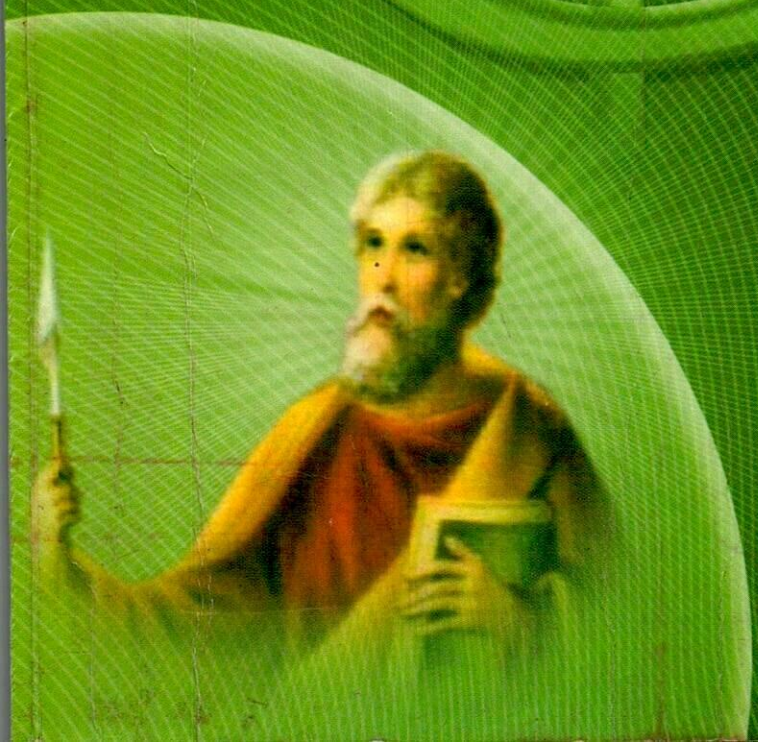
Early Christianity in India



Institute of Asian Studies
Chennai, India

EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

(with parallel Developments in other parts of Asia)

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EDITORIAL NOTE

At the concluding session of the First International conference on the History of Early Christianity in India held in New York during 13-16th August, 2005, it was unanimously decided to found the International Centre for the study of Early Christianity in India. The main objectives of the this centre (ICSCI) are to have such conferences often in various parts of the world to study the early Christianity in India and other parts of Asia and to bring out the proceedings of the conference in the form of handy volumes from time to time.

It is in this context that this volume is made available for the benefit of international audience.

Out of the 55 papers presented at the Second International Conference, a few were given by the writers in a written format. We have organized such papers, 20 in number, in a cogent way so as to cover a wide range that falls within the focus of the theme of the conference. It is our fond hope that when the awaited papers are received in the future, the same will be compiled in subsequent volumes.

Dr.G.John Samuel, the Chairman of the ICSCI and the Coordinator of the Second International conference has been the main source of inspiration and encouragement in bringing out the present volume.

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THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

(From the Desk of the Conference Co-ordinator)

G. John Samuel

The very idea of organizing the international Conference series on the history of early Christianity in India sprouted as part of our efforts to study the social, religious and political history of this land and its rich heritage from an Asian perspective. It also formed part of our quest to discover the glorious but forgotten parts of our history, especially the history of our religions.

Although traditions associated with the missionary works of St. Thomas in India were very vibrant among our people, there is a tendency among most of our historians to ignore them as mere legends. They reject all the three traditions associating the Apostle with North India, the Malabar regions and the Coromandal Coast as events having no historical validity and that they were neither possible nor probable in that social milieu.

The First International Conference on the History of Early Christianity in India organized in New York in 2005 established beyond any doubt about the historicity of the advent of St. Thomas to India and proved that India was one of the countries to receive Christianity in the first century A.D. itself. The very valuable papers presented by Dr. Basil Davis, Prof. George Menachery and others provided rich data for the existence of Christianity all over the then Indian peninsula which included Pakistan and part of Afghanistan.

This Conference revealed the fact that due to lack of adequate knowledge and paucity of rich data about the external history of the Indian soil, many of the traditional historians are not able to digest the historicity behind the various traditions pertaining to the advent of St. Thomas and a hoard of subsequent Christian missionaries to India from various parts of Asia. Consequently, we expanded the theme of the Second Conference a little further with a view to giving a comparative perspective to our approach to the study of early history of Christianity in India. We tried to do this by providing more data on the

simultaneous growth of this religion in the neighbouring Asian countries. We were astonished to notice the remarkable role played by the silk route and the spice route in the spreading of Christianity in various parts of Asia. It is really amazing to study how the above trade routes that linked other parts of the globe with India by land and sea have been made the best use of by the Christian missionaries and Buddhist monks for the propagation of their religions.

Nearly 75 scholars all over the world have come forward to submit their research papers on various aspects of the interaction between early Christianity and the Indian soil. Since this is entirely a new area of academic pursuit, our journey, which is really a pilgrimage, is indeed very slow. Yet we are sure that many more scholars in various countries will join hands in this venture in the near future. We have already many good scholars with us in this phase of our journey which was started in New York in August, 2005. Some of the research papers submitted by our scholars are surely very good contributions to this area of study which is now receiving more and more illumination and enlightenment. There are also new attempts by young scholars who need our encouragement.

We are sure that these studies will help not only to reconstruct the history of our early Churches in this land but also to have a better understanding about our external history of the classical and medieval India, especially our cultural and religious interactions with our neighbouring countries. This will help establish objectively the rich contributions of Christianity to other religious systems of this country. The unique role played by early Christianity in the building up of the composite culture of this land of spirituality and wisdom can as well be established.

May this Conference widen our perception and understanding about the rich religious heritage of this country and the contribution of early Christianity to this multi-dimensional traditions. May this international meet help us to have a clear knowledge about the history of early Christianity in this land and its deep roots in the Indian ethos.

22/XI/18

ANTIOCH - GATEWAY TO ASIAN CHRISTIANITY

Basil S. Davis

Asian Christianity

An early church tradition claims that the apostle Thomas came to south India and established churches in Kerala and that he was martyred in or near Mylapore in Chennai.[1] Until quite recently, this tradition was treated with skepticism by most scholars of Church history. New Testament exegetes and historians of early Christianity felt that there was little evidence in support of this tradition. But all that has changed. At the First International Conference of Early Christianity in India which was held in New York in August 2005 many scholars read academic papers on early Christianity in India, offering literary, archaeological, linguistic and geographical evidence. Some of us read papers on the apostle Thomas, establishing the historicity of this tradition using different but complementary approaches. The diverse approaches taken and the varied evidence that was produced together served to provide a univocal testimony to the apostolic origins of Indian Christianity. It would be no exaggeration to state that not even the most skeptical rationalist could come away from this conference without being convinced of the antiquity of Christianity in India.

So the Second Conference on Early Christianity in India does not have to prove that India received the Christian faith directly from the apostles. Since that has already been established, we may now examine more closely the historical circumstances by which Christianity reached India. This closer scrutiny of early Indian Christianity will entail a look at the growth of Christianity in other parts of Asia. For Indian Christianity was never an isolated phenomenon. India was certainly not the first Asian country to be evangelized. Christianity was born on Asian soil in Judea and Galilee - the land called Israel. Jesus was an Asian, and so were all the apostles. St. Paul was certainly an Asian, hailing from Tarsus (Acts 9:11) which is in present day Turkey. The New Testament tells us that during the apostolic period the Christian faith reached Africa (Acts 8: 26-39), other parts of Asia (Acts 11:19-30), and Europe (Acts 17). By the time the book of Revelation was written there were at least seven established churches in Asia

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(Rev 1:4). The Acts of the Apostles states that the church came into existence in Jerusalem with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). It is from here that Christianity spread to other parts of Asia and the rest of the world. In this paper we shall enquire about the route followed by the Christian faith on its journey from Jerusalem to India and other parts of Asia. I shall argue that Christianity did not come directly to India from Jerusalem, but that it came through the church that was established in Antioch.[2] This is Antioch on the Orontes, which was in Syria in the first century. (It is now part of Turkey, and is called Antakya.) I shall also show that Christianity went to other parts of Asia, beginning with Asia Minor (western Turkey), from Antioch. Thus Antioch served as the portal of Christianity to Asia. From this city the Christian faith moved northwards to Asia Minor and southwards to India.

The Acts of Thomas

The tradition that the apostle Thomas came to India directly from Jerusalem may have received support from the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* written in the Syriac language in the early part of the third century CE.[3] This book opens with these words:

> And when all the apostles had been for a time in Jerusalem, - Simon Cephas and Andrew, and Jacob (James) and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Thomas and Matthew the publican, and Jacob the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Kananite, and Judas the son of Jacob (James), - they divided the countries among them, in order that each one of them might preach in the region which fell to him and in the place to which his Lord sent him. And India fell by lot and division to Judas Thomas the apostle. And he was not willing to go, saying, "I have not strength enough for this, because I am weak. And I am a Hebrew: how can I teach the Indians?" And whilst Judas was reasoning thus, our Lord appeared to him in a vision of the night, and said to him: "Fear not, Thomas, because my grace is with you." But he would not be persuaded at all, saying: "Whithersoever you will, our Lord, send me: only to India I will not go."[4]

The *Acts* goes on to narrate that Thomas was forced to go to India against his will. Christ appeared to him and sold him as a slave to a merchant called Habban who took him to India to work as a carpenter and mason. The point is that according to the *Acts of Thomas* the apostle comes to India directly from

Jerusalem. It is in Jerusalem that the apostles gather and the lot falls on Thomas to go to India, a decision that is confirmed by Jesus both in a vision and in a subsequent personal appearance. But the *Acts of Thomas* is not a historical document. This document may well contain historical elements, but the historicity of the work as a whole has been rejected by scholarship.[5]

The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament offers a more reliable picture of the spread of Christianity to Asia. There is no question of the apostles dividing up the world among themselves for the purposes of evangelization. Jesus simply assures them prior to his Ascension: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)." Thus the evangelization of the world will be done in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the Acts of the Apostles goes on to describe how the Holy Spirit led the apostles to evangelize Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles - in Judea, Samaria, Asia, Greece, Italy and elsewhere. Moreover, the Acts of the Apostles also makes it plain that after the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, they no longer needed to cast lots to discern the will of God. This is an important argument that will highlight the historical unreliability of the opening verses of the *Acts of Thomas*.

The Acts of the Apostles states that the apostles cast lots to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26). But this was the first and the last time that they are described as using this method for discerning God's will. There is no mention of any lots in the process of the selection of the seven deacons in Acts 6:1-7. And when the Church sent Saul and Barnabas on an apostolic mission it was not by the casting of lots but through prayer and fasting:

> While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13: 2-3).

It was through a prophecy, uttered by someone in the group under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the leaders decided to select Barnabas and Saul for this mission. Indeed, the only other time that the casting of lots is mentioned in the New Testament is when the soldiers cast lots for the clothing worn by Jesus after his being nailed to the cross (Mt 27:35; Mk 15:24; Lk 23:34; Jn 19:24). The

casting of lots to divide up land is attested in the Old Testament (Joshua 18:6-10; Neh 11:1). Lots were also cast to assign various duties to different groups of people (1 Chr. 25:8). But the practice of casting lots - while amply attested in the Bible - appears never to have been used after the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church.

The obsolescence of the practice of casting lots is probably related to the fact that the apostles believed that through the Holy Spirit it was Jesus himself who was guiding the church. This is certainly suggested by the episode of Paul receiving a call to minister to the Macedonians:

> They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them (Acts 16:6-10).

Paul and his companions were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to evangelize Asia. (This Asia is the name of the Roman Province situated on the western part of modern Turkey. It was also called Asia Minor, to distinguish it from the continent of Asia.) The Holy Spirit apparently used the medium of prophecy to forbid Paul from evangelizing Asia during that trip.[6] Luke says the Spirit of *Jesus* prevented Paul and his team from going to Bithynia. In mentioning first the Holy Spirit and then the Spirit of Jesus Luke does not mean that there were two Spirits, but he evidently identifies the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Jesus, inasmuch as it was Jesus who had sent the Holy Spirit from the Father (Acts 2:33). Finally, it is through a vision that Paul learns that God wants him to go to Macedonia. Visions, too, are means by which God communicates messages to people through the Spirit (Acts 2:17).

Luke's account of the history of the church in his Acts of the Apostles cannot be taken as a complete and detailed account of everything that happened in the early years following the resurrection of Jesus. However, a comparison of the Acts with the Pauline letters shows that even where Luke diverges from Paul

in certain details he is in basic agreement on the essentials. This very important observation shows that the essential historicity of the Acts of the Apostles must be taken seriously.[7] Now Luke has shown that while the apostles did use lots prior to their receiving the Holy Spirit this method of discerning God's will was permanently abandoned after Pentecost. The gift of prophecy is amply attested in the epistles as well as the book of Revelation (cf. 1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12:6; Eph 2:20; 1 Thess 5:20; Rev 1:3). So there is really no justification for questioning the historicity of Luke's account. This means that we have to reject the opening words of the *Acts of Thomas*. The apostles did not gather in Jerusalem to divide up the world by the procedure of casting lots.

The rejection of the opening story in the *Acts of Thomas* undercuts the base on which the tradition of a direct evangelization from Jerusalem rests. Since the *Acts of Thomas* is unreliable in this regard, we must examine other sources that might supply us with the information we seek. Of course, the New Testament is the most reliable source for this investigation. As we shall see, the New Testament evidence indicates that Antioch in Syria served as the mother church from which apostolic missions evangelized the Roman province of Asia (i.e. Asia Minor) and even India itself. Thus the church of Antioch may be considered the mother of Asian Christianity.

The city of Antioch

The importance of Antioch in the first century CE cannot be overestimated. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria.[8] It was situated on the Orontes River and was the capital of the Roman province of Syria. The position of this city was an important factor in its role as a major trading city of the Empire:

> Because of its position, the city controls the network of roads, supplemented by the Orontes river, which from earliest times has made this part of Syria the route by which land traffic passes between Anatolia and the countries of the South, and between the Mediterranean and the upper Euphrates.[9]

Anatolia is the name given to the peninsula that forms the bulk of modern Turkey. It included Asia Minor, where the seven churches of Revelation were located. The Orontes River gave ready access to the Mediterranean. Antioch was

built almost entirely on the left bank of the Orontes and on an island in the river at the northern part of the city.[10] The Orontes today is a shallow and muddy stream, for which earthquake action is at least partly to blame. But in ancient times it was navigable from its mouth as far as Antioch. Strabo (d. about 25 CE) writes:

> Now on the west, below Antioch and Seleucia, lies the sea; and it is near Seleucia that the Orontes forms its outlets, this city being forty *stadia* distant from the outlets, and one hundred and twenty from Antioch. Inland voyages from the sea to Antioch are made on the same day one starts (Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.7).

Seleucia lay to the west of Antioch and therefore closer to the sea. So according to Strabo the distance from Antioch to the Mediterranean was 120 + 40 = 160 *stadia*. It is obvious that Strabo's figures are rounded approximations and not precise numbers. Since a Roman *stadium* was about 185 meters, a simple calculation shows that Antioch was roughly 30 km from the sea. The importance of Antioch lay no doubt in the navigability of the Orontes. It was this river that provided Antioch with a port that gave access to the Mediterranean Sea.

Both Antioch and Seleucia were founded towards the end of the fourth century BCE by Seleucus I Nicator, who was one of the generals of Alexander the Great. Seleucus named these and the other cities that he founded after members of his family. The successors of Seleucus continued to make additions to Antioch, and when Antiochus Epiphanes (175 - 164 BCE) added the fourth quarter to the city it came to be called *Tetrapolis* ("four cities"). Greek was the official language of Antioch, but most of the population spoke Aramaic.[11] The city measured about 6 km from east to west, and a little less from north to south. The Romans took control of Antioch and the whole of Syria in 64 BCE. The population of Antioch reached a peak of about a half a million inhabitants in the early Roman period. It then qualified as the third largest city in the Empire, after Rome and Alexandria.

Antioch in the New Testament

Antioch on the Orontes is mentioned 30 times in the New Testament, of which 29 occurrences are in the Acts of the Apostles.[12] The only place where this

city is mentioned outside of the Acts is in Gal 2:11. The frequency of the appearances of Antioch in the Acts is a strong indicator that the church of Antioch played a key role in the spread of the gospel in the early years of Christianity.

The first time that we hear the name Antioch is when the seven deacons are chosen to assist the apostles in the daily distribution of food to the widows in the Jerusalem church. The problem was that Greek speaking widows felt that they were being neglected (Acts 6:1). This may have been because the apostles were all Aramaic speakers and so the Greek speaking widows found it difficult to communicate with them. Accordingly, the apostles asked the other members of the church to select seven men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom who could take care of this matter. The fact that all seven men chosen for this task had Greek names (Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus) is an indicator that they were Greek speaking. This way the Greek speaking widows would not feel so marginalized in a predominantly Aramaic speaking community. One of these seven chosen men was Nicolaus who was a proselyte - i.e. a Gentile who had converted to Judaism - from Antioch (Acts 6:5).

After the martyrdom of Stephen, one of the seven deacons, a persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and the disciples were scattered as a result. This scattering helped to spread the gospel outside of Judea:

> Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:19-20).

