to the bishop of Kottaym over the Christian faithful of the Southist community in the whole territory of the Syro-Malabar Church. It is to be noted that the bishop of Kottaym does not enjoy any authority in the dioceses and parishes erected outside the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church, even if there could be found Southists in those places. Anyhow the extension of the territory enabled the St Thomas Christians in such vast areas to live their faith in harmony with their own ecclesial heritage and to conduct the evangelizing ministry abandoning their mother Church.

ii. Erection of the Second ecclesiastical province of Changanacherry

The next step for the progress and advancement of the Syro-Malabar Church was the establishment of a new ecclesiastical province of Changanacherry with Changanacherry as the metropolitan see and Pala and Kottayam as suffragans. Pope Pius XII decided to do so on 29 March 1956, but which became a reality on 10 January 1959 with Pope John XXIII with the apostolic constitution *Regnum Caelorum*.

The dioceses of Trichur, Tellicherry and Kothamangalam remained suffragans of the metropolitan see of Ernakulam as before. Thus, from this time, the Syro-Malabar Church began to be governed by two independent metropolitans, who directly depended on the Holy See. Just like the ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam, the ecclesiastical province of Changanacherry was constituted according to the provisions of CIC 1917, without providing the Syro-Malabar Church with an Eastern hierarchical structure. Hence, the two

provinces of the Syro-Malabar Church, directly subjected to the Holy See, functioned like the other metropolitan provinces of the Latin Church, without a common head and a synod of bishops in accordance with the authentic Eastern tradition.

The Syro-Malabar Church, which was divided into two provinces under two equal metropolitans, without a common hierarchical head, within its own territorial boundaries, was in truth not compatible with the juridical figure of the autonomous metropolitan provinces constituted outside the territory of a particular or archiepiscopal Church, envisioned in *Cleri Sanctitati*. At the same time the canons concerning the patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Churches with synodal governance could not have been applied to the Syro-Malabar Church, since the hierarchical status of this Church was not upgraded to make it fit to the juridical figure of those kinds of Churches. Hence the only possibility was to consider the Syro-Malabar Church as two independent metropolitan provinces directly under the Roman Pontiff, in the manner of the ecclesiastical provinces of the Latin Church, if the canons of *Cleri Sanctitati* had to be applied to it. In fact no real change occurred with regard to the hierarchical structure and juridical status of the Syro-Malabar Church with the promulgation of the Eastern legislation. The two metropolitan provinces functioned under two independent metropolitans just as those of the Latin Church. The metropolitans of the Syro-Malabar Church never exercised any special powers in accordance with the Eastern law over their suffragans.

SYRO-MALABAR MISSION DIOCESES

Since the territory of the Syro-Malabar Church was limited within the boundaries of the two ecclesiastical provinces in Kerala, this Church had no scope of missionary work unless they join the dioceses or religious congregations of the Latin Church abandoning their mother Church. In order to remedy this situation Syro-Malabar apostolic exarchates were established in North India.

i. Chanda, the first mission territory for the Syro-Malabar Church

On 31 March 1962 the Oriental Congregation established the Syro-Malabar ordinariate of Chanda and on 29 July 1968 Paul VI raised it to an exarchate and erected the new apostolic exarchates of Sagar, Satna and Ujjain. The same pope erected on 23 March 1972 the exarchates of Bijnor and Jagdalpur. In course of time new suffragan eparchies were also erected under both ecclesiastical provinces of the Syro-Malabar Church. By the apostolic constitution *Quanta Gloria* of 1 March 1973 Pope Paul VI bifurcated the eparchy of Tellicherry and erected the eparchy of Mananthavady as a suffragan of the archdiocese of Ernakulam. On 27 June 1974 the eparchy of Trichur was divided and erected the eparchy of Palakkad in the ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam.

On 26 February 1977 Pope Paul VI raised the six apostolic exarchates of Chanda, Sagar, Satna, Ujjain, Bijnor and Jagdalpur to the rank of eparchies and erected the new mission eparchy of Rajkot. On the same day the archdiocese of Changanacherry was divided and created the eparchy of Kanjirapally as its suffragan. Furthermore, Pope Paul VI partitioned the eparchy of Trichur on 22 June 1978 and constituted the eparchy of Irinjalakuda as a suffragan of the see of

Ernakulam. Thus during the pontificate of Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) nine eparchies were erected for the Syro-Malabar Church. The growth of the Church continued during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. On 11 September 1984 he created the mission eparchy of Gorakpur and on 28 April 1986 the eparchy of Thamarasserry as a suffragan of the eparchy of Ernakulam.

ii. Kalyan, the first diocese for the Syro Malabar migrants

The eparchy of Kalyan was erected on 30 April 1988 for the pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar migrants in the Bombay, Pune-Nasik region. By this time the Syro-Malabar Church had 21 eparchies: 12 eparchies organized into two ecclesiastical provinces, 8 eparchies outside the proper territory for evangelization and one eparchy for the pastoral care of the migrants.

Pope John Paul II with the constitution *Sacri canones* promulgated the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches on 18 October 1990. The new Eastern Code clearly defined the status and relative autonomy of the three kinds or grades of Churches that already existed in *Cleri sanctitati*: patriarchal Churches, (major) archiepiscopal Churches and metropolitan Churches. The Code introduced the juridical figure of another lower grade of Churches, namely the so-called 'other Churches *sui juris*' in order to accommodate small Christian communities which entered into full communion with the Catholic Church. After the promulgation of the Code, all the Eastern Catholic churches had to conform to one of the four forms or grades of *sui juris* Churches envisaged in it.

iii. Position of the Syro-Malabar Church in 1992

At the time of the promulgation of the new Eastern Code in 1990 the Syro-Malabar Church existed as two independent metropolitan provinces, which directly depended upon the Holy See

like the provinces of the Latin Church. That time the Syro-Malabar Church had 21 eparchies. 12 eparchies were within the delimited territorial boundaries of this Church: seven were suffragans of the ecclesiastical province of Ernakulam and three those of Changanacherry. Eight mission eparchies and the eparchy of Kalyan were considered suffragans of the Latin archdioceses of the place. This Church had no common ‘father and head’, who had jurisdiction over the whole Church. The Syro-Malabar Bishops’ Conference, constituted in the manner of the regional bishops’ conference of the Latin Church, was a mere consultative body, which had no legislative, judicial, electoral or administrative powers.

This hybrid and anomalous juridical situation of the Syro-Malabar Church, namely an Eastern Church with a Latin hierarchical structure, gained the attention of the Commission *De Ecclesiis Orientalibus* of the Vatican Council II and the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Eastern Canon Law. But no decision was made to provide this Church with an Eastern hierarchy. However, it was evident that an intervention of the supreme authority of the Church, restructuring the Syro-Malabar Church in accordance with the juridical figure of the patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Churches, envisioned in the new Code was necessary to solve the peculiar juridical situation of this Church.

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SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH BECOMES MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL

It was only after the promulgation of the new Code that the Holy See gradually initiated procedures to rectify the hierarchical irregularity of the Syro-Malabar Church. Finally on 16 December

1992 by the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori* Pope John Paul II constituted the Syro-Malabar Church as a Major Archiepiscopal Church under the title of Ernakulam-Angamaly, along with all the rights and duties incumbent on the same in terms of the Sacred Canons of the Eastern Churches. In the apostolic constitution the pope indicates three reasons for the elevation of the status of the Syro-Malabar Church: the apostolic origin, the possession of a venerable spiritual patrimony as well as the growth of this Church up to a firm stature by tiding over the crisis of every kind all through the course of centuries.⁷⁸

Despite constant requests from the Syro-Malabar Church to reestablish the ‘all India jurisdiction’ of the St Thomas Christians, in the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori* Pope John Paul II ordered that ‘the territory of the same shall be limited to the confines of the ecclesiastical provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry’. Consequently the eight mission eparchies and the eparchy of Kalyan constituted outside the ecclesiastical provinces of Ernakulam and Changanacherry are considered extraterritorial eparchies in accordance with canons 146-150 of the Eastern Code. Practically the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church does not enjoy any legislative, judicial and electoral powers in the eparchies outside its proper territory. Similarly the major archbishop cannot exercise any administrative powers.

i. The first major archbishop and the papal delegate

On 16 November 1992, with the apostolic letter *Venerabili fratri* Pope John Paul II nominated Mar Antony Padiyara, the metropolitan archbishop of Ernakulam, as the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.⁷⁹ Considering the lack of communion and concord among the bishops and the identity crisis within the Syro-Malabar Church the Holy Father did not grant to this Church all the

powers which the synod of bishops with its head, the major archbishop can exercise according to the CCEO. So when he elevated the Syro-Malabar Church to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church some ‘peculiar norms’ were established *ad tempus*.

The Holy Father reserved temporarily to himself the functions of pastoral governance proper to the Major Archbishop, excepting only the prerogatives of a strictly liturgical character, entrusting the exercise of these functions to a special delegate. On the same day the pope appointed as his special delegate Mar Abraham Kattumana.

The powers of the papal delegate were well defined in the aforementioned decree as: the Papal Delegate shall exercise, for the duration of his mandate, the functions of pastoral governance proper to Archbishop Major, in the manner, and within the limits, defined by Canon Law (CCEO 152). Specifically, he shall have the faculty to convoke and to preside over the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church (CCEO 152; 102-113) to establish the Permanent Synod and other pastoral and legislative organs of this church (CCEO 152; 114-125) and to invigilate over the functioning of the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam.⁸⁰ He was also invested with all the supra-episcopal powers and faculties which normally belong to the major archbishop. The major archbishop, Mar Antony Padiyara enjoyed only the liturgical prerogatives belonging to the major archbishop according to the Eastern Code.

ii. Powers reserved to the Roman Pontiff

In addition to the special provisions already indicated, the Roman Pontiff reserved to his own person all the concerned Episcopal elections and the liturgical order. Therefore, the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church could not elect the major archbishop and the bishops as stipulated in the CCEO. The Roman Pontiff as before appointed the major archbishop, metropolitans and the bishops.

Other reservations are the following: For a serious reason, the major archbishop can, with the consent of the synod of bishops and having consulted the Apostolic See, erect provinces and eparchies, modify their boundaries, unite, divide, or suppress them, modify their hierarchical rank and transfer eparchial sees. (c. 85 #1) Similarly, with the consent of the synod of bishops, the major archbishop can give an eparchial bishop a coadjutor bishop or an auxiliary bishop, transfer a metropolitan, eparchial bishop or titular bishop to another metropolitan, eparchial or titular see (c. 85 #2). Moreover, with the consent of the permanent synod, the major archbishop can erect, modify and suppress eparchies (c. 85 #3). He can also accept the resignation of bishops from pastoral governance and other offices with the consent of the permanent synod (c.210 #1-3).⁸¹

Everything concerning liturgical order was reserved to the Holy See. This meant that the major archbishop and the synod did not obtain the liturgical powers defined in canon 657 of the new Eastern Code. As the Syro-Malabar Church did not obtain the liturgical powers, as before, the Holy See would continue to approve the liturgical books of this Church. The reservation of the liturgical powers did not mean that the Congregation for the Oriental Churches would prepare the liturgical books of the Syro-Malabar Church. The task of preparing liturgical books and presenting them to the Holy See for approval was the competence of the major archbishop and the synod. The Congregation started a Special Commission for the Syro-Malabar Liturgy, whose task was not to prepare the liturgical books of the Church, but only to stimulate, encourage, follow and evaluate the work of the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Commission.⁸²

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SYNODAL FUNCTIONING OF THE SYRO MALABAR MAJOR ARCHIEPISCOPAL CHURCH

In the Eastern tradition the patriarchal/major archiepiscopal and synodal institution exists as one and the same inseparable entity, which manifests the primatial and the collegial dimensions of the episcopate. There is only one supreme power in a patriarchal or major archiepiscopal Church, namely the synod of bishops, convoked and presided over by the patriarch or the major archbishop. By the very fact of elevation of a church to the patriarchal or major archiepiscopal status, that church obtains a common 'father and head' in the person of the patriarch or major archbishop and a synod of bishops for collegial governance. Thus from the very moment of the constitution of a patriarchal or major archiepiscopal church, the synod of bishops juridically comes into being, which the patriarch or major archbishop can convoke at any time after his enthronement and the reception of ecclesiastical communion from the Roman Pontiff. But the case of Syro-Malabar Church was a bit different, as we have seen above with the reservations, the papal delegate etc.

One of the faculties granted to the papal delegate was 'to convoke and preside over the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church, to establish the Permanent Synod and other pastoral and legislative organs of this Church.

i. The three sessions of the synod

After the installation of Mar Antony Padiyara, the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church (20 May 1993), the first session of the synod of bishops was conducted from 20 to 25 May 1993. In accordance with the peculiar norms established by the Holy

See, the papal delegate presided over the synod. The first synod itself elected the secretary of the synod, the members of the permanent synod and those of the superior tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church. Moreover, the synodal commission for particular law, liturgy, ecumenism, catechism, evangelization and pastoral care of the migrants, as well as Catholic doctrine were formed. Thus the synodal structure began to function fruitfully in the Syro-Malabar Church.⁸³

The second session of the synod was from 22 November to 4 December 1993 and the third session of the synod was from 7 to 23 November 1994. On 1 January 1995 the pontifical delegate to the Syro-Malabar Church, Mar Abraham Kattumana, promulgated all the statutes of the permanent synod and of the superior tribunal of the Syro-Malabar major archiepiscopal Church *ad experimentum* for a period of three years. The Syro-Malabar major archiepiscopal ordinary tribunal was erected on 1 September 1994.

ii. Definitive promulgation on 1 August 2000

After the expiry of the period of three years the statutes of the permanent synod, superior tribunal and ordinary tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church were definitively promulgated on 1 August 2000. In short, the synod of bishops itself and all the organs of the synod began to function regularly and properly in the Syro-Malabar Church.