Thus Antioch received the gospel. Initially, it was the Jews who heard the message of Christ, and then the Gentiles too were evangelized. The fact that Nicolaus of Antioch was not a Jew by birth might have encouraged the evangelists to speak to the Gentiles of Antioch. A large number of Gentiles were converted to the Christian faith (Acts 11:21). Acts makes three references to the large numbers of believers in Antioch ("a great number that believed turned to the Lord [v. 21]," "a large company was added to the Lord [v. 24]," Saul and

Barnabas "taught a large company of people [v. 26]"). So there can be no doubt that Antioch is the first significant center of Christianity after Jerusalem.

Antioch and the Churches of Asia Minor

It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Antioch soon became a highly developed church. There were full time ministers of prophecy and teaching in Antioch (Acts 13:1). Antioch soon became the headquarters of all the Gentile churches. The apostolic decree addressed to the Gentile Christians was sent to the church of Antioch (Acts 15: 22, 30), even though it was addressed to the Gentiles of the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:23).

Although Paul mentions Antioch only once in his extant letters, yet the incident he narrates - when he had to publicly censure Cephas (Simon Peter) - was not a trivial one:

> But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (Gal 2:11-14).

Paul stresses the public nature of Cephas' offense and the public nature of the correction. Paul's narration of this episode indicates that the church at Antioch was well known to the Christians in Galatia to whom he wrote this letter.

The Acts of the Apostles tells us that Paul evangelized the following cities and regions of Asia Minor from Antioch as the home base: Perga and Pisidian Antioch (13:14), Iconium (14:1), Lystra and Derbe (14:6), Attalia (14:25), Phrygia and Galatia (16:6), Troas (16:8). When Paul was in Philippi he and his companions enjoyed the hospitality of Lydia, a dealer in purple goods from Thyatira in Asia (16:14-15). Later Paul went to Ephesus and spent some time

there (19:1-41). Thus the initial evangelical missions to Asia Minor came from the base church in Antioch.

Eusebius provides conflicting testimonies on the bishopric of Antioch in its initial stages. In one place he writes that Evodius was the first bishop of Antioch (*Church History* III. 22), and in other that Peter was the first bishop of Antioch (*Church History* III. 36). We know that Peter did spend some time in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). But since the office of bishop was a later development in the church (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7; *Didache* 15.1-2) it would probably be an anachronism to say that Peter was the bishop of Antioch. At any rate it was from Antioch that Peter evangelized the Jews who lived in Asia Minor: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1)."

Thus there is ample evidence from that Antioch served as the missionary base from which Asia Minor was evangelized. The evidence of the New Testament is corroborated by the various letters written by Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, very shortly after 100 CE, to churches in Asia Minor. Ignatius wrote letters to the churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia and Smyrna, all in Asia Minor. The fact that these churches were in communion with the church of Antioch shows that they were probably established by missions sent from Antioch a few decades earlier.

John the author of Revelation wrote his book just a few years before Ignatius wrote his letters. The Book of Revelation contains letters addressed to these churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Rev 2-3). Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia are among the churches to which Ignatius wrote his letters. Thus it is a plausible hypothesis that all the seven churches of Revelation were founded by missions sent by the mother church in Antioch.

The gospel of Matthew

Traditionally the gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew the tax collector who became one of the twelve apostles (Mt 9:9; 10:3). This tradition is

attributed to Papias of Hierapolis (c. 130 CE) and is cited by Eusebius in his *Church History*:

> Matthew (i.e. the apostle) put together in the Hebrew (or Aramaic) language the discourses (logia) and each one translated them as best as he could (Eusebius, *Church History* III 39. 16).

Eusebius' testimony is seconded by Jerome:

> Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek though by what author is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Caesarea which Pamphilus so diligently gathered. I have also had the opportunity of having the volume described to me by the Nazarenes of Beroea, a city of Syria, who use it (Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 3).

Unfortunately, we do not have any ancient manuscript of the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew or Aramaic. So scholars have to depend on the internal evidence of the gospel itself for clues to its origin.

The gospel of Matthew that we have in the New Testament is written in Greek. Now, the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke show a large number of similarities of wording that has led scholars to assume that at least one evangelist had made use of another gospel while writing his own. Traditionally, scholars since St. Augustine assumed that Mark had copied from Matthew and that Luke had made use of both Matthew and Mark in writing his own gospel (cf. Lk 1:1-4). But this view was seriously challenged in the 19th century and since then scholars are in virtual agreement that Mark was the earliest of the three gospels and that both Matthew and Luke have made use of Mark.[13] Some scholars think there was an earlier Hebrew or Aramaic version of Matthew's gospel, which has now been lost, but that the translator of this earlier gospel had made extensive use of Mark in rendering the Greek version of Matthew. But since Matthew has reproduced so much of Mark verbatim, we should not talk about a *translation* of Matthew from Aramaic (or Hebrew) to Greek, but a whole new *edition*.

Indeed, it can be easily shown that the Greek Matthew could not be a simple translation of an Aramaic or Hebrew original. Matthew shows that the virginal conception of Jesus is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Mt 1:22-23). But the original Hebrew text (Is 7:14) does not say that a virgin (*bethulah*) will conceive, but simply that a young woman (*almah*) will conceive. The Isaiah prophecy cited by Matthew is taken from the Septuagint which states that a virgin (*parthenos*) will conceive. The Septuagint version makes sense in the context of Mt 1:22-23. But it is hard to see how Matthew could have found prophetic support for the virgin birth of Jesus in the *Hebrew* Bible. Numerous other examples such as this can be cited to show that Matthew's gospel as it stands could never have been composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. Today, scholars generally believe that the gospel of Matthew in the New Testament was written not by a Galilean apostle, but by a Greek speaking scribe in Antioch.[14]

Matthew's gospel contains a highly developed sense of church that is absent in the other three gospels. The word church (*ekklesia*) appears three times in Matthew (16:18; 18:17, 17). This word never appears once in the other three gospels. This alone suggests that the gospel was written in a well established Greek speaking church. Antioch is therefore the best fit. Thus the internal evidence of the gospel suggests Antioch as the place of composition. Ignatius of Antioch writing about the year 100 CE has numerous citations from Matthew (*Ephesians* 5:2; 14:2; 17:1; *Philadelphians* 3:1; *Smyrnaeans* 1:1; 6:1; *Polycarp* 1:3; 2:2, etc.). By contrast Ignatius rarely cites from Luke, Mark or John. This is external evidence for the currency of the gospel in Antioch.

India and the gospel of Matthew

Church tradition has it that the gospel of Matthew was found in India as early as the second century CE. Pantaenus was the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria about 180 CE. We have the following testimony about Pantaenus from Eusebius:

> They say that he showed such zeal in his warm disposition for the divine word that he was appointed as a herald for the gospel of Christ to the heathen in the East, and was sent as far as India. For indeed there were until then many evangelists of the word who had forethought to use inspired zeal on the apostolic model for the increase and the building up of the divine word. One of these was

> Pantaenus, and it is said that he went to the Indians, and the tradition is that he found there that among some of those who had known Christ the Gospel according to Matthew had preceded his coming; for Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and had left them the writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters, which was preserved until the time mentioned (Eusebius, *Church History*, V. 10).

Rufinus of Aquileia - a contemporary of Jerome, also makes mention of Bartholomew going to India. But Rufinus may have learned this from Eusebius' *Church History*, which he translated from Greek to Latin. Eusebius' testimony may be supplemented with that of Jerome:

> Pantaenus, a philosopher of the stoic school, according to some old Alexandrian custom, where, from the time of Mark the evangelist the ecclesiastics were always doctors, was of so great prudence and erudition both in scripture and secular literature that, on the request of the legates of that nation, he was sent to India by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria, where he found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had preached the advent of the Lord Jesus according to the gospel of Matthew, and on his return to Alexandria he brought this with him written in Hebrew characters (Jerome, *Illustrious Men*, 36).

Both Eusebius and Jerome concur on the following details: (1) The apostle Bartholomew had evangelized the Indians. (2) Bartholomew had taken the gospel of Matthew to India. (3) Pantaenus visited India and there he found the gospel of Matthew written in Hebrew letters.

Jerome tells us in addition that Bartholomew had evangelized the Indians using the gospel of Matthew ("preached the advent of the Lord Jesus according to the gospel of Matthew") and that Pantaenus had brought a copy of Matthew's gospel (written in Hebrew) back to Alexandria.

Let us examine these testimonies closely. Eusebius tells us that Bartholomew was an apostle. He does not say that Bartholomew was one of the Twelve. Moreover, Eusebius' use of the word apostle is not always reliable:

> In this he (i.e. Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus) mentions both John, Philip the apostle, and Philip's daughters as follows: "For great luminaries sleep in Asia, and they will rise again at the last day of the advent of the Lord, when he shall

> come with glory from heaven and call back all the saints, such as was Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who sleeps at Hierapolis with his two daughters who grew old as virgins and his third daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit and rests in Ephesus." (*Church History*, III. 31)

Who is this Philip? Eusebius calls him an apostle, and Polycrates thought he was one of the Twelve. Eusebius goes on to say further:

> And Luke in the Acts of the Apostles mentions the daughters of Philip who were then living with their father at Caesarea in Judaea and were vouchsafed the gift of prophecy. He says as follows: "We came to Caesarea and entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven, and remained with him. And he had four daughters who were prophetesses." (*Church History*, III. 31)

Eusebius is quoting Acts 21:8-9. Now this Philip the Evangelist is not one of the Twelve, but belonged to the group of seven men chosen by the apostles to help with the ministry to the widows in Acts 6:1-6. Philip the apostle is a different person altogether (Mt 10:3; Mk 3: 18; Lk 6:14; Jn 1:43). But the identical name has caused confusion between the apostle and the evangelist. Philip the apostle was from Bethsaida (Jn 1:44), and Philip the evangelist had his home in Caesarea (Acts 21:8). And Eusebius himself refers to this Philip as "one of the seven." This indicates that Eusebius' use of the word apostle can be ambiguous. So the label of apostle as applied to this Bartholomew does not allow us to infer that the *apostle* Bartholomew went to India.

The identity of Bartholomew

Now, it is not just Eusebius but Polycrates (who wrote around185 to 195 CE) who had confused the apostle Philip with the evangelist by the same name. This shows that in the matter of Bartholomew it is entirely possible that the tradition had confounded the apostle Bartholomew with a later evangelist of the same name. Now Jerome wrote later than Eusebius, so it is very likely that he too is transmitting erroneous tradition when he says that Bartholomew - one of the Twelve apostles - went to India. In fact, it is entirely possible that the error originated with Pantaenus. When Pantaenus went to India he found that the Indians had a copy of the gospel of Matthew. These Indian Christians told Pantaenus that an apostle called Bartholomew had gone there and preached the

good news to them from the gospel of Matthew. Why would an apostle need a written gospel in order to preach the good news? Paul reminds the Corinthians about the gospel he had preached to them:

> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (1 Cor 15:3-5).

A few verses later Paul says that this is the same gospel preached by all the apostles (1 Cor 15:11). The apostle Bartholomew was one of the Twelve. He was personally acquainted with Jesus, and had seen the Risen Christ himself (1 Cor 15:5; Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14; Lk 24:33-36). Why would he require a book written by an Antiochene scribe in order to preach the message of Jesus? Moreover, scholars are in virtual agreement that the gospel of Matthew was not written before the year 70. So if Bartholomew the apostle had gone to India carrying with him the gospel of Matthew, this trip could not have begun before 70 CE. Even assuming Bartholomew was only 20 years old when he became an apostle, it would mean that he was over 60 years of age when he began the journey to India. On the whole, it seems highly unlikely that one of the twelve apostles should have taken the gospel of Matthew to India and preached the good news of Jesus using that gospel.

One way of making sense of the tradition would be to assume that this Bartholomew was not the apostle of the same name. This Bartholomew might have been an evangelist who had gone to India towards the end of the first century CE. The Christians in India probably called him a *sliha* (which means *apostle* in Aramaic) and that is how Pantaenus assumed that this Bartholomew was one of the twelve apostles. By this time the gospel of Matthew may have been translated into Aramaic (using Hebrew letters).[15] It was this Aramaic version of Matthew's gospel that Pantaenus found in India, and took a copy back with him to Alexandria.

So according to this hypothesis the Bartholomew who visited India was not one of the Twelve, but was a later evangelist having the same name as the apostle. Since he took the gospel of Matthew to India this suggests that he was sent by the church in which that gospel originated, i.e. the church of Antioch.

Since the name Bartholomew is clearly Jewish, this man was a Jewish Christian evangelist. And this would make sense considering that the church of Antioch had a large number of Jewish Christians.

Antioch and India

Antioch was on the route between India and Rome. The geographer Strabo cites Nicholaus of Damascus as follows:

> He (i.e. Nicholas) says that at Antioch, near Daphne, he chanced to meet the Indian ambassadors who had been despatched to Caesar Augustus; that the letter plainly indicated more than three ambassadors, but that only three had survived (whom he says he saw), but the rest, mostly by reason of the long journeys, had died (Strabo, *Geography* 15.1.73).

It is therefore evident that Antioch had trade links with India. We have already seen that the gospel of Matthew was probably written in the church of Antioch. We shall now show that the author of this gospel had an interest in India that is not evident in the other three gospels. And the evidence for this is the reference to pearls in this gospel. Pearls are mentioned three times in Matthew (7:6; 13:45, 46), and never once in the other three gospels. Apart from a brief mention in 1 Tim 2:9, pearls do not appear elsewhere in the New Testament except in the book of Revelation (17:4; 18:12, 16; 21:21). I have argued elsewhere that the book of Revelation was written with the knowledge of Rome's trade with India.[16] I shall now show that the parable of the merchant seeking fine pearls in Matthew's gospel is an indicator that Matthew (i.e. the author of the gospel) had a knowledge of India.

The Greek document called the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* - which is a first century CE sailing guide to the Arabian Sea - states that the best quality pearls were imported from India and that particularly good quality pearls came through Muziris (*Periplus* 35, 36, 56, 59, 61, 63).[17] This high rating of the Indian pearls receives confirmation in Origen's comments on his exposition of the parable of the pearl of great price in Matt. 13:45-46:

> The land pearls are produced among the Indians only, being fitted for signet-rings and collets and necklaces; and the sea pearls, which are

> superior, are found among the same Indians, the best being produced in the Red Sea (i.e. the Arabian Sea). The next best pearls are those taken from the sea at Britain; and those of the third quality, which are inferior not only to the first but to the second, are those found at Bosporus off Scythia (*Comm. on Matthew* 1.7).

Origen goes on to provide detailed information about the harvesting of pearls in India. He must have obtained his information from merchants who passed through Alexandria. Now, Origen says that the best pearls were harvested by the Indians in the Arabian Sea. This information is in perfect agreement with the *Periplus*, which as we saw claims that high quality pearls came through Muziris, a port city on the Arabian Sea. Matthew, an educated scribe living in Antioch, would have known that a merchant who found a pearl of very great value (Matt. 13:45-46) could have traveled only to India, and since the best pearls were found in the Arabian Sea, a seaport such as Muziris is indicated. Indian pearls fetched a high price in Rome, as Pliny testifies:

> The first place therefore and the topmost rank among all things of price is held by pearls. These are sent chiefly by the Indian Ocean, among the huge and curious animals that we have described as coming across all those seas over that wide expanse of lands from those burning heats of the sun (*NH* 9.54).

Matthew was an educated scribe living in Antioch. As we have seen, Antioch was a hub of international trade. Matthew would have surely known, as did Pliny, Origen, and the author of the *Periplus*, that the best pearls came from India.

Pantaenus and Bartholomew

The foregoing discussion shows that the church of Antioch had links with India at the end of the first century when Bartholomew the evangelist came to this country. This Bartholomew brought a copy of Matthew's gospel and taught from that gospel. So his ministry may be described as teaching or catechesis rather than evangelization, although he could certainly also have evangelized many Indians.

It would be relevant to ask which parts of India were visited by Bartholomew. There is a tradition among the "East Indian" Christians in the coastal areas of Maharashtra that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had visited that region and evangelized the people there. This tradition may have arisen largely through a reading of the testimonies of church fathers such as Eusebius and Jerome. There does not appear to be any solid historical evidence in support of this tradition. Indeed, we have just seen the problems raised by the testimonies of Eusebius and Jerome. So there is no basis for assuming that the evangelist Bartholomew went to the region of present day Mumbai.

However, there is every likelihood that Bartholomew came to the southwest Malabar Coast, following the footsteps of the apostle Thomas before him. We have already seen that Antioch was the base from which the Gentile world was evangelized by the apostles. So the apostle Thomas too must have been sent to India by the church of Antioch. Indeed, there is strong evidence that Thomas did come to India from Antioch. There is a Coptic inscription on the British Museum Ostracon 50235 which says that Thomas was "a wandering apostle from Antioch."[18] The Coptic text probably dates no earlier than the 6th century CE, but the underlying tradition is certainly much older. This tradition therefore states that the apostle Thomas was sent forth by the church of Antioch.

At the First International Conference of Early Christianity in India it was established that Thomas the apostle came to India and preached the gospel in southern India, in the regions that comprise modern Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Thus there was a Christian community in south India by the second half of the first century CE. We have shown earlier in this article that the evangelist Bartholomew was sent by the same church that sent the apostle Thomas a generation earlier. So it would appear logical that Bartholomew was also sent to the Christians of south India.

Now Pantaenus visited India in the late second century CE. If Pantaenus believed that an apostle had brought the copy of Matthew's gospel to India, then Bartholomew's visit to India must have been sufficiently early for him to be remembered as an apostle. If Bartholomew had come later in the second century, Pantaenus would have met at least a few Christians who claimed to have met or at least been baptized by Bartholomew. So for Pantaenus to believe that

Bartholomew was an apostle, the visit of this Bartholomew must have occurred about a century earlier, i.e. towards the end of the first century. We have already seen that the author of the gospel of Matthew was aware of the Indo-Roman trade. And since the apostle Thomas had been sent out earlier by the church of Antioch, Matthew would have known that there was a community of Christians in India. Now Aramaic was the language spoken by most of the people of Antioch, even though Greek was the language of commerce and administration. So the gospel of Matthew was translated into Aramaic not long after it was written. Bartholomew used this Aramaic version of Matthew's gospel as a textbook for communicating the teachings of Jesus to the Indians. Bartholomew's preference for the Aramaic translation could be explained by assuming that Bartholomew was not very well versed in the Greek language.

Death of the apostle Thomas

According to Indian church tradition Thomas was martyred in the year 72 CE. This date is consistent with the testimony of John's gospel, which was probably written no earlier than 75 CE.[19] According to this gospel Thomas expresses his readiness to die with Jesus (Jn 11:8, 16). Of course, Thomas does not know what he is saying. He does not know that Jesus' hour had not yet come. But most importantly, he did not as yet have the faith and the love that were prerequisites for dying with Jesus (Jn 21: 17-19). Nevertheless, the phrase "die with him" is the language of Christian martyrdom (cf. 2 Tim 2:11-12). Later Thomas tells Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way? "(Jn 14:5). Here again, Thomas expresses his desire to *follow* Jesus, and the following of Jesus is a Johannine theme associated with martyrdom (Jn 21:18-22). Finally, it is only Thomas who is invited by Jesus to unite himself to the risen body of Christ by placing his hands on the marks of his crucifixion (Jn 20:27-28). So it would be fair to say that the gospel of John reveals knowledge of the martyrdom of Thomas and thereby lends support to the traditional date of Thomas' martyrdom.

So if Thomas died in 72 and Matthew's gospel were written shortly after this date, it would explain how this gospel came to be taken to India. When the news of the apostle's death reached Antioch, the church must have decided to send another evangelist to encourage and strengthen the faith of the church in

India that was geographically so far removed from the churches in the Mediterranean. And so the evangelist Bartholomew was sent with a copy of the gospel of Matthew to strengthen the faith of the Indian Church, and to assure them that Christ was indeed with them, even though Thomas himself had died.

Conclusion

It is now clear that Indian Christianity owes its origin to the church that was established in Antioch. This church was founded on a strong base from which the apostles could be sent forth to evangelize other parts of Asia. A northern mission to Asia Minor included Peter and Paul. John of Patmos was almost certainly a Christian prophet sent out by the church of Antioch. The southern mission to India was begun by Thomas. An evangelist by the name of Bartholomew was probably sent by Antioch to the Indian church shortly after the death of Thomas. Our study has shown that there was a spiritual bond between the church of Antioch and the Christians of India in the latter half of the first century.

End Notes

1 Klaus Karttunen traces the tradition back to the sixth century CE, in his article "On the Contacts of South India with the Western World in Ancient Times, and the Mission of the Apostle Thomas," in *South Asian Religion and Society* (London: Curzon Press, 1986) 189 - 204. See also T. Placid, "The South Indian Apostolate of St. Thomas," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 18 no 3-4 (1952) 229-245.

2. For the belief that Thomas came to India directly from Jerusalem, see Herman D'Souza, *In the Footsteps of St. Thomas* (Madras: Diocesan Press, 1983) 14.

3. A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 15; Jan N. Bremmer, "The Acts of Thomas: Place, Date and Women," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, ed. J. N. Bremmer (Louvain: Peeters, 2001) 74-90; Han J. W. Drijvers, "The Acts of Thomas," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992) 2.323.

4. Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 17.
5. Cf. Lourens P. van den Bosch, "India and the Apostolate of St. Thomas," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, 143.
6. In the second chapter of Acts we read that when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers they were given the gift of prophecy (Acts 2:17-18).
7. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ - A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001) 42; Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. Conrad H. Gempf, WUNT 49 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989); W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989); Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).
8. John P. Meier, "Antioch," in Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983) 12.
9. Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961) 15.
10. Glanville Downey, *Ancient Antioch* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963) 12.
11. A Christian form of Aramaic came to be called Syriac.
12. Pisidian Antioch in Asia Minor is mentioned three times in Acts (13:14; 14:19, 21) and once in 2 Timothy (3:11).
13. The first evidence that Matthew uses Mark was supplied by Christian Gottlieb Wilke in 1826 in an article 'Über die Parabel von den Arbeitern im Weinberge Matth. 20.1-16,' in Winer's *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, I, 73-88. The basic argument from order, to the effect that Matthew and Luke follow the same order only when parallel to Mark, was provided by Carl Lachmann, 'De ordine narrationum in evangeliis synopticis,' *TSK* VIII (1835) 570-90.

14. Cf. John P. Meier, "Antioch," in Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman: 1983) 15-27; Donald Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998) 21; Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Düsseldorf/Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchener, 2002 [1985]) I.100-103; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002) 5; Stephen Harris, *Understanding the Bible* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006) 380; Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004) 24-25; Clayton N. Jefford, "The Milieu of Matthew, the Didache and Ignatius of Antioch," in Huub van de Sandt (ed.)., *Matthew and the Didache: Two Documents from the Same Jewish-Christian Milieu?* (Assen/Minneapolis: Royal Van Gorcum/Fortress, 2005) 35-47; Wim Weren, "The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community," in *Matthew and the Didache*, 51-62.

15. Biblical Aramaic such as we find in parts of the book of Daniel is written in Hebrew letters. Christian Aramaic, also called Syriac, uses a different script.

16. "Did the Apostle Thomas Visit South India?" paper presented at the *First International Conference of Early Christianity in India*, New York, 13-16 August 2005; "Early Indian Christianity, Archaeology and the Apocalypse," paper presented at the *Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting*, Washington DC, 18-21November 2006.

17. Muziris is the name of the ancient seaport that was situated near modern Kochi in Kerala. The apostle Thomas probably landed in Muziris around 52 CE.

18. Malcolm Choat, "Thomas the 'Wanderer' in a Coptic list of the Apostles," *Orientalia* 74 Nova Series Fasc 1 (2005) 83-85.

19. Colin G. Kruse dates the gospel between 80 and 90 CE (*John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003] 30-32). Raymond E. Brown thinks a date between 75 and 110 is possible, though he favors a date after 90 (*An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney [New York: Doubleday, 2003] 214-15). Stephen Harris thinks a date between 90 and 100 is likely (*Understanding the Bible*, 411).

EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND MARTYRS

with particular reference to India and some other regions of Asia

D. Koilvaram

Introduction

"In that age every Christian was a missionary" - wrote John Foxe in his classic – *Book of Martyrs*. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" - Tertullian, the 2nd century apologist argued. Obeying the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles stepped out and landed in the far-reaching nook and corner of the globe as missionaries carrying the good news.

Raymond Lull wrote this about missionaries: "Missionaries will convert the world by preaching, but also through the shedding of tears and blood and with great labor, and through a bitter death".

All but one of these 12 apostles died as martyrs. Following the footsteps of these pioneering missionaries and martyrs, hundreds and hundreds marched out with a mission to reach out the ends of the world. While St. Paul is the apostle of the West, many proclaimed the good news to the East including Thomas and Bartholomew, men of the twelve and later on, Thaddeus of Edessa , one of the Seventy Disciples.

Role of Missionaries in Asia

Christianity had already spread to the South East and the East Asian countries even before the coming of the Western missionaries through the efforts of the Nestorian missionaries and believers from Persia, India or China. There was a large presence of followers of Jesus Christ in the early centuries widely spread across Central Asia. This was possible only due to the sacrificial work of the pioneer missionaries who laid down their lives for the cause of propagating the gospel..

Herbert J. Kane wrote, "What began as a Jewish sect in A.D. 30 had grown into a world religion by A.D. 60". The apostles of the Jewish descent never kept the faith to themselves but went all out to share it with the people of many nations - thus started the great missionary movement. Following the footsteps of the Jewish pioneers, missionaries emerged from different races and nations to take the Gospel to the far-reaching regions of the world. The Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum that was written in Edessa as early as 250 A.D., speaks of how the early churches received the testimony of the apostles who had gone out to spread the gospel to the world: James in Jerusalem, Mark in Egypt, Peter in Syria and Rome, and Thomas in India. St. Ephrem, a Syrian who died in A.D. 373, confirmed the tradition of Thomas in India.

Early Christian Missionaries and Martyrs in India

The pioneer who turned the history in bringing the good news eastward was St. Thomas, the Apostle of the East. Christianity that was born in Asia, became undoubtedly the most widely spread faith in several parts of Asia in the early days.

There is unanimity among historians that the Indian Church is ancient and its roots date back to the first century.

Apostle Thomas

The Syrian Christians or St. Thomas Christians in South India hold the apostolic foundation of their Church as an article of faith. According to them, St. Thomas came to *Muciripatinams* (anglicized - Muziris[1]), referred to as a port town and a major trade center in ancient Tamil literature, from an island in the Arabian Sea called Socotora. He preached to the Jews settled there, traveled to different places and won the souls of high caste Hindus and established churches in seven places.

The East Syrian Church also holds the view and believes on the apostolic activity of St. Thomas in India. This view and tradition can be noticed in their writings from the third century.

Mingana, in Early Spread of Christianity in India wrote : "It is the constant tradition in the Eastern Church that the Apostle Thomas evangelized India. To refer to all the Syrian and Christian Arab authors who speak of India in connection with Thomas, would, therefore, be equivalent to referring to all who have made mention of the name of St. Thomas. Thomas and India are in this respect synonymous".

The early Christian romance, Acts of Thomas is a series of episodic Acts that occurred during the visit of Apostle, Judas Thomas (Judas the Twin) to India. Thomas was sold in Syria to Habban, an envoy of Indo-Parthian King Gondophares and was taken as a slave by sea to India, was presented to Gondophares to undertake the erection of a palace for the king. Thomas instead spent all the king's money on alms, and was imprisoned by the king.

Acts of Thomas ends with the apostle's death as a martyr having been pierced to death with spears. Thomas had earned the ire of the monarch Misdaeus (Mazdai in Syriac, possibly the Kushan King, Vasudev) because of his conversion of Misdaeus' wives and a relative, Charisius and his plea for sexual abstinence had aroused the King's anger leading to his death. This was the Syrian version of the martyrdom of St. Thomas.

However, according to the local Indian tradition, his martyrdom is attributed not to the royal resentment of the apostle's ascetic and celibate faith but to the enmity of the Brahmins and the powerful opposition of the local religion[2]. Thomas was put to death with a pointed stake. There are two hills near Mylapore in Madras. All tradition points to the little mount as the scene of the martyrdom. But after the Thomas Cross was found in the larger hill people started believing that the Apostle was "wounded gravely on the smaller hill but managed to escape to the large hill and died there. In 1547 an ancient granite cross (Thomas Cross) was discovered on the larger hill by the Portuguese while digging the foundations for an oratory. This cross was incised beneath an arch. Around the arch an inscription in unknown letters in a strange language was found.

Archaeologists viewed that this cross is the original and that the others are copies or copies of copies. Later on, it was found that the unknown language was Pehlevi, middle Persian and the inscription reads: "In punishment by the

cross was the suffering of this One; He who is the true Christ, and God above, and Guide ever pure." Another archaeological evidence is the discovery in 1945 of a Roman trading station south of Madras dating to before 50 A.D. and containing a size of brick reportedly not used after the first century A.D. but similar to those found in the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore.Thus the apostle Thomas finds a place in the history as the first missionary and martyr in India. Many vested interests in India tried to suppress the visit and death of Thomas in India. But many historians could not deny the truth and the popular novelist Ka Na Subramanyam (Ka Na Su - 31.1.1912 to 16.12.1988) categorically recorded the historical facts about the apostle in his novel *'Thomas Vantār'* that he wished to consciously bring to the notice of the literary world before his death.

Apostle Bartholomew and Pantaenus, the theologian

It is believed that another apostle, Bartholomew also came to Arabia and India in pursuit of his missionary goals. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reports in the year 883 that 'in the same year Sighelm and Aethelstan conveyed to Rome the alms that the king (King Alfred) had vowed to send thither, and also to India to St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew'.

Eusebeus, called 'the father of church history' wrote:

"Pantaeus was appointed as a herald of the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the East and was sent as far as India. Among persons there who knew Christ he found the Gospel according to St. Matthew which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language which they had preserved till that time".

Pantaneus came from Alexandria, Egypt to India in 180 A.D. to preach to the Hindu philosophers, the Brahmans and intellectuals –Jerome in the fifth century itself wrote that. Pantaneus born a Jew and trained in Greek philosophy (His disciple Clement calls him the Sicilian bee), became the greatest Christian teacher of his age and had served as the head of the catechetical school for the training of priests.

Though the visit of Pantaenus to India is not to be dismissed easily, the visit of Bartholomew and the discovery of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew left by the apostle (possibly for the use of the early Jewish settlers in India) lack convincing evidence or tradition. However, Indian historians George Moraes and H.C. Perumalil hold the view that the Bombay region on the Konkan coast was the field of Bartholomew's missionary activity.

Other missionaries in the early centuries

According to a Syriac document[3] translated by Mingana, Dudi (David), Bishop of Basra (A.D. 293-300) went to India and evangelized many people. The next visiting missionary to India was Theophilus, a native of Socotra, an island in the Arabian sea. On arriving in India, he reformed many practices that were not rigidly followed by the Indian Christians. In A.D. 345 Thomas of Cana, a godly merchant and his companions landed in India. Their arrival coincided with the reign of the Sassanian king, Sapor III during whose time the persecution of Christians was very violent. In a letter from the Nestorian patriarch Isho Yahb III (650-660 A.D.) the large presence of Christians in Southern India has been mentioned. In the early centuries many emissaries made their way as far as Rome to the remote Christians of the East. A Syriac manuscript found in the 18th century reported that in the year 823 the Syrian Fathers Mar Sapor and Mar Parut with the illustrious Sabrisho came to India, reached Kollam (anglicized - Quilon) and met the king Shakirbirthi. Scholars agree that the date A.D. 823 is acceptable and that the King Shakirbirthi could be King Veera Raghava Chakravarti. Evidence for these historical happenings has been found in the copper-plates that are now in the possession of the Christians and Jews of Kerala. Even before the 6th Century India's Christians had maintained a conscious link with the authority of the Persian patriarch, with the Syriac language and with the Nestorian[4] Church. There is nothing significant to record about the Christian communities in India for several centuries in the medieval period even though the Thomas Christians were least affected by the Muslim upsurge.

Franciscan and Dominican Missionaries

John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan missionary from Italy on his way to China was detained in India in 1307 for 13 months. He was **the first Roman**

Catholic priest to land in India. He wrote, 'I remained in the country of India, wherein stands the church of St. Thomas, the Apostle, for 13 months, and in that region baptized about one hundred persons. The companion of my journey was Friar Nicholas of Pistoia who died there and was buried in the church aforesaid'. The place John visited could have been Mylapore and the local Christians were Nestorians. Father Jordanus, a French Dominican served in India in 1321 and 1322. He was the first resident Catholic Missionary in India. He wrote letters about the martyrdom of four Friars in Thana near Bombay. (Friar - from the French word frere meaning brother in English). Jordanus claimed that he baptized many persons in the town of Baruch in Gujarat and about 35 persons in the nearby places. In 1328, Jordanus was consecrated as Bishop of Columbum (Kollam).

Arrival of the Portuguese

A Syriac document talks about three Thomas Christians from South India visiting the Catholicos Mar Simeon, Nestorian Patriarch of the East in 1490 with a request for sending Bishops to India. A. Mingana who translated this Syriac document called it 'the Swan song of the Nestorian Church before the Western missionaries made themselves felt on Indian soil'. By the time the pilgrims returned from the Tigris River region to the Malabar coast on 18th May 1498, strange ships had landed on their native coast and the strangers were Portuguese. It was Vasco da Gama and his Portuguese team that landed in the Malabar coast near Kozhikode (anglicized - Calicut). On 13th September 1500 a second expedition reached Kozhikode under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral. Cabral found Kochi (anglicized - Cochin) to be a better center for trade. It was at Kochi the Portuguese erected their first fort and the first church dedicated to St. Bartholomew.

Other Franciscan and Dominican Missionaries

Cabral was accompanied by 8 Franciscans in 1500 A.D. In 1502 Vasco da Gama brought with him more Franciscan missionaries. In 1503, Afonso d'Albuquerque accompanied 5 Dominican missionaries including Fr. Rodrigo. In 1505, more Franciscans including Francis de Almeidia came to India. All these missionaries ministered to the Indians with all zeal and commitment.

Kochi was the first settlement of the Portuguese but Goa became the capital of commercial enterprise for them in India. Christian community rapidly grew with the arrival of a large number of Portuguese and through the conversion of a sizable Indians. The first Bishop for the diocese of Goa was a Franciscan missionary, John d'Albuquerque who was consecrated on 13th January 1538.