After the death of the papal delegate Mar Antony Kattumana on 4 April 1995, Mar James Pazhayathil, bishop of Irinjalakuda was appointed as an assistant to the major archbishop on 31 May 1995 'to facilitate the pastoral governance of the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church'. The Roman Pontiff, however, continues to reserve to His own person 'all that concerns Episcopal election and the liturgical order'. The faculties of the Assistant to the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church enclosed with the decree were so

exhaustive that they practically left nothing to the major archbishop. He had only the liturgical prerogatives as before.

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MAR VARKEY VITHAYATHIL, THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

i. Appointment of Mar Varkey Vithayathil as apostolic administrator

On 11 November 196 the Holy Father accepted the resignation of Mar Antony Padiyara, the first major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. On the same day he appointed Father Varkey Vithayathil CSSR as apostolic administrator *sede vacante ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*, elevating him to the rank of titular archbishop of Acrida. On 18 January 1997 Mar Varkey Vithayathil took charge of the Syro-Malabar Church. On 19 January 1998 the pope determined to confer on the synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church the full exercise of the faculties foreseen in the Eastern Code in liturgical matters.

On 18 May 1995 Pope John Paul II established the metropolitan provinces of Trichur and Thalassery, raising the said eparchies to metropolitan status. During the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, in addition to the three eparchies already mentioned, five more were erected: Thucklay (11.11.1996), Belthangady (26.5.1999), Adilabad (16.7.1999), Chicago in USA (13.3.2001) and Idukki (19.12.2002).

ii. Mar Varkey Vithayathil becomes Major archbishop

Having taken into account the three years of service of the apostolic administrator Varkey Vithayathil, on 18 December 1999

Pope John Paul II appointed him to the dignity and office of the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The decree of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches states:

desiring to guarantee to the Syro-Malabar Church a head who might guide Her, who would facilitate Her pastoral activity and represent Her with dignity, having taken into account the veneration and the respect of the Apostolic Administrator from his years of ecclesial service, and having heard the bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, His Holiness Pope John Paul II at the Audience granted to the undersigned Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, this 18th day of December 1999, in His pastoral solicitude, decide to elevate His Excellency the Most Reverend Varkey Vithayathil, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to the dignity and Office of the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, transferring him from the titular see of Antioch, with all the rights, honours and privileges of the Office of the Major Archbishop according to the norms of the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches and the norms of the Holy See.⁸⁴

Although on 16 December 1992 the Syro-Malabar Church was elevated to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church, only on 18 December 1999 did it obtain a real ‘father and head’ with the rights, privileges and honours as stipulated in the Eastern Code. At that time the synod enjoyed full legislative, judicial and liturgical powers, as well as other rights, obligations and prerogatives as determined in the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches. Nevertheless, all the concerned Episcopal elections still remained reserved to the Roman Pontiff.

Recognizing the sufficient collegial maturity of the synod and the growing unity and communion among the bishops, according to the recommendations of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

on 23 December 2003 the Holy Father revoked the reservations of the faculty of appointing bishops in the Syro-Malabar Church. With the granting of the faculty to appoint bishops to the synod of the Syro-Malabar Church, it has become a fully-fledged and juridically perfect major archiepiscopal Church according to the norms of the Eastern Code, although much remains to be done in the fields of liturgy, theology and other aspects of ecclesial life.

iii. Erection of Kottayam as metropolitan see

With the consent of synod of bishops and having consulted the Holy See, on 9 May 2005 Mar Varkey Vithayathil raised the Southist eparchy of Kottayam to the rank of a metropolitan see without a suffragan eparchy and Mar Kuriakose Kunnasserry was enthroned as its first archbishop on 3 June 2005.

At the time of erection of Syro-Malabar Church as a juridically perfect autonomous church this church had 26 eparchies; 15 within the proper territory and 11 outside. Besides the archdiocese of Kottayam which has no suffragan see, the 14 eparchies which constitute the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church are organized into four ecclesiastical provinces. Of the 11 eparchies outside the territory, the eparchy of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Chicago in USA is immediately subject to the Holy See. Other 10 eparchies outside Kerala are suffragans to the nearby Latin archdioceses.

On 21 August 2007 Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil, Major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church erected the eparchy of Bhadravati, comprising the civil districts of Shimoga of Karnataka, from the eparchy of Mananathavady, as a suffragan of the archdiocese of Thalassery. On 15 January 2010, bifurcating Mananathavady, erected the eparchy of Mandya, as suffragan of Thalassery, comprising four districts of Mandya, Hassan, Mysore and Kamaraj Nagar in Karnataka.

On the same day bifurcating Palakad, Ramanathapuram was constituted in Tamil Nadu, comprising civil districts of Coimbatore, Erode, Karur and Tirupur, as suffragan of Thrissur.

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MAR GEORGE CARDINAL ALENCHERRY, THE PRESENT MAJOR ARCHBISHOP

Following the death of Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil on 1 April 2011, Mar George Alenchery who was then the bishop of Thucklay, was elected major archbishop on 26 May 2011 and he assumed the office on 29 May. On 18 February 2012 he was made cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI.

i. Newly erected dioceses

On 6 March 2012 the eparchy of Faridabad was erected in North India. On 23 December 2013. Melbourne and on 28 July 2016 Great Britain are erected dioceses. With the document *Mystici unitas* the diocese of Hosur was erected on 9 October 2017 by Pope Francis. It reads: ... we turn our attention to the dear faithful in India, and recognize the need of establishing a new eparchy for the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church residing in the Indian state of Tamilnadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry and Karaikal.⁸⁵ In the list of Syro-Malabar dioceses the last one erected is Canada in 2018.

ii. Attainment of ‘All India Jurisdiction’

It is a noteworthy event in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church that it attained the faculty of the jurisdiction all over India. With the document *Tamquam viti palmites* Pope Francis erected the

diocese of Shamshabad on 9 October 2017.⁸⁶ It reads: ... we erect and constitute the new eparchy under the name of Shamshabad, out of all the territories of India where at present the eparchial jurisdiction for the Christian faithful of the same Syro-Malabar Church is wanting.⁸⁷

The Pope expresses the wish that the path of the Catholic Church in India cannot be that of isolation and separation, but rather of respect and cooperation. The presence of several bishops of the various *sui iuris* Churches in the same territory will surely offer an eloquent witness to a vibrant and marvellous communion. So the Holy Father urges all the Churches in India to be generous and courageous as they witness to the Gospel in the spirit of fraternity and mutual love. He hopes that this extension of the pastoral area of the Syro-Malabar Church and the full freedom to do the missionary work all over India in no way be perceived as a growth in power and domination, but as a call to deeper communion, which should never be perceived as uniformity.⁸⁸

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SYRO-MALABAR EPARCHIES AND BISHOPS

i. Syro-Malabar dioceses

The Syro-Malabar Church has today 35 dioceses and two apostolic visitations. Of these dioceses 18 are within the proper territory and 17 outside. Out of 17 one each in USA, Australia, Canada and Great Britain and the other 13 are in other parts of India. They are: Chanda, Satna, Ujjain, Sagar, Jagdalpur, Bijnor, Rajkot, Gorakpur, Adilabad, Kalyan, Faridabad, Hosur and Shamshabad.

The 18 dioceses within the proper territory, excepting the one archdiocese of Kottayam, which has no suffragan, divided in

four provinces are: Ernakulam-Angamaly (Kothamangalam, Idukki), Changanasserry (Pala, Kanjirapally, Thucklay), Thrissur (Irinjalakuda, Palakad, Ramanathapuram) and Thalasserry (Mananthavady, Thamarassery, Belthangady, Bhadravati, Mandya)

The two apostolic visitations are New Zealand (apostolic visitor is Mar Bosco Puthur) and Europe (apostolic visitor is Mar Stephen Chirapanath).

ii. Syro-Malabar Bishops

In the Syro-Malabar Church at present including the major archbishop there are 6 archbishops and 57 bishops. The **archbishops** are as follows: 1. Mar Alencherry George, 2. Mar Moolakatt Mathew OSB, 3. Mar Thazhath Andrews, 4. Mar Perumthottam Joseph, 5. Mar Njaralakkatt George and 6. Mar Bharanikulangara Kuriakose.

The bishops are the following: 7. Mar Manethodath Jacob, 8. Mar Elavanal Thomas MCBS, 9. Mar Vadakel Sebastian MST, 10. Mar Mukkuzhy Lawrence, 11. Mar Arackal Mathew, 12. Mar Angadiath Jacob, 14. Mar Kallarangatt Joseph, 15. Mar Porunnedom Jose, 17. Mar Thurthimattom Thomas CST, 18. Mar Arumachadath Jose MCBS, 19. Mar Vadakel John CMI, 20. Mar Puthur Bosco, 21. Mar Inchananiyil Remigiose, 22. Mar Alappatt Paul, 23. Mar Kannookadan Pauly, 24. Mar Chittooparambil Jose CMI, 25. Mar George Rajendran SDB, 26. Mar Madathikandathil George, 27. Mar Kollamparampil Joseph CMI, 28. Mar Nariculam Ephrem, 29. Mar Kodakallil Joseph, 30. Mar Kariyil Antony CMI, 31. Mar Kalluvellil Jose, 32. Mar Panengadan Antony Prince, 33. Mar Srampickal Joseph, 34. Mar Pozholiparambil Sebastian, 34. Mar Nellikunnel John, 35. Mar Athikalam James MST and 36. Mar Vaniapurakal Sebastian (Curia bishop).

The following are the **auxiliary bishops**: 37. Mar Adayanthrath Sebastian, 38. Mar Pandarasseril Joseph, 39. Mar Muricken Jacob, 40. Mar Puthenveetil Jose, 41. Mar Alappat Joy, 42. Mar Pulickal Jose, 43. Mar Tharayil Thomas, 44. Mar Pamplani Joseph, 45. Mar Neelankavil Tony and 46. Mar Chirappanath Stephen (apostolic visitor).

The following are the **bishops *emiriti***: 47. Mar Powathil Joseph, 48. Mar Thoomkuzhy Jacob, 49. Mar Valiamattam George, 50. Mar Pallikapampil Joseph, 51. Mar Punnakottil George, 52. Mar Mundadan Gratian CMI, 53. Mar Karotemprel Gregory CMI, 54. Mar Kokkatt Dominic CST, 55. Mar Neelankavil Joseph Pastor CMI, 56. Mar Chittilapilly Paul, 57. Mar Chakiath Thomas, 58. Mar Nedumpuram Vijay Anand CMI, 59. Mar Palathra Simon Stock CMI, 60. Mar Kunnath Joseph CMI, 61. Mar Vaniakizhakel Mathew VC, 62. Mar Anikuzhikattil Mathew and 63. Mar Chirayath Anthony.

iii. Bishops from Syro-Malabar Church in Latin Dioceses

Bishops from Syro-Malabar Church in Latin Dioceses are:

1. John Moolachira (Guvahati), 2. Thomas Menampambil SDB (*Emeritus*) (Guvahati), 3. Joseph Charanakunnel (Raipur), 4. Thomas Thiruthalil CM (*Emeritus*) (Balasore), 5. Joseph Pathalil (Udayapur), 6. Kurian Valiyakandathil (Bhagalpur), 7. Thomas Pullopillil (Bongai), 8. Alexander Kaliyanil SVD (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe), 9. Chacko Thottumarikal (Indore), 10. George Palliparambil (Miao), 11. Paul Maippan (Khammam), 12. Raphy Manjaly (Allahabad), 13. George Puthiyakulangara (Port-Berge, Madagascar), 14. Sebastian Kallupura (Buxar, Bihar), 15. Franko Mulakkal (Jalandhar), 16. Thomas Vazhapilly (*Emeritus*) (Mysore), 17. James Thoppil (Kohima), 18. Jose Mukala (*Emeritus*) (Kohima), 19. John Kattarakudiyil (Itanagar), 20. George Mamalassery (*Emeritus*) (Tura), 21. Varghese Thottamkara (Nekemthe, Ethiopia), 22. Paul Mattekkatt

(Diphu), 23. Thomas Thennatt (Gwalior), 24. Joseph Mithathany (*Emeritus*) (Imphal) and 25. Mathew Cheriankunel PIME (*Emeritus*) (Kurnool).

Apostolic Nuncios from Syro-Malabar Church are: 1. Archbishop Joseph Chennoth, 2. Archbishop Joseph Panikulam, 3. Archbishop George Kochery and 4. Archbishop George Vayalumkal.