Antony de Louro is regarded as the founder of Franciscan work in India, who landed for the second time in India in 1517 along with 12 Franciscan missionaries. In their first year of missionary work itself they won the souls of 800 persons. On 8th January 1518, Sebastian Pires reported to the King of Portugal that there were about 10 to 12 thousand Christians in the neighbourhood of Kochi. He probably referred to those who had become Christians recently and not to the Thomas Christians of the first century heritage. The Franciscans played a major role in the missionary work in India. The Jesuits arrived in 1542. Though they first arrived in India in 1503, the Dominicans could gain strength in Goa only from 1548. The Augustinians arrived in India in the year 1572.

Francis Xavier

Don Francisco de Jassu Xaver, popularly known as Francis Xavier, was born at the castle of Xavier in Navarre, Spain. Xavier, Ignatius, and five others founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit order) on August 15, 1534, taking a vow of going through poverty and chastity. He had a close friendship with Ignatius Loyola whom he met for the first time in 1529 as a student at the University of Paris. Xavier was commissioned to go to India as a missionary by the King of Portugal and he arrived in Goa on 6th May 1542. The voyage from Lisbon (7th April 1541) to Goa (6th May 1542) gave him and his friends opportunity to serve the sick and the dying as true followers of Christ. In Goa he never stayed at the house allotted to him but preferred to sleep on the floor in the hospital to readily help the sick and the injured. He also cared for the inmates of the Leper hospital. Francis Xavier used to walk through the streets ringing a bell and shouting, 'Believing Christians, friends of Jesus Christ, for the love of God send your sons and daughters to the Christian instruction'. He engaged himself in pastoral care and Christian instruction to the people around him. He founded the St. Paul's College that became a center of excellence for learning. From Goa, Xavier was commissioned to work amongst the fisher folk (Paravas or Bharathas) of the

Pearl Fishery Coast (currently the Tuticorn - Tiruchendur region). His first mission field was Manappadu on the Southern tip. Today Manappadu boasts of two large churches, one of the Goanese and the other of the Jesuits. During his ministry, Xavier used to be surrounded by lads who disliked the idolatry practised by their kith and kin and were keen to listen to Xavier. Xavier also tried to reach the Brahmins of the area and one young man among them accepted Christ.

In a village where there were no Christians, Xavier prayed for a woman who was in labor pain for 3 days and was dying. God healed the woman miraculously and she delivered the baby safely. As a result the entire family accepted Christ. In another village near Punnaikayal, a boy believed to be dead after falling into a deep well, was miraculously raised from death after Francis Xavier prayed for him. After a brief trip to Goa, he was back in the Pearl Fishery coast in 1544. Xavier also evangelized the Mukuvvas - a fisher folk different from the Paravas – who lived west of Kanyakumari. He spent a few months in 1545 at St. Thomas Mount, Madras. He made a trip to Malacca and came back to Kochi in 1548.

Xavier was in Japan from 1494 to 1552 and came back to Goa again. On April 17th, he set sail with Diego Pereira, leaving Goa for China on board the Santa Cruz.

In early September 1552, Santa Cruz reached the Chinese island of Shangchuan, 14 km away from the southern coast of mainland China, near Taishan, Guangdong, 200 km south-west of what later became Hong Kong. On November 21, he fainted after celebrating Mass. He died in the island on December 2, 1552, at the age of 46, without having reached the mainland China.

He was first buried on a beach of Shangchuan island. His intact body was taken from the island in February 1553 and was temporarily buried in St. Paul's church in Malacca on March 22,1553. An open grave in the church now marks the place of Xavier's burial. Pereira came back from Goa, removed the body shortly after April 15, 1553, and moved it to his house.

On December 11, 1553, Xavier's body was shipped to Goa. The body, having resisted extensive decay, is now in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa. The

Roman Catholic Church considers him to have converted more people to Christianity than anyone else since St. Paul.

In 1599 under Aleixo de Menezes the Synod of Diamper converted a number of the Syriac Thomas Christians to the Roman Catholicism. The synod enforced severe restrictions on their faith and the practice of using Syriac/Aramaic. The Kerala Christians of Malabar were independent of Rome. There started persecution against them and also assassination attempts against Archdeacon George so as to bring the entire Syriac church in India under Rome. The first martyr of consequence was **Mar Ahathalla** who was the Bishop from Syria, who was staked by the Goan Inquisition. Then followed the literary holocaust of the Thomas Christian history and faith.

Fr. Henry Henrique (Anrique Anriques):

Fr. Antony Criminall was the first missionary who learned to read and write Tamil. A year later he was joined by Fr. Henry Henriques and others. In January 1548, Francis Xavier was back again on the Fishery Coast for a visit and he ordered Fr. Henriques to learn Tamil well and to compose a Tamil grammar on the model of the Latin and Greek grammar Fr. **Henry Henrique** obeyed, and in less than one year he was able to speak and write Tamil. When Fr. Criminall was killed towards the middle of 1549 in a military entanglement between the Badaga troops and the Portuguese at Vedalai, the missionaries elected Fr. Henry Henriques as their superior. Xavier confirmed their choice by a letter.

Already in 1547 Fr. Henry Henriques was in charge of the two most important villages on the coast, Tuticorin and Punnaikayal, and also of some other villages including Kombuturei. There was a high rate of infant mortality on the coast and he visited the coastal villages very frequently to comfort the affected families.

Like Francis Xavier, Henriques too engaged himself in the Christian instructions of the youth. He taught the prayers to the girls in the mornings and to the boys in the evenings.

Fr. Henriques spent considerable time in the correction of the Tamil prayers which had been attempted by Xavier and his collaborators in 1542.

The first stone church of the Pearl Fishery Coast was the beautiful chapel in honor of the holy Cross, built at Manappadu in 1581. One of the most prominent converts of this period was a learned yogi, baptized by Fr. Henriques at Punnaikayal in 1550. He was a native of Vembar and was very much respected by the villagers.

In 1552 Henriques wrote to Ignatius of Loyola that the Christians of the Fishery Coast were firm in their faith and that they would be able to persevere in their faith, even if there were no longer any Portuguese missionaries in the region to support them. According to Fr. Henriques the Christians of the Fishery Coast numbered more than forty thousand. Some young men from this region were sent to the colleges of Goa and Quilon for higher education.

He worked very hard as an ardent student to master the Tamil language. He wrote to Ignatius Loycla that his interpreter suddenly left and thus he had to be on his own in the mission field and got motivated to learn the language vigorously.

Henriques prepared a Tamil grammar book and he was the first European to do so. A copy of this book Arte Malauar was found after a few centuries in the Biblioteca Nacional, the National Library of Lisbon by Fr. Xavier Thani Nayagam. In 1586 Henriques completed a work on the lives of popular saints in Tamil. Other literary contributions of Fr. Henriques are

* *Tambirāṉ Vaṇakkam* - 1578
* *Kiricittiyāni Vaṇakkam* (Doctrina Christam)
* *Confessionair* - 1580
* *Flos Sactorum Enra Aṭiyār Varalāṟu* – 1586

Fr. Henry Henriques died on 6th February 1600 after serving faithfully for more than 50 years as a missionary to the Pearl fishery Coast in Southern Tamil Nadu. He had commanded immense respect of the Hindus and the Muslims. The people of the Muslim town, Kayalpatnam, mourned his death by fasting[5].

The Tamil tradition of Henriques was carried forward by Anthony de Proenea who compiled the first Tamil-Portuguese Dictionary.

Rober de Nobili

Nobili was an Italian aristocrat and was connected to many noble Italian families. He joined the Jesuit order and arrived in Goa on May 20, 1605. After a short stay in Kochi, he arrived in Madurai to be a missionary with the Madurai Mission.

He realized that the attempt of the missionaries to make their converts to adopt Portuguese ways was an impediment to spread the gospel. He observed that the Sadhus are respected in the society, and he started wearing the robes of a Sanniyasi to win over the Brahmins for Christ. Thus he pioneered new methods of evangelism but his practices that include allowing the converts to wear the Punul, the sacred thread, were considered very controversial in the following decades.

Nobili was able to baptize his first high caste convert and gave him the name Albert to honor Albert Laerzio. Many including his brother followed Albert and got baptized. Nobili first became an expert in Tamil. He studied Sanskrit from a Telugu Brahmin teacher, Sivadharma. Nobili was conferred with the title, Tattuvabodhakar. He worked ceaselessly to reach the local population. The number of the baptised rose considerably including Sivadharma, his Sanskrit teacher. He had converted 1208 members of higher caste and 2675 of lower castes in an area where there was not a single Christian earlier.

The last 11 years of his missionary work was crippled by his failing health and blindness. During this period Muthuvirappa Nayakkar who ruled Madurai died and was succeeded by Tirumali Nayakkar. From this point, wherever Nobili went, the preaching of the gospel encountered fierce opposition and persecution.

Nobili kept his austere habits and vegetarianism till the end. Attempt to make him drink chicken soup failed even though he became extremely weak. He threw away the bowl and observed fast unto death like an ascetic and died on January 16th 1656. There is no tomb nor any memorial connected with his name.

John de Britto

Britto was born in Lisbon, Portugal as the third son of his parents on 1st March 1647. His Portuguese name is Joao de Brito.

He joined the Jesuits, in 1662, traveled to India to join the missions of Madurai in 1673. He returned to Europe, as a missions procurator, arriving in Lisbon, in 1683. The king Pedro II wanted him to stay, but he returned to India with 24 new missionaries in 1690. Britto was a thoroughly devoted missionary. His fearless attitude and disregard for intimidation by the enemies of the faith was remarkable. There were large scale conversions and many marvels that happened were attributed to his devotion and prayers. In 1690 after returning from Portugal he set out again for the Marava area. The ruler of the Marava country then was Raghunata Thevar. Through the work of Britto, the ruler's relative Tadiya Thevar accepted Christ. He had married many women but after becoming a Christian he wished to send them away. One of the women was a niece of Raghunatha Thevar, the ruler, who became furious decided to kill Britto by any means. With this intent he sent Britto to Uriya Thevar, the governor of Oriyur. He was sentenced to death by Uriya Thevar on 28 January 1693, and executed on 4th February 1693. His head was severed from the body. His hands and feet were cut off and bound to the body. In a letter he wrote to his superior, Father Francisco Laynes he stated. "To suffer it's glory." Britto died as a martyr for the cause of his Master.

In 1678 the number of Christians was about 70 thousand in the regions of Madurai, Thanjavur, Gingi and Vellore - a clear evidence for the tireless work of the missionaries.

First Protestent European Missionaries

King Frederick IV of Denmark decided to emulate the Roman Catholic rulers and send missionaries to the tiny Danish settlement of Tharangambadi (anglicized - Tranquebar) in the Coromandal coast.

On July 9, 1706, The King's emissaries, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pliltschau arrived in Tranquebar as the first Protestant missionaries to

arrive on the sub- continent. Amidst opposition the two labored intensively and baptized their first Indian converts on May 12, 1707.

A Printing Press was established and the New Testament was translated into Tamil by Ziegenbalg in 1715. This translation was later on revised by his successor, Johann Fabricius. The first Protestent church, the Church of the New Jerusalem was dedicated by Ziegenbalg in 1718.

Despite opposition from the Copenhagen Mission Society (his sponsors), he felt that the preaching of the Gospel included taking care of the social wellbeing of the converts apart from the concern for the souls.

Ziegenbalg was jailed by the Danish authorities for four months during 1708-1709 due to the rivalry between the different Christian clergy in Tranquebar. In 1708, in a dispute over whether the illegitimate child of a Danish soldier and a non-Christian woman should be baptized and brought up as a Catholic or a Protestant, he was arrested and imprisoned. He was released after four months and returned to Europe in 1714-1716. Ziegenbalg was married in 1716. He was also active in cooperation with the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. By 1709 SPCK sent out to Tranquebar a printing press and a trained printer to assist in the production of the first translation of the Bible into Tamil done by Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau.

Even though the Roman Catholic missionaries had established several presses in India in the 16th century, a continuous history of printing in Tamil began only with the Tranquebar press, the most prolific of all 18th century presses in South Asia.

Zieganbalg's first tract in Tamil in 1713, *Akkiyanam* marked the beginning of a new era in print culture in India.

Ziegenbalg was troubled by ill health throughout his entire life. When his condition was aggravated by his work in the mission field his health declined and he died on February 23, 1719 at the age of thirty-six in Tranquebar. At the time of his death Christians at Tranqueber numbered about 350.

He left behind a dictionary and grammar in Tamil, his translations of the New Testament in 1714 and the Old Testament up to the Book of Ruth in Tamil. Recently the Indian Church celebrated the 300 th anniversary of Zicgcnbalg's arrival.

Other countries in Asia

As a result of missinaries' ceaseless and selfless sacrificial efforts, Christianity spread its branches to Asian territories.

Osrhoene with its capital city Edessa

Western Mesopotamian state Osrhoene had its capital Edessa (which is now Sanhurfa, Turkey). Its pioneering missionary was Thaddeus alias Addai, one of the 70 and a disciple of St. Thomas, the Apostle.

Legend tells that Abgar, king of Edessa, afflicted with an incurable sickness, had heard about the power and miracles of Jesus and wrote to him seeking his help for healing and offering him asylum in his own residence; Jesus wrote a letter declining to go, but promising that after his ascension, he would send one of his disciples, endowed with his power, namely Thaddeus alias Addai.

Addai converted King Abgar, the Black, and his people including Aggai and Mari. There has been a link between the two earliest centers of the Asian Church, India and Edessa. Ephrem the Syrian wrote a hymn to celebrate the arrival in Edessa of the bones of St. Thomas from India.

The full tradition of Addai's mission is recounted in great detail in a Syriac document that could be the source of Eusebius's work, "The Doctrine of Addai'. People of Edessa believed in the gospel in great numbers even though there was no coercion from King Abgar, the Black.

When Addai died he was buried with state honors. King Abgar passed on the position of Guide and Ruler of the Church to Addai's disciple, Aggai. Under Aggai the church grew and prospered. After the death of King Abgar, his son came to power. He, being an unbeliever, ordered Aggai to stop preaching and go

back to his old profession of making royal robes and tiaras. Aggai's reply was "I will not leave the ministry of Christ and make the headband of the evil one". This angered the king. He sent men to kill Aggai in his own church by breaking his legs. Aggai died as the first martyr in Edessa. In 1909 a first-century Edessa document, the Odes of Solomon was discovered. J.H. Charlesworth calls it as the earliest Christian hymn book.

First Christian Kingdom

For the first 200 years Christians in Edessa met in homes for worship. The first church building was constructed during the time of Abuar VII. He was also called Abgar the Great who ruled Edessa a century and a half after the death of his ancestor, Abgar the Black. Syrian tradition says that Abgar VIII became a Christian to merit the title of the first Christian King ahead of Constantine. Edessa became the capital of history's first Christian Kingdom, Osrhoene.

Bardaisan, a great thinker believed in Christ and was baptized after hearing the Scriptures from Bishop Hystaspes. Bardaisan contended stoutly for the truth against the dilutions of divinity by which Gnostics and Marcionites explained about the problem of evil in God's creation. The first martyrdoms in Edessa under Rome are attributed to 112 A.D. During this time the Roman emperor, Trajan corresponded with Pliny the Younger on the subject of how to deal with the Christians of Pontus(Black Sea region). Sharbil, the converted chief priest of the idols of Edassa was flogged on his belly, set flames between the eyes, burned slowly with candles, hung on a tree, sawed in two and finally beheaded. But he preached steadily to his executors all the time[6]. Pliny the Younger in his letter in 112 A.D. describes the way he dealt with Christians in Asia Minor and how he executed them. The Christians laid down their lives more bravely as martyrs for Christ than Pliny expected.

Edessa became a Roman colony in 214.

Christianity in Assyria and Arbela (modern day Erbil, Iraq)

400 miles east of Edessa lay another small Persian border kingdom, Adiabene. Its capital Arbela was one of the earliest Christian centers in Asia.

First century Jewish historian Josephus says that King Ezad of Arbela while visiting an Arab kingdom was converted by a Jewish merchant. In A.D. 36 his mother, Queen Helena also accepted Christ. Tradition traces the pioneering mission to Adiabene to the two disciples of Addai, Aggai and Mari.

The first Bishop of Adiabene was Pkidha in 104 A.D. The second Bishop, Semsoun died as a martyr and his martyrdom in Arbela is dated in 117 or 123. Justin Martyr was a defender of the faith. He insisted that the memoirs of the apostles were of equal authority with the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Justin was beheaded in 165 A.D. in the persecutions leashed out by Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Tatian was a pupil of Justin Martyr and the first historical evidence of Christianity in Adiabene was brought out by him.

The church in Asia east of Rome already had the Old Testament brought out by people of Jewish descent. But it was Tatian who first brought the gospels of the New Testament, to Asia.

Arbela of Adiabene became a major center for missions beyond Mesopotamia into eastern Persia and Central Asia.

By the 3rd century the majority of the people who lived here were Christians - the first fruits of the strenuous hard work by the missionaries.

Christianity in Arabia

Arab means desert. Arabia had the pride of possessing the reliable trade from the West to Asia down the Red Sea and across the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Now the peninsula is one of the least Christianized, but before the Islamic conquest, three of the largest Arab kingdoms were Christians. When Christianity spread rapidly to Syria and Persia quite a few Arabs also embraced Christianity in the early centuries. Abgar, the Christian ruler of Edessa was of Arab origin.