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SYRO-MALABAR MAJOR SEMINARIES

i. Synodal major seminaries

i. **St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Mangalapuzha** (1932). In 1932 the former Varapuzha joint-seminary, which was then at Puthenpally was shifted to Mangalapuzha, a land donated by Mathu Tharakan, a beautiful and extensive campus near the NH 19 and the River Periyar. The philosophy faculty was started at Carmelgiri in 1955. In 1997 the Mangalapuzha-Carmelgiri seminary was bifurcated to form the twin seminaries of Carmelgiri for the Latins and Mangalapuzha for the Syrians.

ii. **St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor** (1962). It was started on 3 July, 1962 under the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy. Paurasthya Vidya Pitham was established on 3 July 1982.

iii. **Good Shepherd Major Seminary, Kunnoth** (2001)

iv. **St. Ephrems Theological College, Satna** (1992), (newly placed under the Synod of Syro-Malabar Church)

ii. Eparchial Major seminary

v. **Mary Matha, Thrissur** (1988) (under the archbishop of Thrissur)

iii. Major Seminaries of the Syro-Malabar Religious Congregations

- vi. **Dharmaram College, Bangalore (CMI)**
- vii. **Samanvaya, Bhopal (CMI)**
- viii. **Darsana, Wardha (CMI)**
- ix. **Ruhalaya, Ujjain (MST)**
- x. **Jeevalaya, Bangalore (MCBS)**
- xi. **Sanathana, Thamarassery (MCBS)**
- xii. **De Paul, Bangalore (VC)**
- xiii. **Little Flower, Aluva (CST)**

iv. Major seminaries of Latin Orders having Syro-Malabar Provinces

- xiv. **Carmelaram, Bangalore (OCD)**
- xv. **Carmel Hill Philosophate, Trivandrum (OCD)**
- xvi. **Capuchin Vidya Niketan, Kottayam (OFM Cap.)**
- xvii. **Calvary Ashram, Thrissur (OFM Cap.)**

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS/ SOCIETIES FOR MEN IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH⁸⁹

A. Clerical

I. Syro-Malabar Congregations for Men

1. Carmelites of Maty Immaculate (CMI), 2. Little Flower Congregation (CST Fathers), 3. Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS)

II. Syro-Malabar Societies of Common Life according to the Manner of Religious for Men

1. Vincentian Congregation (VC), 2. Oblates of Sacred Heart (OSH)

III. Syro-Malabar Societies of Apostolic Life for Men

1. Missionary Society of St Thomas (MST), 2. Missionary Society of St Pius X (MSP)

IV. Latin Orders for Men having Syro-Malabar Provinces / Vice Provinces/Regions/Delegations/Houses

1. Order of Canons Regular of Praemonstratensians/Norbetines (O. Praem.), 2. Order of the Brothers of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (O. Carm.), 3. Order of Friars Minor Capuchins (OFM Cap.), 4. Order of Friars Minor Conventuals (OFM Conv.), 5. Order of Clerics Regular Minor/Adorno Fathers (CRM), 6. Order of the Discalced Carmelite (OCD), 7. Benedictine (Annunciation) Order (OSB), Kappadu, 8. Vallombrosian Benedictine Congregation (OSB Vall.), Kaduthuruthy, 9. Missionary Benedictines of St Ottilien (OSB), Murukady.

V. Latin Institutes for Men having Syro-Malabar Provinces/ Vice Provinces/Regions/Delegations

1. Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (CSsR), 2. Congregation of the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Blessed Virgin Mary (Claretian Missionaries-CMF)

VI. Monasteries *sui iuris in fieri* for Men in Syro-Malabar Church

1. Mar Thoma Sreeha Dayara Monastery, Nallathanny, 2. Divyakarunyamatha Ashram, Perumthotty, 3. Preachers of Divine Mercy (PDM), Thavalam

VII. Latin Secular Institute for Men having Region in the Syro-Malabar Eparchies

1. Sacerdotal Secular Institute of Apostolic Sodales (SSIAS)

B. Non clerical

I. Syro-Malabar Religious Institutes (Brothers)

1. Malabar Missionary Brothers (MMB), 2. Congregation of St. Therese of Lisieux (CST Brothers)

II. Brothers in other Syro-Malabar Institutes

1. Order of Friars Minor Capuchins (OFM Cap.), 2. Order of the Discalced Carmelite (OCD), 3. Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), 4. Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS), 5. Oblates of Sacred Heart (OSH)

III. Latin Institutes for Brothers having Houses in Syro-Malabar Eparchies

1. Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHJ), 2. Congregation of Brothers of St. Patric (FSP), 3. Congregation of the Missionary Brothers of St. Francis of Assisi (CMSF), 4. Hospitaller Order of St John of God (OH), 5. Missionaries of Charity (MC), Montfort Brothers of St Gabriel (SG).

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS/ SOCIETIES FOR WOMEN IN THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH⁹⁰

I. Cloistered Monasteries in Syro-Malabar Church

1. Trinity Cenaecle Adoration Monastery (PCPA), Chelacombu,
2. Ishwar Krupa Ashram (OSB), Bhanvad, 3. Prem Jyothi Ashram (PCPA), Mahuva, 4. Mount Carmel Cloistered Convent (OCD), Malayattoor, 5. Mar Sleeva Clarist Adoration Monastery (PCPA), Vallichira.

II. Syro-Malabar Institutes for Women

1. Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), 2. Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC), 3. Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS), 4. Congregation of Sacred Heart (SH), 5. Congregation of Holy Family (CHF), 6. Sisters of the Destitute (SD), 7. Congregation of Sisters of Charity (CSC), 8. Medical Sisters of St Joseph (MSJ), 9. Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate (ASMI)-Green Gardens, 10. Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate (MSMI), 11. Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul (SCV), 12. Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth (CSN), 13. Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha (CSM), 14. Congregation of Samaritan Sisters (CSS), 15. Daughters of St. Thomas (DST), 16. Snehagiri Missionary Sisters (SMS), 17. Society of Nirmala Dasi Sisters (SNDS), 18. Society of Kristu Dasis (SKD), 19. Congregation of Preshitharam Sisters (CPS), 20. Dominican Sisters of the Holy Trinity (OP), 21. Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (SVM), 22. Sisters of St Joseph (SJC), 23. Sisters of St. Martha's Congregation (SMC), 24. Missionaries of Little Flower (MLF), 25. Society of Ladies of Mary Immaculate (SLMI), 26. Apostolic Sisters of Maty Immaculate (ASMI), 27. Congregation of Nazareth Sisters (CNS), 28. Sadhu Sevana Sabha (SSS), 29. Deen Bandhu Samaj (DBS), 30. Sisters

of Charity of St John of God (SCJG), 31. Little Servants of Divine Providence (LSDP), 32. Sisters of Jesus (SJ), 33. Little Sisters of St Therese of Lisieux (LST), 34. Society of Devpriya Sisters (DP).