The first known Bishop of nomad Arabs was Painphilos of the Tannaye. Mawiyya was the first Christian Arab queen. The whole western Tanukh tribe for whom Mawiyya was the leader, became Christian.

The first documented Christian sent on a mission to Southern Arabia was Theophilus. He was sent by the Roman emperor, Constantius, son of Constantine the Great. The King of the Himyarites was converted and 3 or 4 churches were built in the territory. Beginning 339 A.D., severe persecutions by Shapur II in Persia sent a number of Christian refugees to Arabia. During the same time missionaries also traveled to Arabia and established monastries. The earliest among them was Abdisho, who built a monastry on the island of Bahrain. The first documented Nestorian Synod in 410 A.D. included delegates from Qatar and Bahrain.

Yemen was evangelized by a native merchant, Hayyan who was converted by the Nestorians on the Persian border east of the Euphrates. He carried the gospel to his own family members and also across the border into other Arab countries. At the same time Judaism also began to make converts. Yemen King Abu-Karib Asad accepted the Jewish religion. Persecution against Christians started in 522 A.D. and King Dhu-Nawas killed Christians at Najran in a bloodshed that lasted for many days. It was reported that 4252 Christians and 427 monks and nuns were burned alive. Dhu-Nawas was killed in a later invasion by the Ethiopians.

Christianity in Asia Minor

Anatolia is a peninsula of Western Asia which forms the greater part of the Asian portion of Turkey, as opposed to the European portion (Thrace, or traditionally Rumelia). It is also often called by the Latin name of Asia Minor. Asia Minor had been a great field for missionary Evangelical work from the time of Paul. Its people mainly the Greek-speaking city dwellers were readily receptive of the gospel. The growth of the Church was so rapid that Pliny in his letter to Emperor Trajan in 112 A.D. expressed his dismay by the rapid spread of Christian faith in the remote province of Bithynia in north-west Asia Minor which he was sent to govern.

Cappadocia (or Capadocia) (meaning "the land of beautiful horses", in Turkish **Kapadokya**) is in Asia Minor. Well-known evangelist from Cappadocia was Gregory also known as Thaumaturgus was born in 213 A.D. and was a student of Origen in Caesarea. He became Bishop of Cappadocia when there

were only 17 Christians but when he died 30 years later, all the people in the city were Christians except seventeen. That shows the achievement of Gregory as a missionary Bishop. It was from Cappadocia the gospel was spread to Armenia. If Osrhoene was the first Christian kingdom, the second was Armenia.

In the 6th century the Emperor Justinian organized campaigns to drive paganism from his regions in Asia Minor.

Christian Missions in Antioch

Evangelized perhaps by Peter, according to the tradition upon which the Antiochene patriarchate still rests its claim and by Barnabas and Paul, who preached here the first Christian sermon in a synagogue, its converts were the first to be called Christians (Acts. Chapter 11).

Ignatius of Antioch (also called Theophorus, the bearer of God) succeeded Apostle Peter and Evodius as the 3rd Bishop of Antioch according to Eusebius.

Ignatius based his authority on living his life in imitation of Christ.

He was arrested by the Roman authorities and transported to Rome under trying conditions. He died as a martyr for the cause of the gospel. After Ignatius' martyrdom in the Flavian Amphitheatre, his remains were honorably carried back to Antioch by his companions, and were first interred outside the city gates, then removed by the Emperor Theodosius II to the Temple of Tyche which was converted into a Christian church dedicated to Ignatius.

The missionary movement grew and the Christians multiplied exceedingly, and by the time of Theodosius the Christians numbered 100,000 according to Chrysostom. Between the years 252 and 300, ten assemblies of the church were held at Antioch and it became the seat of one of the four original patriarchates, along with Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome.

Early Missionaries in China

The Church of the East stretched from South India to the Central Stepps, from Babylon to China. **Nicolas Trigault** (1577-1629) a French Jesuit, and a missionary to China said that in the Syriac manuscripts of the Malabar coast it is written that' the faith was carried to the Sinae (China) by the same Apostle of Christ (Thomas) and that several churches were founded in that kingdom'.

Missionary Alopen who was sent by Patriarch Yeshuyab came to Ch'ang-an, China, in the ninth year of Cheng-kuan (also called Tai-tsung) in 635 A.D. The Nestorian Monument that was found in 1625 in China is believed: to have been carved during this period and the first entry of Christianity into China was through missionary Alopen.[7] The monument contains a long list of names of Persian or Syrian missionaries and is dated 781. Issu (Yazdbozid) was a Nestorian priest and a high ranking general in the Chinese army who was responsible for the erection of this monument.

In 638 A.D. the first church was built in China at the capital Chang'an (present day Xian), the largest city in the world at that time. Tai-tsung died in 649 and his son Kao-tsung became the emperor. He also favored the Nestorian missionaries. By the last half of the 7th century there were 358 monasteries or churches in China.

Wu Hou assumed power in 690 and set up a new dynasty (690 - 705) and the new queen started persecuting the Church. In 691 she declared Buddhism as the state religion. In 690 A.D., violent mobs sacked the church in the Eastern capital, Loyang. Hostile crowds invaded the historic Nestorian church in Chang'an, the first Church in China.

The spread of Arab empire in the mid-8th century stimulated Nestorian missions. The missionaries accompanied Arab emissaries to China. The years between 712 and 781 were the period of great progress for Christians in China. New missionaries arrived from Persia in 744. In October 745 the official Chinese name for the Christian religion was changed from the Persian religion to the Syrian religion.

A great Christian leader of the 8th century in China was Adam (Ching-ching). The Book of the Honored Ones contains a bibliography of 35 Chinese works of which 30 were translated by Adam. He composed the elegant inscription on the tablet/monument dated 781 AD. With the fall of Tang dynasty in 907 the Nesiorian church completely disappeared from China.

According to A.C. Moule, the large number of manuscripts that were found in the North Western China speak of the presence of missionaries and Christians in the 7th and 8th centuries in China. In the 9th century there was a great degree of persecution and many died as martyrs.

In 1289, Franciscan Friars from Europe initiated mission work in China. This mission collapsed in 1368, as the Ming Dynasty banned Christianity in China.

The first Jesuit attempt to reach China was made in 1552 by Francis Xavier, but he died the same year in Chinese island of Shangchuan, without having reached the mainland. In 1582, Jesuits once again initiated mission work in China, introducing Western science, mathematics, and astronomy. One of these missionaries was Matteo Ricci.

Early Missionaries in Japan

Historiographic term for Christians in Japan is Kirishitan. Missionary activities in Japan began very late as compared to the other Asian countries. Portuguese-sponsored Jesuits started working in Japan in 1549. Later on Spanish-sponsored Mendicant orders gained access to Japan.

When the Jesuit missionary to India Francis Xavier arrived at the port of Kagoshima in Japan in 1549, Japan was experiencing a nationwide civil war. At first Xavier planned to gain permission for building a mission from the emperor but was disappointed with the devastation of the imperial residence. The Jesuits approached Daimyo in southwestern Japan and succeeded in converting some of these Daimyos. Xavier stayed 27 months in Japan and he gained three little groups of converts. In 1563 Christianity spread rapidly amongst the daimyos , the first Daimyo to receive baptism was Omura Sumitada. The first church was built

in Kyoto in 1576. According to Martin Repp of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, "between 1579 and 1582 the early missionary work was revised under Father Alessandro Valignano, one of the few who understood that Christianity had to lose its European flavor in order to become acceptable to the Japanese" (Martin Repp, Introduction to Japanese Religions, Vol. 19).

By 1575 the entire population of the region accepted Christ - the number touched a figure of 50,000.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi became the ruler of Japan. The Spanish captain of a shipwrecked trading vessel claimed that the missionaries were there to prepare Japan for a conquest. This enraged Hideyoshi and made him suspicious of the foreign religion. Toyotomi Hideyoshi issued the first ban on Catholicism in 1587. At the same time he put Nagasaki under his direct control to control Portuguese trade.

Martyrdom in Japan : In 1597, 26 Christians were executed in Nagasaki at Hideyoshi's order. The number of baptized Christians at their peak by the end of the 16th century in Japan was estimated at 300,000 whereas there were likely around 1,000 known martyrs during the missionary period. On 22nd September 1601 three of the Japanese were ordained as priests - one was a Diocesan and the other two were Religian Jesuits. Of these Sebastian Chimura died as a martyr on 1011 September 1622. The Tokugawa shogunate finally decided to ban Catholicism in 1614. This marked the end of open Christianity in Japan. The Christian faith was repressed heavily and ceased to exist publicly in the 17th century.

Early Missionaries in Ceylon - Sri Lanka

According to traditions, Thomas the Apostle first arrived in Sri Lanka (as well as India) during the 1st century. After his arrival, small Christian settlements were recorded to have been established on Sri Lanka's coastline. They continued steadily in their faith and Christians were found even in the the 6th century. However, Christianity did not spread much until the arrival of Portuguese missionaries during the 15th century. In the 17th century, the Dutch took over Sri

Lanka and Dutch missionaries were able to convert 21 % of Sri Lanka's population by 1722.

Christianity in Vietnam

Cosmas Indicopleastes mentions about the Christian presence in Ceylon, Pegu (Burma), Cochin-China (Southern Vietnam), Siam and Tonquin (Northern Vietnam). But historical evidence traces the origin of Christianity in Vietnam to mid-19th century A.D. when Vietnam became a French Colony.

Christian Missionaries in Bactria (modern day - Northern Afganistan)

Bactria is a mountainous region with a moderate climate and was the home of one of the Iranian tribes.

Legend from the Apocryphal Gospel of Thomas suggests that Apostle Thomas preached in Bactria. The Nestorians planted Christianity in the area, and there were 9 bishops and dioceses in the region including Herat (424-1310), Farah (544-1057), Kandahar, and Balkh. Nestorian missionaries had successfully worked among the Hephthalites in Bactria for about a hundred years. This early establishment of the Church was overcome by Muslim invasions in the 7th century.

In 1581 and 1582 respectively, the Jesuit and Catalan Montesserat and the Portugese Bento de Goes were welcomed by the Emperor Akbar but the Jesuits did not last long in the country.

Turkestan - Timothy I, a Patriarch of the Persian Church sent about 80 monks as missionaries to Turkestan in the 8th century.

John England mentioned about some of the places in Asia where inscriptions, crosses, frescoes, paintings and manuscripts and other such evidence of Christian history were found. By the sixth century, we have crosses and inscriptions from Sri Lanka and Turkestan (where some early manuscripts were also found); and by the eighth century, Sian-fu-stele, documents from Gobi sites, inscriptions from central Japan and Russian Turkestan (which has frescoes and

church remains also), along with large bodies of the writing of the golden age of Syriac literature from west Asia were found.

Conclusion

India and the Asian countries carry the pride and heritage of their roots of Christianity to the first century. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of Independent India (1952-1962) made the following remark:

"Remember, St. Thomas came to India when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian, and so those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European countries. And it is really a matter of pride to us that it so happened."

Despite many hurdles, oppression, persecution and martyrdoms, the missionaries have been ceaselessly laboring to expand the kingdom of their Master fulfilling the great commission. Now Christianity is the universal religion and the Church is everywhere today and the Body of Christ in every land! This is the perfect work of the Holy Spirit beyond the comprehension of the human beings.

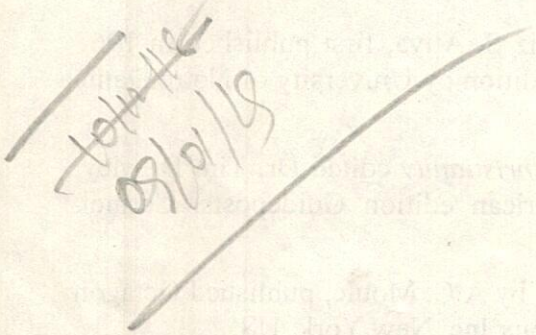
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10. *Catholic Encyclopedia*: Online

End Notes

1. Kodungallur in Trichur district, Kerala (anglicized – Cranganore)
2. According to Brown in *'The Indian Christians'* and Samuel H. Moffett in 'A history of Christianity in Asia'
3. Chronique de Seen, Patrol Orient
4. Nestorian doctrine that the human and divine essences of Christ are separate is identified with Nestorius (386-451 AD), Patriarch of Constantinople
5. According to a Jesuit letter in 1601
6. Acts of Sharbil, Ancient Syriac Documents as quoted by SH Moffet
7. As documented by the Nestorian Stone in Chang 'an (present-day Xi 'an).



CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN ASIA BEFORE 1500 A.D.

A brief survey of church and Mission activities

T. Dayanandan Francis

Introductory

The area covered in this chapter would extend Iran: Syria in the west upto Japan in the far-east, excluding India. Although several studies have been made by western as well as Asian scholars during the past two centuries a connected and comprehensive account of the Christian presence in Asia was not quite available till recently. The appearance of The Hidden History of Christianity in Asia[1] written by John C England in 1996 is a significant event since it serves as an eye-opener for understanding the Asian Christian realities pertaining to the early and middle ages. It is a pointer as well for further research and documentation.

Now it is fairly established that the Asianness of Christianity is not confined to the country of its origin but is comprehensive as to make its influence felt in almost all the countries of the continent.

It is a pity that church historians have overemphasized the advent of the Catholic and Protestant mission in the 16th and 19th centuries respectively, to the exclusion of the mission enterprises that have taken place within Asia prior to the arrival of the western missionaries. But now remarkable amount of source material is available in Syriac, Persian, Tamil, and Malayalam for confirming commercial contacts and religious establishments of traders and missionaries. Church buildings and the stone crosses together with chalices etc have been discovered in many places in the past century. The findings include extracts of gospel portions in Syriac as well as in Chinese. All these go to prove that many facts remained 'hidden' for a proper understanding of the spread of christianity in "at least twelve countries east of Persia by the eighth century"[2]

Many scholars involved in writing the histories of the Asian countries are chiefly interested in studying the process of contextualization and the attempts at indigenization subsequent to the mission from the west. It is equally important to undertake such studies for earlier centuries with a view to discovering the various attempts at assimilation made by the Christian communities who had to encounter and combat Asian religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and heretical sects like Manichaism.

The purpose in this paper is to present briefly the origin and course of the Christian mission from the second to the fifteenth century A.D. and to highlight a few events, achievements and the encouraging challenges that are to be noted in the western, central and eastern regions of the continent.

The Significance of the Silk Road Traffic

It was a super high way that ran 7000 miles from Syria to China in the early centuries. Merchants and Bishops, scholars, missionaries and musicians passed by the road. They carried with them not merely material goods but also ideas, messages and songs with musical instruments. The long eastward journey meant halts at many places and temporary or longtime stay for many travelers. Countless centers for worship and learning, healing and preaching were established. Such a movement of christianity is said to have reached China by the sixth century followed by Manichaism in the seventh century and Islam in the eighth century. These religions are supposed to have made their impact on Chinese Shamanism. Syriac and Arabic writings provide authentic evidences for studying the early trade route that connected west Asia with East Asia.

Movement of Christianity from Syria

The Church of the East is believed to have originated in the first century among the Aramaic-Syriac speaking communities in Syria and Mesapotamia. Syriac is a dialect of eastern Aramaic. The church grew stronger owing to the immigration of Jewish christians after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70A.D. Tradition has it that Thaddaeus, one of the seventy disciples of Jesus had his mission in Edessa, an important center of the church in Syria . He is referred

to as Mar Addai in Syriac. From such places there has been a steady movement of missionaries towards the east commencing from Mesapotamia, Parthia through Media and Persia. Authentic information for this enterprise is to be found in the writtings of Bardaisan who lived in the second century and a fifth century document that goes by the name Doctrina Addai. By the beginning of the 5th century, twenty Bisphoprics were established in Selucia and farther east including the area adjoining the Persian gulf. Christian population increased in Armenia which was proclaimed as a christian state. Christian settlements were increasing till the 8 century in the countries between Kurdistan and Persian Gulf. The christian community was of composite kind consisting of Syrians, Iranians and Greeks who arrived from Roman provinces. Christianity became a significant and powerful minority in the Persian empire and it had to face the opposition and even persecution that arose from the followers of Zorostrianism. The opposition became all the more stronger because of the Persian enmity towards the christian Roman empire.

However, during the period between 410-780, Selucia on the river Tigris close to the highland of Bactria had become a Church centre where the Catholicos lived. The Patriarchs of the Church continued to have their office there with supervising responsibilities of the sees which were in large numbers extending in the east upto Sumatra and Japan.

Among the outstanding christian institutions of the church of the East of that age, the Clergy school at Seleucia, the Training Center for missionary monks are noteworthy. The theological school established at Edessa in the third century is claimed to be the first one of its kind in christian history. During the following centuries theological and devotional writings were brought out by eminent scholars like Bardaisan to whom is attributed Odes of Solomon, the earliest Christian Hymn Book and also the Acts of St. Thomas. From Armenia came out the teachings of the Apostles in the fourth century. The Peshita (The Syriac version of the Old Testament) was used in the churches. The literary contributions of the Syrian theologians in the following centuries include the writings of Ephrem Syrus and Aphrahat who have excelled in the area of theology, exposition and poetry. Ephrem has to his credit more than 5000 hymns, some of which are still used in the church worship of the Orthodox Church.

The theological standing of the church of the East was established by the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) based on the teachings of Nestorius. His works, including those in which he has stressed historical interpretation and the Nestonian theology were taught widely in the Persian church as well as in its eastern provinces that extended upto the Indian region.