III. Latin Institutes for Women having Syro-Malabar Provinces/ Vice Provinces/Regions/Delegations

a. Latin Institutes with Syro-Malabar Provinces

1. Daughters of Presentation of Mary in the Temple (DPMT), 2. Sisters of St. Joseph of St Marc (SJSM), 3. Sisters of St. Ann, Bangalore (SAB), 4. Sisters of the Poor of St Catherine of Siena (SdP), 5. Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries (MMS) (Medical Mission Sisters), 6. Sisters of St John the Baptist and Mary Queen (SJB).

b. Latin Institutes with Syro-Malabar Vice-province

1. Franciscan Handmaids of the Good Shepherd (FHGS)

c. Latin Institutes with Syro-Malabar Regions

1. Sisters of St. Philip Neri (SFN), 2. School Sisters of St Francis (OSF), 3. Congregation of the Cellitines According to the Rule of St Augustine (OSA), 4. Daughters of the Charity of the Most Precious Blood (DCPB)

d. Latin Institute with Syro-Malabar Delegation

1. Little Workers of the Sacred Heart (LWSH)

IV. Syro-Malabar Pious Unions for Women

1. Josephine Sisters (JS), 2. Little Sisters of Christ (LSC), 3. Fervent Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (FDSHJ), 4. Deivadan Sisters (DDS), 5. Sisters of Grace (SG), 6. Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker (SSJW), 7. Sisters of Mercy (SM), 8. Franciscan Sisters of Destitute (FSD), 9. Sisters of Mercy (SM)

V. Syro-Malabar Secular Institutes for Women

1. Caritas Secular Institute (CSI), 2. Servants of Our Immaculate Lady (SOIL), 3. Mary Immaculate Secular Institute (MISI), 4. Sisters of Win Society of Jesus (WIN SJ), 5. Sisters of St Alphonsa (SSA), 6. Unitas Secular Institute - Syro-Malabar (USMS).

VI. Latin Secular Institute for Women having Syro Malabar Sector of the Indian nation

1. Apostolic Oblates (AO)

VII. Monasteries sui *iuris* for Women in Syro-Malabar Church

1. Mar Thoma Sahodarikal (MTS), 2. Abhishekagni Sisters of Jesus and Mary (ASJM)

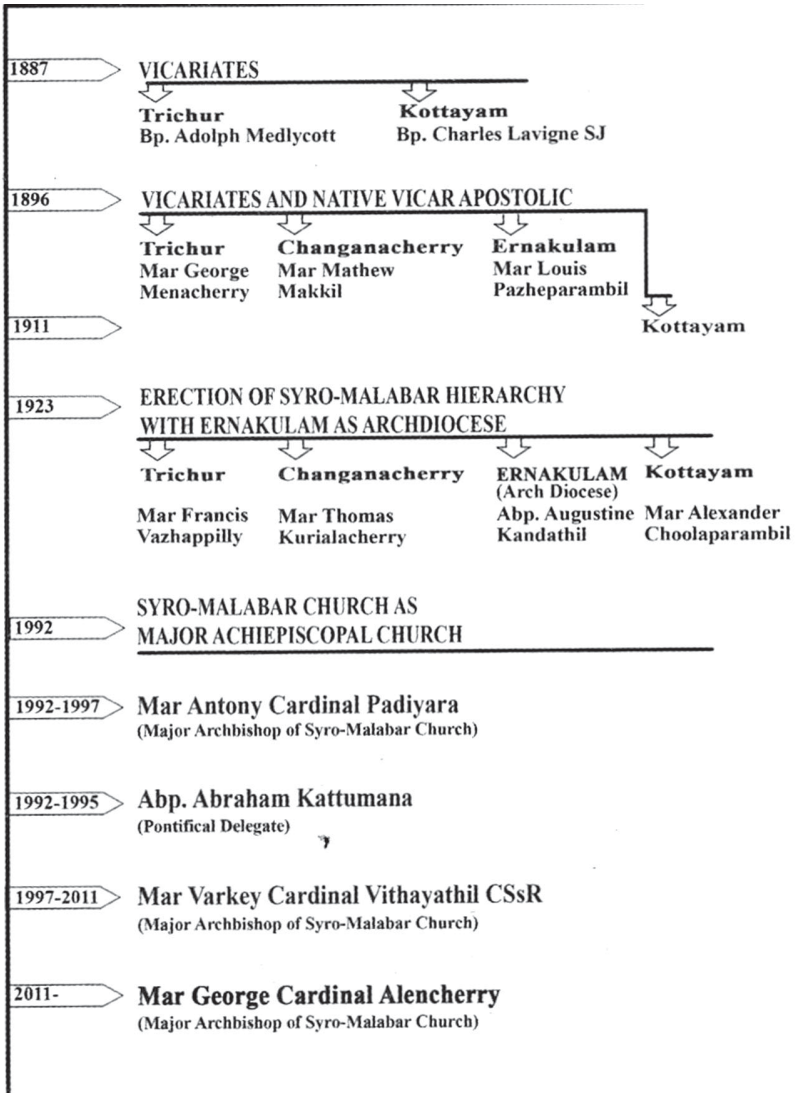
VII. Monasteries sui *iuris in fieri* for Women in Syro-Malabar Church

1. Nava Jyothi Benedictine Monastery (OSB), 2. Daivamatha Ashram (DEM), (Dayara D'mma D'Mshiha), 3. Mangalavartha Dayara (Servants of the Handmaid of the Lord)

VIII. Hermitages in Syro-Malabar Church

1. Snehadeepam, 2. Carmel Heritage

THE CHURCH BECOMES SYRO-MALABAR



SYRO MALABAR CHURCH TOMORROW

i. Need of a global jurisdiction

Syro-Malabar Church which had two vicariates in 1887 increased the number of her vicariates into three in 1896 and to four in 1911. After the erection of the Syro-Malabar hierarchy in 1923 the number of the dioceses began to increase rapidly and constantly both in the proper territory in Kerala and outside in the mission areas in Central and North India. In 1959 there were two ecclesiastical provinces and from 1962 onwards mission territories were given to this Church. In 1968 there were four exarcates in the missions and in 1977 six eparchies in the mission territories. In 1984 the number of mission eparchies was 8 and in 1988 for the first time a diocese for the Syro-Malabar migrants. When in 1992 the Syro-Malabar Church was raised as a Major archiepiscopal Church there were 12 dioceses in the proper territory, 8 in the missions and one for the Syro-Malabar migrants; thus altogether 21 dioceses.

The growth of the Syro-Malabar Church as a major archiepiscopal Church is praiseworthy. In the year 2000 the number of dioceses in the proper territory was 15 and those outside Kerala was 11. In 2012 when the present major archbishop Cardinal Alencherry took charge of the office there were 18 dioceses in Kerala and 11 outside Kerala. During his tenure i.e. from 2012 onwards till today the number of the dioceses outside Kerala increased from 11 to 17. Faridabad (2012), Melbourne (2013), Great Britain (2014), Hosur (2017), Shamshabad (2017) and Canada (2018) are the new ones. Now there are 18 dioceses in Kerala and 17 outside Kerala and 2 apostolic visitations. Thus during the 25 years of Syro-Malabar Church as a major archiepiscopal church the number of dioceses increased from 21 (1992) to 35 (in 2018). Out of these 35 eighteen are in the

proper territory and seventeen outside; of these 17 one each in USA, UK, Canada and Melbourne. Thus the Syro-Malabar Church has become truly universal or global. What is now needed, therefore, is the universal jurisdiction - the possibility of multiple jurisdiction - so that the major archbishop can exercise power over all his faithful all over the world.

ii. Scope of a patriarchate

As the apostolic constitution *Quae maiori* raising Syro-Malabar Church a Major archiepiscopal Church in 1992 says: ‘since the Syro-Malabar Church, as the constant tradition holds, owed its origin to the preaching of the apostle Thomas, and having been enriched by a proper, venerable and spiritual patrimony, has grown up to a firm stature by tiding over the crises of every kind throughout course of centuries, it seemed to us quite opportune to upgrade the same as a Major archiepiscopal church’.

In the documents erecting the two vicariates of Kottayam and Thrissur and the three vicariates of Thrissur, Ernakulam and Changanasserry it is made clear that Syro-Malabar Church is a separate church, separate from the Latin Church and the Chaldean Church. Thus the claim of the Latin archbishop of Varapuzha and the claim of the Chaldean patriarch were explicitly decreed denied by the Roman Pontiff. When the Syro-Malabar Church was granted a Syro-Malabar Hierarchy in 1923 in the document it is again stated that this church is in a position of having a separate hierarchy, though not constituted in the manner of an Eastern hierarchy with a common head and a synod of bishops. The identity of the Syro-Malabar Church was emphasized during the time of constituting this church a major archiepiscopal church on the basis of its apostolic tradition, venerable spiritual patrimony, the strong faith against all odds and the marvelous growth of the church.

The expression 'Syro-Malabar' is very meaningful in the sense that both these words have got much significance. 'Syro' or 'Syrian' refers to the ancient Syrian or Syriac Church, to which this Church had age-long contact, which should have benefitted both. Syriac Christianity or Syriac world was as large and important as was the Roman or Latin and Greek or Byzantine Christianity in the medieval period. As the Church of St Thomas Christians had no theological centre it had to depend upon the neighbouring Church, i.e., the Church of the East or the Persian or Chaldean Church. Syro-Malabar Church or the ancient Church of the St Thomas Christians, therefore, depended upon this Church for her growth in many respects, especially in the development of her liturgy.

Malabar was the ancient name of Kerala. The entire western coast of India, from Cape Comorin till Bombay, was called Malabar Coast by the Europeans. During the English time the name Malabar became popular, but was then limited to the northern part of Kerala as it was then the part of Madras presidency, while the other two regions Kochi and Thiruvithamkoor formed two other different states. In 1887, the first time when the word 'Syro-Malabar' was used, not Kerala, instead Malabar was in popular use. And that is the reason why 'Malabar' was used to denote the proper land or the abode of the St Thomas Christians. Though the Syriac patrimony and Indian heritage are expressed in the appellation 'Syro-Malabar' the apostolic tradition handed over through St Thomas, about which the St Thomas Christians always are proud of, and as they were always in ancient time called Mar Thoma Christians, a different name connecting St Thomas like Mar Thoma Catholic Church or Mar Thoma Nazrani Church, St Thomas Catholic Church are all desired expressions.

The Syro-Malabar Church which is one among the 23 Catholic Churches of Christendom, is the most active, living and rapidly growing Eastern church which can be rightly called 'doubly eastern' or 'properly eastern' as it is eastern both liturgically and

geographically. This Church has today 63 bishops (including 17 *emiriti*), 4545 diocesan priests, 3499 religious priests, 5484 men religious, 32453 women religious, 1225 Major seminarians (in 17 Major seminaries) and 5054422 faithful around the globe.⁹¹ This Church which has 4 Saints, 2 Blesseds, 3 Venerables and 13 Servants of God is heading all other Oriental Churches in Christian life, parish activities, youth ministry, vocations to religious life, conducting ecclesiastical, charitable, health and educational institutions, publications and involvement in social activities.

Nowadays it is a point of discussion among many about the need of recognizing the Syro-Malabar Church as a patriarchal church. Syro-Malabar Church, one among the 22 Oriental Churches which has today the highest number of faithful, priests, bishops etc has all the right to be called patriarchal. Her unique liturgical heritage, particular canonical discipline long-standing tradition, apostolicity etc justify this claim. The *Motu Proprio Cleri Sanctitati* has made the erection of new patriarchates as legitimate. Vatican Council II in OE 11 clarifies this point saying: ‘Since the patriarchal system is the traditional form of government in the Eastern Churches, the holy ecumenical council wishes, where there is need, new patriarchate to be set up’. According to OE 2, ‘It is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place’. So in conformity with the mind of the Council the Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church should go forward in this direction. The very same reasons for raising this Church as major archiepiscopal, could be put forward to recognize it as patriarchal. So it is the high time and it is right and just that the Syro-Malabar Church be granted the title of patriarchate.

NOTES

- ¹ An early third century apocryphal work called the *Acts of Judas Thomas* (in Syriac version) and *Acts of Thomas* (in Greek version) deals mainly with the missionary activities of St Thomas in India and the liturgical, sacramental and spiritual life of the Christian communities in the Syriac Churches. We see more on the same book in the second chapter. Hereby we use the short form *AoT* for the *Acts of Thomas*.
- ² King Gundaphar is given in Greek texts as *Goundaphorous*, in Latin as *Gundaforus* or *Gundoforus* and in Syriac as *Gudnaphar*.
- ³ E. H. Warmington, *The Commerce Between Roman Empire and India* (New Delhi 1995) 52.
- ⁴ S. H. Moffet, *History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. I (New York 1998) 31.
- ⁵ *The Acts of Thomas*, Chapter 1, paragraphs 11,12, in J. Puliurumpil, *Acts of Thomas: a Theological Source for St Thomas Christians* (Kottayam 2019) 98-99.
- ⁶ *The Acts of Thomas*, Chapter 7, paragraph 3.
- ⁷ There are different opinions regarding the name and nature of this Indian king. This name appears in Syriac text as *Mzdai*, in Greek version as *Misdaios* and in Latin *Misdeus*. According to M. Levi, *Vasudeva* is the Sanskrit form of *Mzdai*. In certain coins discovered the names of the king in the Greek legend is given as *Bazodeo* and *Bazdeo*. This name due to the Iranian influence became *Mazdeo* and then in the Syriac text as *Mzdai* (M. Levy, *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XXIII (Madras 1904) 10. According to Wilson, the word *Mahadeva*, passing thorough Iranian mouths can assume the form of *Mahdeo* and *Masdeo* and later as *Mzdai* in the Syriac text. See the details in Wilson, *Catalogue of Mackenzie's Collection* (Madras 1882) 77.