A similar theologian and church leader of high reputation for the Arabs was Bishop Jacob Baradaeus (500-578) who was responsible for the renewal of the monophysite communities which came to be known as the Syrian Orthodox. Thousands of priests were ordained in course of time and under the able leadership of Metropolitans, Jacobite communities spread in Central Asia and in South India[3].

One of the Patriarchs was a convert from Zorastrianism who after a long time of exile and imprisonment was restored and honored by the ruler Khusro II. He is said to have employed many christians in government service. In the seventh century A.D. Ishoyab VI seem to have been instrumental in strengthening the churches, giving due recognition to them.

Even after the Arab conquest in 637, the Nestorian church extended from Syria as far as Japan in the north east and Sumatra in the South east with nine Metropolitans and ninty-six Bishops. According to Lotouratte, the total number of christians in the late seventh century was well over a million. The majority of them were Syriac speaking and the remaining were of Iranian stock. A peaceful coexistence of christians and muslims has prevailed during the 7th and 8th centuries and the expansion of the church in the eastern region including Armenia, Damascus, Turkistan and Tibet was remarkable.

The church of the East developed its independence from Antioch already in 424 and developed independently of the Roman or Constantine Church. Under Persian rule there were persecutions in the previous century. Mar Shimoun was executed along with five Bishops and one hundred clergy for refusing to collect enhanced tax from poor christians. In the centuries that followed christian communities were able to preserve their Semitic and Asian traditions with strong christian commitment.

Due importance was given to women in the church and the role they played in ecceciastical affairs is remarkable compared to later times. Many of them occupied important positions as Abesses and spiritual leaders and prophetesses. Apart from being the wives of the priests, they seem to have been deaconess and priests as well with special training centeres and monasteries meant for them.

The church of the East in the earlier centuries of the christian era has been in many respects a fore-runner for the pattern of life set in medieval as well as modern times.

Arabian Christianity

It is interesting to note the origin of the Arabian christian communities chiefly owing to contacts with christian ascetics who lived in the deserts. The impact made by Hilarian in the 4th century on the Arabs produced a number of christian monks among them. The missionary endeavours of Theophilus the Indian during this period is praiseworthy. He was the founder of the church in Yeman and was responsible for the establishment of a monastery near Behrain in 390. The Arab Church was missionary in character as to make converts from royal and influential families of Yeman. The Arab kingdom of Hirah that was under the rule of Persia had become a christian state by the end of the fourth century. Arab Bishops were among the participants at the council at Chalcedon. The Nestorian and Monophysite church activities during the following three centuries were not free from conflicts and clashes with the Jewish community. This resulted in a massacre in which many belonging to both communities lost their lives.

It may be noted that similar to the Syrian women Arab women have also played prominent role in the church. Mawiyya who ruled from Hirah became the first Arab christian queen in 373. The wife of king Mundar III is said to have been the founder of a convent in the 6th century. The names of several women are found in the list of martyrs preserved by the church. Their final confessions of faith are also available.

Kenneth Cragg, an eminent christian theologian and Islamic scholar has pointed out that early christian missionaries in Arabia have first invented the Arabic script that was used for printing the Quran. The contributions of christian Arabic poets who were patronized by Muslim rulers were written on christian themes. The apologetic works of Abd al Masih written in the 9th century is said to be an attempt at presenting the christian faith in purely Asiatic dress and language. Polemical writings were produced by Yahya ibn Adi, a Jacobite theologian in answer to attacks upon the doctrine of Trinity.

The christian communities in some Persian Arab provinces flourished in the 9th century with full recognition for their academic contributions and administrative skills till the break out of the crusades.

It is refreshing to know that many scholars are now involved in concentrated studies on the early history of the church in Persia, Arabia and Armenia particularly during the first ten centuries when the Eastern churches have made phenomenal growth amidst opposition and devoid of any contact with the Graeco-Latin church.

Christianity in Turkestan

Moving eastwards we find several places which speak in clear terms about the church enterprise in Trarsoxana and west Turkestan. As early as the fourth century, refuges and merchants from Syria and Persia were instrumental in spreading christianity among the inhabitants, especially the Mans (Turks). Mero became an important missionary centre. Both the Nestorian and Armenian missionaries have worked hand in hand in evangelizing the Huns. That the Armenian church was also active in this area is evident from an Armenian gospel parchment of the 10th century. A place called Samargaud which lies on the side of the silk road which passes through west Turkestan became famous as a meeting place for travelers and settlers because of an emporium which was in operation for their benefit. The place became a christian centre in due course with Jacobite (Syrian Orthodox) Meltutes (Syrian of the Greed Rite) and Armenian (Apostalic Church) settlements. In the centuries that followed it became a strong Nestorian centre. Marco Polo who visited the place

reports that there were about 11,000 christians. A Latin Missionary Bisphohic was established there in the fourteenth century.

The missionary enterprise of the early Nestorians at Samargaud according to Pothen and Mundadan extended upto Ladakh as the visit of a christian ambassador from Samarguad to Tibet in the 9th century is confirmed[4].

A number of artefacts from East Turkestan belonging to a period of nine centuries since the fifth have been discovered. Of these the manuscripts, paintings and relics are helpful in ending out glimpses of church life during the Chinese. Turk and Mongol rule. Hsuan Tsang is believed to have visited the region and reported about the activities of Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and Manichaeans.

One important place which needs mention is Danhung, a famous centre for Buddhist worship. Christian missionaries who traveled on the Silk Road have visited the place frequently and established churches. Both Turkish and Tibetean christians have lived together under the see of a Nestorian Bishop. This place is important also for the reputed library in which many important commentaries, treatise and christian apocrypha most of which written in Syriac are still preserved. A significant document found in Chein - fo-tung temple was the 'Chinnese Gloria' or 'Hymn to Trinity'. In a list of names of 25 saints are found six names to be Chinnese, A painting on silk named ie Bon Pasteur" deepicts a Crist-like figure in the pattern of Bodhiasthva attributed to a period earlier to the 11th century.

The Tibalean Experience

As for Tibet, the commercial and trade contacts with Persia loom large. Foreign dignitaries including religious luminaries such as the christian missionaries were accorded cordial reception by the monarch who adopted a policy of toleration. The Syrian church got established in Tibet by the 8" century as many christians filled the country. Among the relics discovered crosses, inscriptions and manuscripts are valuable. A manuscript discovered at Danhuang bears the mark of a cross painted by a Tibetean. So also Christian themes such as salvation by grace is said to be noticed in some other manuscripts.

Abbe Hue who visited Tibet in the 19th century was surprised to find christian rituals, symbols and practices getting assimilated into Lamaism.

China Receives Christ

The silk road will lead the traveler to step into China which in fact was the terminal. The Chinese kings in the 6th and 7th centuries have maintained cordial relations with the Turks when China's borders extended into east Turkestan and Persia. As was in the case with other countries of Asia we have surveyed earlier, the traders from Persia were the first ones to arrive with their commodities and create a religious ethos of their own in China. Between 7th and 9th centuries, a number of Nestonian congregations have sprung up with a few monasteries that received the favour of the ruling monarch. A Nestonian monument of the 8th century measuring 9ft high was discovered in 1625 by the side of a church and monastery. The inscription purported to have been written by a native Chinese priest of the monastery speaks of the 'way' in China under the caption "The Ministers of the Cross'. Underneath the text of the inscription a reference is made to the erection of the monument with the names of 70 saints, monks and presbyters of the church of the east. The text, apart from 70 Syriac words is written in Chinese with imagery drawn freely from traditional Chinese and Buddhist sources[5]. The authorship of the inscription is attributed to Ching Ching (Adam). He was a reputed scholar in christian and Buddhist theology and translated among other texts, the six Paramitassutra of Buddism in collaboration with a monk I'rajna by name. From the four series of documents Alopen, Ching Ching, Cyriacus, Cyriacus and Turfan collections belonging to periods between the 7th and 9th centuries, it is evidently clear that the teachings and worship patterns of christianity was indegenized with critical evaluation of the elements assimilated from Buddhist, Muslim and Manichar sources. So also Confucian and Taoist terminology were not completely rejected by the Chinese christians. In turn Buddhism is said to have adapted the concept of the communion of saints and the practice of observing lent. An important christian centre since the 7th century was Chan-an the capital city of the Tang dynasty. It was the terminus of the silk road. The Al-o-pen writings were compiled in the city library where many christian writings were translated into Chinese.

During the period that followed christianity received patronization form the ruling king who honoured a christian Bishop and organized an annual retreat for the monks of the four monasteries that were situated in the area. He is said to have presided over preparatory as well as inaugural meetings for the 9th century. The heretical books of Manichaism were confiscated and the monasteries were closed. Pro-Taoist emperor persecuted the christians and many were evacuated from their monasteries. Books and artefacts were destroyed. However, the mission from Persia and Bactria continued till the end of the century. The christian witness continued in North China with a much reduced number of christians chiefly through the monasteries in the 11th century. There is an important evidence for the surviving christian presence in the 12th century. This is found in the report of John of Piano Carpturi who visited Mangolia in 1245-47. He speaks of the Chinese version of the scriptures and christian literature. He records that christians were monotheists who honoured Jesus Christ and believed in eternal life.

The southern part of the country was connected with west Asian countries by sea routes. Maritime trade existed between them ever since the 8" century. As early as the 7th century, the sea port Can-fu or Canton has become one of the important christian centres. The Nestorian Bishop had relations with the officers in the royal courts. The siege of Canton during 877-878 resulted in the massacre of six score thousand Muslims Jews, christians and Parses who were teachers in the city. The christian activities, however, continued in Canton and in a few other places in the 10th and 11th centuries. Marco Polo who visited Fugee in the thirteenth century found a christian community which possessed the Psalter and paintings of apostles in their worshipping places. Although this sectarian group is not easily identifiable Marco Polo estimates their number to be not less than 7,00,000. When asked about their church identification they declared themselves "to be christians as their predecessors had been".

According to the Buddhist historian Tsan ning who lived in the 10th century the Nestorians, Mamichaeans and Zorostrians were pseudo vegetarians and teetotalars who were 'perverse' and 'disorderly' under cover. They were also implicated for communal disturbances.

When the Mangols established their supremacy in China the Nestorian Christians were granted freedom of worship. Interestingly a colony of Armenians was established in Chan Chou by the fourteenth century. The Franciscan missionaries had arrived in China by that time.

Subsequent to the rule of Jenghis Khan in the 13th century, the rule of Mongolia extended from the Volga to the mouth of the Yangtse. The rulers were tolerant and were eager to learn from all religious quarters. Many members of the Khan family and several others from the major tribal groups have already become christians. From the 12th century till the 15tn century there was enormous growth of the christian church in China owing to the untiring endeavours of both the eastern and the Roman church.

An important inter-faith dialogue or colloquim, more in the fashion of a debate was convened by the ruler Mangu in 1254. Participants from Christian, Muslim, Manichaean, Shanrnan and Buddhist communities took part in the discussion that continued in the following years. A Nestorian theological school was established at Khannbaliq in 1230. Records reveal to us the existence of about seventy monasteries in Southern China during the 13th and 14th centuries. The earliest christian mission from east to the west took place when Sauma and Markan undertook journeys to Europe. The patranization of the Khans continued while several women folk including the wives of Khan have embraced christianity. Unfortunately the antagonism between the Nestrorian Roman christians weakened the recognition of the Khans. Thus the christian presence was weakened in the region by the 15th century.

The South Eastern region of Asia that covers countries like India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Sumatra was already connected with Persia and Syria in the early centuries both by land and sea routes. Consequently christian churches came into existence in these countries with episcopal standing.

Christian Mission in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Java

Anuradhapura, a strong Tervada Buddhist centre was also a trading centre. It gave access to christian traders and missionaries to establish churches. According to information available from inscriptions, several foreign christian

high officials were employed in the court of the Sinhalese kings during the 5th century. Abu Zayd Hassn of Basra who visited the place had left records in appreciation of the tolerance shown by the monarchs to the Jewish and other communities. Another Muslim, Idrisi who visited Anuradhapura in 1154 mentions that there were ministers in the court representing the four major religions of Budhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma welcomed trade connections with West Asia since 14th century. In places like Pegu evidences are found for the existence of communities Nestorian or Armenian.

Giovanne de Marignolli who visited Java says that christians were to be found at Majapathit and also in Sumatra. The journey of the Magi in search of the new born king of the Jews is supposed to have commenced at Java according to a tradition.

Christ in Korea and Japan

A study of Korean christianity would reveal the impact of Chinese culture chiefly through the spread of Buddhism from the 4th century. The silk road seem to have reached Korea, Japan and as far as eastern Russia. Referencess to Nestorian presence in Korean Chronicles is called Sanguk Yusa and Samguka. During an excavation near An Shan in 1927, several clay crosses from a large tomb that contained the remains of seven bodies were found. Bronze mirrors engraved with the christian symbols of fish and the grape vine were unearthed. These are preserved in the christian museum of Soongsil University at Seoul.

Japanese history also records through an injunction of prince Shotoku (544-622) the "full liberty and personal rights" granted to the Nestorians. Nestorian christianity was named as "the church of the unanimous religion". Both Mar Aprem and Young point out in their studies[6] that empress Komyo was strongly influenced by christianity and she later built a hospital, an orphanage and a leprosarium. Further churches have been in existence in Sukoshi and KadomMn central Japan. In one part of the foundation stone of a Buddhist temple at Kyoto built in 818 and restored in 1165 are found

letters used for christianity along with Uzu Masa (Yesu Messiah). The characters are infered to belong to an earlier period of 603 when a christian building stood there till the 9th century when the burning of the same could have taken place.

A ninth century manuscript entitled 'The Lord of the Universe 'on Alms giving' and preserved in Kyoto is said to have been based on the Sermon on the Mount and other Mathean passages. In fact this is an A-lo-pen document from Dunhuang.

It should be noted that the evidences available for christian presence in South West and South East Asia are fragmentary compared to that of central and Southern Asian countries.

The emergence of christian churches in Central and Southern Asia were possible because of the mission of the Eastern churches, namely Persian , Syrian and Armenian . In the chequered history of eastern christianity in this part of Asia, are remarkably preserved the basic christian beliefs and the accepted patterns of worship. Further studies are worth the while for reconstructing the church life of the christians and their attempts at contextualization and the process of indigenization attempted by them. These will provide incentives for modern attempts at Asian expressions of christian commitment.

End Notes

1. Published by ISPCK, Delhi and CCA, Hong-Kong. 1996
2. Ibid, P 1
3. Ibid, P 25
4. Ibid P 46
5. Ibid P 71
6. Ibid P 106,107

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SOCIAL HISTORY OF INDIA

Cynthia Stephen

Introduction

One of the little-known facts of Indian history is the existence of Republican non-monarchical states -the gana sangha - in the parts of present-day India, said to have been heavily influenced by early Buddhism. The strength of these states may be gauged from the fact that Ashoka found it an almost insuperable task to subdue these entities and had to undertake extreme violence to win the struggle for supremacy over them in the Kalinga war. The resilience of these republics reflect the strong social bonds engendered by the concept of the Sangha, the Buddhist social organisational pattern. Ashoka found that his victory was pyrrhic, was stricken with remorse after the war, and converted to Buddhism, which was the religion of the republics he was attempting to annex. This incident is indicative of the strength of egalitarian ideologies in providing the basis of a strong and united society, which used to be the situation in the past, which has unfortunately not survived into the present day.

Further, the mode of Asoka's rule after his conversion, rather than being in the classical mould of monarchy, was strongly influenced by the concept of the Chakkavatti - the one who ruled to maintain the wheel of Dharma, or righteousness. This concept is in one sense a departure from the classical mould of a dictatorial monarch and is uniquely egalitarian. In a certain limited sense it is the forerunner of the later concept of Bodhisattva, which became the key tenet of the hugely popular *Mahayana* sect of Buddhism, a couple of centuries later.

The last six hundred years of the pre-Christian Era was a time of great religious search. Two important faiths, Jainism and Buddhism, were born during this time, said to be in reaction to the spread of Vedic Brahminism and its emphasis on sacrifices, rituals and the priesthood. The Jews, having earlier established their nation, had been divided into the northern and southern kingdoms, been invaded and taken captive, their temple destroyed, and their people scattered. In 538 B.C., they were allowed, by the edict of Cyrus, to return to their homelands, and the foundation for a new temple was laid in 537 B.C. The

prophets Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Malachi and Joel lived and worked during this period, widely separated by time. The inter-testament period - 400 to 100 B.C. saw the dominance of Alexander the Great over Palestine, and as is well known, he also launched a campaign towards the Indus basin which ended in disaster and the death of the mighty warrior on the return journey, leaving little trace of influence on India. It was a time of great social and political development in the Indian landmass.

Socio-political situation in India

Religious and philosophical developments of the time included apart from the rise in the popularity of Jainism and Buddhism, several traditions such as the Charuvacas -materialists who denied the existence of the afterlife, the *Sramanas*, a term that included the adherents of a wide variety of heterodox beliefs. Puranic, or popular Hinduism, did not rise until the early Christian era. The existence of urbanized settlements based on clan identity coexisted with other polities based on kingship. Romila Thapar, eminent Indian historian has studied this phenomenon extensively. Her research forms the main basis for this presentation, with interpretation by the author to support her argument for the existence of less-known egalitarian patterns of social and political governance in Ancient India, and to draw some inferences of the influence of Christianity on these polities.