- ⁸ Jerome, *Epistola ad Magnum oratorem urbis Romae* (PL XXII) col. 667.
- ⁹ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.10.
- ¹⁰ For details see E.H. Warmington, *Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India* (London 1974) 13.
- ¹¹ S.H. Moffet, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, Vol. I (New York 1992) 38.
- ¹² For details see J. Puliurumpil, *The Acts of Thomas, A Theological Source for St Thomas Christians* (Kottayam 2018).
- ¹³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* I, 13 (PL XX) col. 120.
- ¹⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III,1.
- ¹⁵ W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London 1864) 32.
- ¹⁶ S. Gamurrini, *Silviae Aquitanae Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta* (Roma 1888) 33-34.
- ¹⁷ Patrologia Latina XIV, 1143.
- ¹⁸ Patrologia Greca LIX, 361.
- ¹⁹ Patrologia Greca LXIII, 179.
- ²⁰ Patrologia Greca LXIII, 237.
- ²¹ Gregory of Tours, *Miraculum Liber* I, 32, in Patrologia Latina LXXI, 733.
- ²² Isidore of Seville, *Ethymologiarum Liber* 14.3.5-6, in Patrologia Latina LXXXII, 497.
- ²³ Isidore of Seville, *De Ortu et Obitu Patrem*. 74. 132, in Patrologia Latina LXXXIII, 152.
- ²⁴ Patrologia Latina XXII, 588
- ²⁵ Patrologia Latina XXII, 7211.
- ²⁶ See the details in Patrologia Latina XXIII, 274.
- ²⁷ Patrologia Latina XVI, 1143.
- ²⁸ See the details in Patrologia Latina XXII, 1104.
- ²⁹ Patrologia Latina XXII, 1194.
- ³⁰ H. D'Souza, *In the steps of St Thomas* (Madras-Mylapore 2009), 59.

- ³¹ W. Vincent, *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, Containing an account of the Navigation of the Ancients* (London 1805) 407.
- ³² L. Casson, *Periplus of the Eritrean Sea* (Princeton 1989) 85.
- ³³ See the details in Pliny, *Natural History*, W.H.S. Jones (tr. & ed.) (London 1969) 69.
- ³⁴ A. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas* (London 1905) 134.
- ³⁵ See H. D'Souza, *In the Steps of St Thomas* (Madras-Mylapore 2009) 47.
- ³⁶ H. Heras, *The Two Apostles of India* (Trichinapoly 1944) 18.
- ³⁷ M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I (Bangalore 1989) 104.
- ³⁸ J. W. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmos* (London 1987) 118.
- ³⁹ J. W. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmos* (London 1987) 120.
- ⁴⁰ Patrologia Graeca LXXXVIII, 448.
- ⁴¹ A. Ricci, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (London 1931) 338.
- ⁴² S. H. Moffet, *History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. I (New York 1998) 15.
- ⁴³ Abu Salih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries* (Oxford 1895) 300.
- ⁴⁴ K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol. I (New Delhi 1989) 270.
- ⁴⁵ Narration of the siege of Kollam fort is described in V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I (Trivandrum 1906) 289-290.
- ⁴⁶ A. Ayyer, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* (Ernakulam 1926) 54.
- ⁴⁷ L.W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas* (Cambridge 1956) 167.
- ⁴⁸ P. Malekandathi (ed.) *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, (Kochi 2003) 258.
- ⁴⁹ P. Malekandathi, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar* (Kochi 2003) 249.
- ⁵⁰ Dionysio S.J. *Informacao de Crisandade de Sao Thomae que estam no Malabar, Reino do Indie Oriental*, 1578, as quoted in M. Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians* (Bangalore 1970) 153.
- ⁵¹ P. Malekandathi *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar* (Kochi 2003) 257.

- ⁵² From 1510 till 1961 Goa was a Portuguese colony.
- ⁵³ There was also a Spanish Padroado – rights and privileges enjoyed the Spanish authorities in South and central Americas.
- ⁵⁴ *Bullarium Patronatus* I, 33-34.
- ⁵⁵ *Bullarium Patronatus* I, 148-149.
- ⁵⁶ *Bullarium Patronatus* I, 260-261.
- ⁵⁷ Session II, decree I.
- ⁵⁸ Regarding his journey (to and fro) and his activities see *Prima Spedizione all' Indie Orientali* (Roma 1666).
- ⁵⁹ See the details in T. Pallipurathukunnel, *A Double Regime in the Malabar Church* (Alwaye 1982) 21.
- ⁶⁰ Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, vol. II (Trivandrum 1906) 189.
- ⁶¹ Ambrosius of S. Theresia, *Hierarchia Carmelitana* (Rome 1939) 205.
- ⁶² For details see Paremakal, T., *Varthamanapustakam* (Rome 1971) 10-12.
- ⁶³ J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict in the Suriani Church of India* (Kottayam 1994) 123.
- ⁶⁴ For the details of the 'Goan Schism' see J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict in the Suriani Church of India* (Rome 1993)
- ⁶⁵ *Jus Pontificium* V, 196.
- ⁶⁶ J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict in the Suriani Church of India* (Rome 1993) 8.
- ⁶⁷ See the details in J. Puliurumpil, *A Period of Jurisdictional Conflict in the Suriani Church of India* (Rome 1993) 16-20.
- ⁶⁸ For the details of the Pandari schism see J. Puliurumpil, *Pandari Schism (Mal.)* (Kottayam 2004) 145-155.
- ⁶⁹ P. Pallath, *Catholic Church in India* (Rome 2005) 111.
- ⁷⁰ See the details in C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India, Her Quest for Autochthonous Bishops* (Kottayam 1995) 103.
- ⁷¹ See the report of Persico in C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India, Her Quest for Autochthonous Bishops* (Kottayam 1995) 19-20.

- ⁷² P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India* (Rome 2005) 118.
- ⁷³ C. Varicatt, *The Suriani Church of India, Her Quest for Autochthonous Bishops* (Kottayam 1995) 363.
- ⁷⁴ P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India* (Rome 2005) 125.
- ⁷⁵ C. Varikatt, *Suriani Church of India, Her Quest for Autochthonous Bishops* (Kottayam 1995) 159.
- ⁷⁶ For the details on the erection of the vicariate see P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India* (Rome 2005) 129-131.
- ⁷⁷ See V. Vithayathil, *The Origin and Progress of Syro-Malabar Hierarchy* (Kottayam 1980) 76-78.
- ⁷⁸ J. Puliurumpil, *Syro-Malabar Church Towards Patriarchate* (Kottayam 2017) 264.
- ⁷⁹ See the original Latin text and the English translation in *Synodal News*, no.1 (1993) 11, 13.
- ⁸⁰ *Synodal News*, no. 1 (1993) 8-9.
- ⁸¹ P. Pallath, *The Catholic Church in India* (Rome 2005) 145.
- ⁸² See *Synodal News*, No. 2 (February 1994) 14.
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- ⁸⁷ *Synodal News*, No. 1-2, vol. 25 (2017) 191-192.
- ⁸⁸ *Synodal News*, No. 1-2, vol. 25 (2017) 186.
- ⁸⁹ Syro-Malabar Church Year Book (Mount St. Thomas Kakkanad 2018) 55-58.
- ⁹⁰ Syro-Malabar Church Year Book (Mount St. Thomas Kakkanad 2018) 59-68.
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