"The emergence of the gana-sangha might be better seen as a form of a proto-state. It was unlike a kingdom, since power was diffused, the stratification of its society was limited, and the ramifications of administration and coercive authority were not extensive. The persistence of the gana-sanghas in Indian history was quite remarkable, especially in the northern and western regions. Despite being conquered periodically, their resilience was demonstrated by their reappearance and continued presence until the mid-first millennium A.D.[1]

Statecraft and Empire: Ashoka the 'Chakkavatti'

Statecraft and its development in the last centuries before the CE in India was first visible in the Mauryan kingdom. The first Emperor to have ruled India and established a significant dynasty was Chandragupta Maurya, in 321 B.C. His son Bindusara succeeded him, and extended the kingdom which originally

covered the Indogangetic plains, as far as the Deccan. Even during this time, the Kalinga (present-day Orissa) was a region inimical to the interests of the Mauryas, because it came in the way of their commerce with South India. The government in Kalinga was in republican pattern. It was Bindusara's son Ashoka who eventually succeeded in bringing the region under his control, following the epic battle of Kalinga, fought in the year 260 BC. The extreme violence of the campaign affected Ashoka deeply, and aroused in him a great remorse at having caused such extensive loss of life, hardship and grief. He has stated in one of his edicts that he converted to Buddhism, as an aftermath of the war, about two and a half years later. He had a number of edicts carved on rocks and set up all over his kingdom. His confessions and regret expressed in the edicts are remarkable especially as they come from a victorious conqueror, an emperor. However, he does not call himself by the title Chakkavatti, or one who rules to uphold the wheel (Chakka) of dharma (Righteousness).

Around the same time, there was a focus on codification and canonisation of the Buddhist scriptures. Ashok was instrumental in convening the third Buddhist Council in Pataliputra, his capital in 260 B.C. Another aspect of Ashoka's Buddhist faith was the equipping and launching of several missionary journeys into the rest of India and into Sri Lanka as well, by the Buddhist sanghas.

It is the fourth Buddhist Council which is of great interest to students of the history of ancient Indian Christianity, because it was the occasion whereby the various emerging sects of Buddhism were acknowledged. Held in the early second century A.D. in Kashmir by Kanishka, it reflects a change in the way Buddha is depicted in the popular Buddhism of the people. The Mahayana sect, contrasts the more traditional orthodox Hinayana sect, which was said to have preserved the original teachings of Buddha. The Mahayana sect incorporates aspects such as the concept of the Bodhisattva, which is inconsistent with the original teaching, but proved hugely popular and entered into the common practice wherever Buddhism spread, especially in Burma, China, Tibet and Central Asia. However, Thervada Buddhism spread more in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Influence of Early Christianity

It is not improbable that the change occurred under the influence of the early Christianity that was just beginning to spread out eastwards via Egypt and Asia Minor. "Other aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, although germinating from the earlier teaching, were further encouraged through its interaction with various religions - Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Manichaenism in particular - especially in the part of Asia stretching from northern India to the eastern Mediterranean and central Asia. Among these, prominence was given to the coming of the Buddha Maitreya to save the true doctrine. With this was connected the concept of the 'suffering saviour' sometimes thought of as the *Bodhisattva* who redeems humanity through his own suffering."[2] This is a startling parallel with *the Biblical* teaching about Christ and his sacrifice, and the second coming.

"Maitreya, although known from earlier texts, gained in popularity at this time, when it was feared that Buddhism might decline unless a saviour appeared. From being the historical founder of a new way of life, Buddha became a projected messianic, millenarian deity. These concepts of incarnations and saviours were not the result of one religion influencing another but rather the existence of a universe of discourse among those who travelled, missed and spoke with one another. This discourse is reflected in parallels of thought and belief among many religious ideologies of the time, particularly in the area including India, central Asia and west Asia."[3]

The depiction of Buddha in anthropomorphic forms began around the 1st century A.D. Earlier depictions of Buddha were confined to symbols such as two feet, an empty seat, and so on. "The Buddha had opposed deification, yet by the 1st century A.D. his image was carved in stone, engraved on rock, or painted, and worshipped. The Bodhisattva was another new idea, defined as one who works for the good of humankind in an unselfish manner, and is willing to forgo nirvana until such time as his work is completed. Alternatively it was interpreted as Bodhisattva being a previous incarnation of Buddha, working towards nirvana and accumulating merit through successive births. Such merit was intended for humanity and not just for the individual Bodhisattva."[4]

This separation in the practice of the *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* forms of Buddhism was formalized and acknowledged during the fourth Buddhist Council held in Kashmir during the reign of Kanishka. This was also the time when Jainism underwent a schism, between the orthodox Digambaras and the more popular Swetambaras. The iconography of the Jains also shows a change during this period and the tirthankaras who were earlier depicted with closed eyes, symbolizing the inward look. They were then shown with open eyes, indicating an engagement with the material world.

Gana-Sanghas

Further refinement to the concept of ganasanghas was reinforced by the developing urbanization of the Indo-gangetic plain. A clear connection can be made between the ganasanghas and their belief-systems, mainly Jaina and Buddhist. In fact, it was from these gana-sanghas that the two teachers - Buddha and Mahavira - emerged. It is significant that Brahminical texts are disapproving of the gana-sanghas mainly because they did not conduct the traditional rituals and even ignored varna. In fact, the Vedic literature ignores their existence. While the focus was on towns which were capitals of kingdoms, there were several clusters of these ganasanghas in the periphery of these kingdoms, such as in the foothills of the Himalayas, in Sind, Punjab, and central and western India. Though not monarchies, these ganasanghas were ruled by certain clans or families, or by confederation of clans. These polities had only two strata, the ruling families and the dasa-karmakara - slaves and labourers. While they rejected Vedic ritual and authority, they venerated sacred groves and other forms of popular religion. While land was commonly owned by the ruling clan, labour was provided by the non-clan labourers.

Social and political power was with the rajas who sat as representatives in the assembly. Not being monarchies, the gana-sanghas were more open to individualistic and independent opinion than the monarchies, and were more ready to tolerate unorthodox views. They were also able to reject Brahminical political theories, which essentially were conceits relating to the kings being appointed by gods as patrons of sacrifice, ritual and upholders of varna. In contrast, the Buddhist theory spoke of the state having originated as a form of social contract - in the hoary past, there was harmony among all creatures, a

gradual process of decay set in, and needs, wants and desires began to manifest themselves. Ownership, the concept of family, private property, and thereby struggles and the need for laws and a controlling authority. To manage the societal conflict, it was necessary for one person to be chosen to maintain justice, and be paid for the services. Thus, this Buddhist theory accounts for the societal institutions and provides for a non-monarchichal non-ritualistic and more egalitarian form of social and political governance.

St. Thomas in Northwest and South India and egalitarianism in the South

The account of the arrival of St. Thomas the apostle of Jesus to India through the land route and his success in getting the support of a certain King Gondephares was thought to lack historical proof till recently. But recent archaeological finds verifying the existence of the King Gondophares who lived in the north-west and ruled at the time of St. Thomas' visit have been uncovered, lending credence to the account. The arrival of St. Thomas on the Malabar coast has historical evidence to support it for much longer, especially given the extensive Indo-Roman trade links of the time. The tradition that he was martyred in Chennai at an advanced age persists, supported by the existence of a small chapel said to contain a tiny relic on St. Thomas' Mount in Chennai as well as the record that his body which had been buried in Madras and them been exhumed and removed to its final resting place in Edessa.

Settlements of an urban nature are evident, and extensive trade relations with the West (Rome) are seen, mainly consisting of spices, pearls, beryl, etc. Several important port cities are known to have existed. Later developments included the gradual evolution of kingdoms and large dynasties, as the spread of Brahminical influence became stronger. *Tirukkuṟaḷ* has been dated to the 2nd century AD and the subsequent Tamil devotional poetry, including the Nālāyirat Tivvya Prabantham, the *Civañāpotam*, and the other gems of classical Tamil poetry and philosophy.

"Classicism in Tamil literature includes many expressions invoking the emotion of love, the seminal form which can be found in earlier Cankam poetry. The development of Tamil was furthered by a religious movement popularized by

groups of poets, hymnologists and preachers who in modern studies are often called the saints of the Tamil devotional sects. Tamil was widely used in these compositions accelerating its evolution compared to other southern languages (The term saint has been extensively used for those who were teachers and poets of bhakti, where devotion was the primary religious expression. The word should not be understood in the sense of a Christian saint, but rather as a charismatic person gifted to teach the new doctrines and to compose poems, and around whom large groups of followers gathered" Romila Thapar.[5]

For instance, the poems of Nammāḷvār in which he imagines himself as a woman in relation to a deity who is male is remarkable. The woman poet Andal saw herself as a beloved of god and her poetry speaks of her love for the deity. These literary outpourings were at the center of the movement and the Thapar wonders "The question still remains why the religion of the Āḷvārs and the Nayanmars became so popular from the latter part of the first millennium AD." Thapar op.cit., p 355.

Could we say that the evolution of spiritual, poetic and religious sensibilities went hand in hand in this religion, contributing to its popularity among the Tamil people, who continue to be the repository of independent thought with a unique and egalitarian critique of Brahminism, casteism and vedic hegemony even in modern and contemporary India?

End Notes

1. Romila Thapar in *The Penguin History of Early India*, 2005, p 137.
2. Thapar, op. cit, p. 274.
3. Thapar, op cit., p 278.
4. Thapar, op cit., p 271.
5. Thapar, op. cit, p. 347).

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EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN PERSIA

Mathias Mundadan

Christianity in Persia has a chequered history. It has assumed several names in the course of history. It is called Persian Christianity because it exists and had existed in those regions which is called the Persian Empire. The great rival of the Roman Empire till the rise of the political power of Islam; it is the Church of modern Iraq and Iran. This part of the world was ruled successively by the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans and the Persians, and it was known in history by various names: Assyrian, Babylon, Chaldea, and Persia. Also the Church in this part has been called by all these names, such as East Syrian Church (in opposition to West Syrian or Antiochene) and Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (after the twin capital cities under the Persians). The region as well as the Church is also known after Mesopotamia, the Euphrates-Tigris valley, the seat of one of the most ancient civilizations which had its parallel in the early Nile valley civilization.

Political Developments

It is relevant to give a little of geography before going into the political background to situate the topic of this paper in context. The famous Greek Geographer Strabo wrote in about A. D. 20, his well-known book '*Geographica*', which was the fruit of a lifetime of study. It presented to the world of the apostolic Church a better picture of the planet than its people had ever before possessed (cf. Moffett 1998: 4). The apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ who had the Master's command, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel" (Mk 16: 15), who became witnesses to Christ "in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), had no precise idea about "the ends of the earth". Half of Strabo's inhabited world was the continent of Asia, which extended from Don to the Ganges, from Arabia to "the land of the Seres", i.e. China. He divided Asia into two sections, one south of the great ranges of the roof of the world-Himalayas, Pamirs, Hindu Kush, and Urals, the Atali, and Tien Shan mountains-and the other to the north. The southern section was the familiar territory: Arabia, Syria, and Asia Minor in the far west, Assyria and Parthian Persia, and India to the east. Four waves of empire that swept across this broad

expanse left, like tidal marks on the beach of the first century, four strands of civilization stamped upon its surface: Greco-Roman Asia, Iranian (Persian) Asia, Sinic (Chinese) Asia and Indian Asia (cf. Moffett 1998: 6).

The concern of this paper is about Iranian/Persian Asia. The earliest form of government here, as far as we can trace from history, was that of the City-States under Sumerians (before 2400 B. C). The Sumerians were followed by a semitic people called the Acadians (from 2400 B.C.) who had to surrender their power to another Semitic people, the Babylonians, who under their great ruler Hammurabi established the Babylonian Empire (18cll century B. C.) with their capital Babylon situated on the Euphrates, north of Sumer. The Babylonians in their turn had to surrender to the Hittites who were later overthrown by other peoples and finally power fell into the hands of another Semitic people, the Assyrians, who with Ashur as their centre, founded the Assyrian Empire (8th century B. C); but after a century they had to make way for the Chaldeans, also a semitic people, who with Babylon as their capital, again formed the Chaldean or the second Babylonian empire. At the close of 6th century B.C. the Persians[1] under Cyrus overthrew the empire of the Chaldeans and established their own, the Persian Empire.

It is important to remember, however, that eventhough the rulers changed and politics shifted, students of history note a continuation of the Babylonian civilization, as we may call it, which was essentially a semitic civilization. Even after the conquest by the Persians this civilization was not destroyed but passed into a new admixture and assumed a new development. The geographical position of the location of this civilization, which was central between east and west, north and south, gave it its commercial importance especially because the north-south and east-west land routes of trade passed through these regions. These trade routes greatly facilitated the activities of the missionaries of the East-Syrian Church. The language of commerce here was Aramaic and it continued to be so even after the take over by the Aryan Persians. Hence probably, the merchants and traders (and later on, missionaries) from these parts were known in Kerala by their language as Arameans, and their country was known as Aramea. But the Portuguese seem to have confused these names with Armenians and Armenia (cf. Hosten 1936: 35f)[2].

It is with Cyrus II, the Great that the Persian Empire had its beginning. The dynasty, to which he belonged, was that of the Achaemenids, which ruled from 549 to 330 B.C. By the close of the 5th century B. C. they had conquered the whole of western Asia and even crossed over to Europe. This is the first dynasty of the Persians. The second was that of the Seleucids (312-238 B. C.) of Greek origin. These Greek rulers, as heirs of Alexander the Great carried the culture of the Athens into central Asia as far as Afghanistan and across the borders of India. In fact, a Greek connection may have been as important as the Jewish one for the early Christian advance eastward. Edessa, Ecbatana, and even Taxil in India all had Greek military colonies. Greek trade routes from Antioch through Persia to Afghanistan and onto Patna on the Ganges remained open into the Christian era as inviting avenues of approach for Christian traders and evangelists. The third dynasty, the Parthians (247 B. C.-A. D. 226) took Persia back from the Greeks and made it Asian again. It was in Parthian Persia and on its border with Roman Asia that Asian Christianity as distinguished from Western Christianity grew and began to develop a related but eventually separate existence. In 53 B. C. the Romans met with a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Parthian archers under the command of a brilliant young general, Suren, from the Indian border. From that day on, R. N. Frye points out, Western writers divided the world between Rome and Persia. It was in the time of the Parthians that Christian faith moved beyond the Roman Empire into oriental Asia.

The Parthians, like their rivals the Romans, screened their border with a patchwork of protecting client-kingdoms. Three of these vassal principalities figure prominently in the traditions of early Asian Christianity: Osrhoene, Adiabene, and Armenia. Osrhoene, with its capital Edessa (modern Urfa), guarded the crossings of the Euphrates at its great northern bent not far from the lower border of Armenia and sheltered what became the mother Church of organized Asian Christianity. Farther east, the little kingdom of Adiabene stood on the upper waters of the Tigris River near old Nineveh (Nisibis). Its capital, Arbela (modern Erbil), was to become the centre for Christian missionary advance into central Asia (cf. Moffett 1998: 12)

Under Alexander the Great, the Persian Empire was brought under the rule of the Greeks but the national character of the government still continued. At the dawn of the Christian era, Persia was ruled by the national dynasty of the

Arsacids (242 B.C.-A.D. 226) who liberated the country from the Greek rule and successfully resisted the Romans. In A. D. 226, the Persian Sassanid dynasty overthrew the Arsacids and ruled Persia for four centuries (A. D. 226-642), that is, till the rise of the Arabs who overran the country in A. D. 642 and established the rule of Islam. The Sassanians introduced changes both in political and religious policies. Regarding the political situation, the sixth century Chronicle of Arbil has this to say: the Persians "had vanquished all the kings of the East, and had replaced them by governors and mazbans who were subject to them. Ardushir, the first king of the Persians, deputed a governor named Adur-zad to rule our country". This means that the rule was to be much more centralized. The new power too laid great emphasis on nationalism and patriotism in a way the Parthians had never done, and Zoroastrianism, as the State religion, was the symbol of this. This meant that inevitably there would be a clash with Christianity, sooner or later.

The Muslim rule which started in A. D. 642 continued under different dynasties such as the Abassids, the Bujids and the Seleucids, till A. D. 1220 when the Mongols invaded the land and after a period of confusion established the Mongolian dynasty of the Ilkhans (A. D. 1265-1349). Towards the end of the 14th century Timur Leng (Tamerlane) ruled the country. At his death (A. D. 1405) the Turchemans and the Ottoman Turks divided the land between themselves. Later on, the eastern half of Persia came under the Safavids (A. D. 1502-1736), the rivals of the Turks.

Till the coming of the Persians, Babylon appears to have been the main city. After the subjugation by the Persians and before the Greek invasion, Persepolis became the capital and under the Greeks the twin towns of Seleucia (on the right bank of the Tigris) Ctesiphon (on the left bank of the Tigris), quite frequently called simply the 'Royal Cities' came into prominence. The Arabs built a new town, the town of Bagdad (wrongly believed to have been located where the old town of Babylon stood before). This still remains the capital of Iraq, while Iran has as its capital Teheran, which was founded by the Quagiar dynasty (18c).

The religious life of Persia under both the Arsacids and the Sassanids was dominated by the Magi or Magians with their astrology and divination, and the

Zoroastrians with their two absolute principles of good and evil: Ahura-Mazda, the light and creator of all good things, and Ahriman the darkness and creator of serpents, insects, plague, war, death, and all evil things. They emphasized "right thoughts, right words, right deeds" and particularly that men should be dependable and honest. The Zoroastrian religion was the State religion, and for this reason the Magians occupied a high position in the nation and at the royal court. The ruling Persians often adopted the attitude that if a man was not a Zoroastrian he did not love his country, and that anyone who abandoned Zoroastrianism and accepted another religion was worthy of a traitor's death.[3]

Beginnings of Christianity

The beginnings of Christianity in Persia are shrouded in legends. There seems to be no contradiction in supposing that the first messengers of Christianity in those regions were the 'Parthians, Medes and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia' who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and heard St Peter speak in their own languages (cf. Acts 2: 9), if not the Magi before them.[4] For other details relating to early history, we have to depend on some Syriac accounts, the reliability of which is not acceptable to all historians.[5] The substance of all the accounts, legendary or otherwise, can be summed up thus: Addai, the Apostle of Edessa, one of the 72 disciples of Jesus, either personally or through his disciples Agai and Mari, evangelized the regions beyond the eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire.

Although no serious claim to the apostolate of St. Thomas is put forward by the Persian Church, the apostle is, however, considered to be intimately connected with their Church (cf. Moffett, ibid.: 46-90). According to Eusebius, writing about the year 324, it was Thomas who sent the first recorded Christian mission across the Roman border into Asian Osrhoene. He tells how the apostle asked one of his disciples, a man named Thaddeus (or Addai, in Syriac), "one of the seventy" mentioned in Luke 10: 1, to answer a request for healing by the king of Edessa, Abgar V, called "the Black" (Eusebius: 1. 13.6-10).

In all the early Syriac documents, whether legendary or authentic, Thomas is the apostle who initiated the spread of Christianity to the regions beyond the eastern borders of the Roman Empire, whether it is Osrhoene with its

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capital Edessa (the Greek form of the original Syriac Urhai, which is today known by the Arabic word Urfa), or Adiabene with its capital Arbil or Arbela. The legendary account called The Doctrine of Addai Addai (Thaddeus), a missionary chosen by Apostle Thomas is said to have evangelized the eastern regions, centred around Osrhoene; when he died his disciple Aggai took over as guide and ruler of the Church and appointed Palut a deacon. We find in Odes of Solomon,[6] considered to be the earliest extant Christian hymn book, perhaps Christian hymns written in Syriac almost as soon as the Church was planted outside the Roman Empire.

Bardaisan or Bardesanes, a sportsman, nobleman, poet, philosopher, and friend of King Abgar VIII of Osrhoene represent Syriac Christian literature of the late second century. Perhaps he was the author of Acts of Judas Thomas. Another great witness to Syrian Christianity is Tatian (A. D. second century), a remarkable Biblical scholar, linguist, and ascetic, who took pride in calling himself as an Assyrian and tried to project Asia-the non-Roman world-as excelling the Greeks and Romans in all aspects. Probably this follower of Encratism, meaning "self-control" but considered as a heretical tendency signifying abnormal self-denial and an insistence on the separation of the Christians from the world, bequeathed an exaggerated emphasis on the merits of radical asceticism to the Eastern Church. Jerome called Tatian the very violent heresiarch of the Encratites.[7]

Strangely enough it is the ascetics who become pioneer missionaries in eastern Persia. In the very earliest Christian documents of the East, the call to ascetic self-denial is almost always associated with the call to go and preach and serve. This seems to have been the most striking difference between Syrian and Egyptian saint-ascetics. Egypt, more solidly agricultural, valued stability and tended to withdraw from outside contacts and movements. Its saints ignored the world and retreated to their caves and cells. Syria, on the other hand, with its travel and trading traditions, stressed mobility and outreach. Its ascetics became wandering missionaries, healing the sick, feeding the poor, and preaching the gospel as they moved from place to place. R. Murray describes them as "homeless followers of the homeless Jesus on... ceaseless pilgrimage through this world".

Addai, who refused to receive silver and gold from the king of Edessa, saying that he had forsaken the riches of this world "because without purses and without scrips, bearing the cross upon our shoulders, we were commanded to preach the Gospel in the whole creation", is known in the Doctrine of the Apostles as the pioneer missionary of Edessa and Nisibis (Soba), and in Arabia and the borders of Mesopotamia. His disciple, Aggai is described as the apostle of "the whole of Persia of the Assyrians and Armenians and Medians, and of the countries round about Babylon, the Huzites and the Gelai [i.e., on the Caspian Sea], even to the borders of the Indians, and even to the country of Gog Magog". Another line of tradition centres around the missionary, Mari, another disciple of Addai. It is interesting to note that Addai and indirectly Aggai and Mari are all disciples of apostle Thomas from the early sources.

An East-Syrian (or Persian) Bishop, probably Mar Jacob[8], told the Portuguese the following story in 1533. St Thomas, St Bartholomew and Judas Thaddeus, by the command of Jesus Christ were sent to parts of Babylon. St Thomas and Judas Thaddeus went first to Babylon and hence en route Bassara to the north in Qualex-qadaqa, where Judas Thaddeus settled down. He converted many to Christianity and built houses of prayer. St Bartholomew proceeded to Persia and there he was buried in Tarao in a monastery across Tabris. Leaving Judas Thaddeus behind, apostle Thomas went to Soeotra and then continued his journey to India and China. The Bishop said that he had heard this story narrated in Babylon and Malabar.

Christianity thrived during the Parthian Arsacid times. The Sassanid dynasty which seized power from the Arsacids in 226 began reviving what they thought to be the old religion, Zoroastrianism.[9] They believed that both the ancient religion and State had been dissipated by the easy going Parthians. They tightened the alliance of religion and State by appointing a chief priest (mobadan-mobed or magi) to advise the Shah (emperor) and to preside over the village priests or mobeds. Zoroastrianism was enthroned as State religion and soon attempts were made to eliminate all other religious faiths. That spelled the end of the three hundred years of toleration that Christianity enjoyed. But the change had not come at once. It is somewhat surprising to find little evidence of any persecution of minorities during the reign of the first eight Sassanian monarchs. The fight of the State at this time was rather against Manicheism.[10] Only in the

reign of Varahran (Bahram) II, who ruled from 276 to 293, that the Christians faced a limited persecution the causes of which were not perhaps the difference of religion.

Church Organization

Till about A. D. 270 the capital city, Seleucia-Ctesiphon had no Bishop, though in northern Mesopotamia there were the Dioceses of Arbela and Susa. According to the disputed account of the History of Church of Adiabene, the Christians of Seleucia-Ctesiphon begged Shaklupa, "Bishop" of Arbela, who was visiting them, to choose and ordain their first priest, which he did. Later, perhaps between 280 and 290, the two Bishops of Arbela and Susa, deciding that it was now fitting that the capital city should have its own Bishop, elevated its priest, Papa bar-Aggai, to the rank of Bishop. Once Papa became Bishop of the royal city, he began claiming primacy over the other Bishops, which claim others contented. A council was convened in 315, the 'Synod of Seleucia', in which the Bishops led by Bishop Miles of Susa-a see much more ancient than Seleucia-Ctesiphon- bluntly rejected Papa's pretensions to primacy. It deposed him and he revolted against the decision. But soon a compromise was arrived at and Papa was re-instated. His proposal of a national Church with clear lines of authority had a logic of its own. It eventually came to be accepted. Even if Seleucia-Ctesiphon had no apostolic right, its importance for contact between a minority Church and the highly centralized monarchy was recognised. However, the faction continued. It was at the counsel of Bishop of Edessa that the Persian clergy were persuaded to accept as the nominal head of the capital city. Later documents refer to "Western Fathers" (west Asian Bishops) as playing a decisive role in the first organizational crises in the Church of the East. These "Western Fathers" came later to be falsely interpreted as Bishops of Antioch and Jerusalem. Moffett is of the definite view that if there was any Western influence in the compromise that averted a schism in the Persian Church it came probably from Edessa and Nisibis, not Antioch and Jerusalem. In the eyes of the Persian clergy Edessa was still the mother missionary church and still more Persian than Roman whatever the fortunes of war had done to it (cf. Moffett: 122).

Papa died around 327 and Simon bar-Sabba'e, his archdeacon who had already been consecrated Bishop when Papa rebelled, succeeded. Simon was

martyred together with a number of other Bishops, priests and lay Christians in the 'great persecution' under Shapur (Sapor) II. The death of the martyrs, in particular that of Bishop Simon, is said to have wiped the slate clean for a while of the petty bickering of church politicians. More than that, it gave the Persian Christians a martyr and a hero to follow in the painful years that ensued, years which saw the Church as a national organization destroyed.

While the Bishops were sometimes praying and sometime quarrelling their way toward a national unity, at the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum a very different quest for a satisfying organizational structure was occurring where it might be least expected. The radical ascetics, with much the same mixture of piety, necessity, and fractious human behaviour displayed by their Bishops, were beginning to move out of their separate, isolated orbits into community. The fourth century saw the rise in Persia of organized monasticism. Jacob of Nisibis (early 4th century) and Aphrahat or Aphraates (mid 4th century), both of whom started as recluses, as 'sons of the Covenant', came out of their rocky dwellings and gave leadership to organized monasticism, similar to what Pachomius had done in Egypt (cf. ibid.: 122f.).

Great Persecutions

The fortunes of the Church were much affected by the changing politics of the country. When Rome became Christian in the 4th century, Christians of the Persian Empire were suspected of divided loyalty by its rulers, the Sassanians. A violent persecution broke out under Shapur II (A. D. 310-379) and many Christians were martyred. A modicum of freedom was granted under Jasdgard I (A. D. 399-420). Persecution broke out again in the 5lh century under Bahram V (A. D. 420-24) and his son Jasdgard II (A. D. 445-48); and then a modus vivendi was worked out between the Christians and the Sassanians towards the end of the century. The persecutions were due mainly to the amicable relations of the Christians with the Roman Empire, and their permanent geographical and political isolation vis-a-vis the bulk of the Christians in the Roman Empire. Though the religious motives (the zeal to jealously guard the national religion, Zoroastrianism), were not unrelated, the primary cause of the persecution was political. When Rome became Christian, its old enemy Persia turned anti-Christian. Shapur II received about 315 a letter from Emperor Constantine I of

Rome. This was written out of his concern for the welfare of fellow Christians in Persia: "I recommend them to your care, and leave them in your protection". It is this letter, which probably triggered the beginnings of an ominous change in the Persian attitude towards Christians (cf. ibid.: 138; Young 1969: 26).

Towards Autonomy[11]

However, the persecution fostered among the Persian Christians a tendency towards centrifugal ism- the desire for forming a 'national' Church, independent of the Church in western Asia, which was situated within the Roman Empire. The Christological controversies of the 5th century further contributed to the spirit of independence. The Synods of 410, 424 and 486 are particularly important from this point of view. In the 410 Synod of Seleucia or of Isaac the Bishop of the twin cities was declared the chief ecclesiastical authority for the Persian Church and in that synod or a little prior to that, he assumed the title of 'catholicos' that is, the 'Bishop for the whole'. Canon 12 of the Synod says:

We accept of our free-will, as we have been commanded by Yazdgard, King of Kings-we, all the Bishops of the East, and those who shall come after us- to obey, in all things right and prescribed, the Bishop, Catholicos, Archbishop, Metropolitan of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, until Christ shall come that is to say, every Bishop who shall sit on the sublime throne of this Church of Kohke.

In the synod of 424 held in Markabta of Tayyaye or the Synod of Dadisho, the Bishops took the decisive step of repealing all appeals to the 'Western Fathers' (thus if there was any dependence on the Churches of West Asia, it was ended); the chief Bishop, who has already been given the title of catholicos, was made independent and supreme. Another step, more radical, was taken towards independence and autonomy in the synod of 486 or of Acacius held in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. In it a diphysite Christological formula of faith was adopted, a formula which almost overstressed the two natures in Christ, and which followed closely the guidelines set forth by the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the acknowledged master of the East-Syrian theological school of Edessa-Nisibis. This formula apparently served the Church of Persia to demonstrate its independence from Roman West Asia, which was now fermenting with what is called the 'monophysite' tendencies of Alexandria.

Independence and Growth

These two events are looked upon by many authors as 'schism' and the acceptance of Nestorian 'heresy'. But there are many others who for very good reasons refuse to subscribe to such a view. In any case, the Church of Persia, now placed beyond any suspicion of disloyalty to the motherland and enjoying more or less permanent peace with the Sassanid rulers of Persia, developed from the end of the 5th century according to its wishes. All the ecclesiastical institutions began to assume a national character. It built up its own diphysitic theology, with Theodore of Mopsuestia as the master-a theology, in which their clerics were trained first in the school of Edessa and then the Nisibis.[12] The Church law too evolved in the same national spirit. A large body of ecclesiastical literature was produced. Monastic life flourished and the monks, unlike those of other Eastern Churches, undertook missionary activity in a commendable manner. By the efforts of these monks the Church developed, within and without the Persian territories.

The conquest of Persia in the 7th century by the Islamic forces from Arabia does not seem, at least in the beginning, to have much perturbed the tranquillity and prosperity of the Church. Actually the East-Syrian Church witnessed its greatest missionary expansion under the Arabs in the 8th century. But in course of time the burdens imposed by the Muslim rulers on the Christians became so onerous that the Church declined and many of the missionary enterprises ceased. A second flowering of the Church took place under the Mongols, who made religious tolerance their policy. Patriarch Jaballaha III (1284-1317) was very influential with the Mongol rulers. He maintained good relations with other Christian communities and the Latin missionaries. Under him the Church attained its greatest expansion.

But the second efflorescence did not last long, and actually after Jaballaha III very little is heard about the Church till the 16th century. The political chaos, especially in the wake of the invasion of Tamerlane (end of the 14th century) seems to have battered the Church considerably. Also the Turks who captured Bagdad in 1534 did not make life easy for the Christians. Although conditions may be said to be better in the modern period, still Christians in Persia are

citizens only of the second rank as in all the other Islamic states, although in Iraq they enjoyed a better position under Saddam Husain.

The residence of the primate, who is referred to indiscriminately as catholicos or patriarch, was first at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, which had been the capital of the Sassanians. When Bagdad became the capital under the Arabs, the catholicos shifted his residence to Bagdad. It continued to be his residence from the close of the 8th century till the end of the 13th century. From that time the primate began to be known as catholicos patriarch of Babylon. In the 14th century different residences were chosen by the patriarchs, such as Maragha, Arbela and Karamalis. Then Mosul became the residence for a century (from the end of the 14lh to the end of the 15th century), and four patriarchs resided there in succession. Later Djizireh became a temporary residence, and subsequently Rabban Hormizd an almost permanent residence till the middle of the 16th century.

Division of the Church

The East-Syrian Church was looked upon by the western Christians as having drifted into 'schism' and 'heresy' from the end of the 5th century. However, there were occasions (especially from the time of the Crusades), when the Church maintained good relations with the Latin missionaries and Rome. But it is in the middle of the 16th century that the event, which is generally regarded as the 'reunion' of the 'Nestorians' with Rome took place. From 1450 onwards the office of the catholicos or patriarch of Babylon had become hereditary, passing from uncle to nephew. When in 1551 Simon VII bar Mamma died, his nephew Simon was not acknowledged by a section of the clergy and laymen, who elected John Suid Sulaqa as catholicos and sent him to Rome to be confirmed by the Pope. In Rome, after his profession of the Roman Catholic creed he was confirmed by Pope Julius III as patriarch and he returned home accompanied by two Maltese Dominicans and took up residence at Diarbekir.

Mission and Expansion

Reference has already been made to the missionary activity of the Church of Persia under the Persians, Arabs and the Mongols. Such activity might have

been greatly helped by the fact mentioned earlier, namely, the commercial importance of Mesopotamia and the regions around. Missionary expansion had begun under the Sassanians, whose persecutions made the Christians flee to the eastern parts of the Persian Empire and evangelize those parts. In the beginning of the 5th century we find Christians with their bishops in the extreme eastern provinces, and at the close of the century the Turks and Huns near Oxus were evangelized. Not long after, missionaries entered the Transoxanian regions and in the beginning of the 8r century Samarkand was a bishopric. China began to be evangelized in the 7th century and this evangelization was commemorated by the erection of the Hsi-an Fu stele. Under Timothy I the Great (780-823), these missionary activities expanded and peoples in central Asia en masse with their kings, accepted Christianity. In all these activities the monks were in the foreground, and the Christian merchants, accompanied by priests, played their part well in diffusing the Christian faith. These intensive activities slumped in the 10lh century and were resumed only under the Mongols when, as it was pointed out earlier, there occurred a second blossoming of the Church. The Central Asian and Chinese missions again broke up in the 14th century after a period of more friendly regimes of the Mongols in Persia and China ended.

What about the missions of the East-Syrian Church in the south and south-east of Mesopotamia? There is no doubt that the zealous missionaries of the Church, whether they were professional missionaries or Christian merchants, who had always the cause of the faith at heart, penetrated very early into some of the islands of the Arabian Sea, the subcontinent of India and a little later, also the islands and peninsulas south-east of China, such as Malacca, Java and so on. Cosmos Indicopleustes in his 6th century Christian Topography mentions small but flourishing communities of Christians not only along the coasts of India, but also in Socotora and Sri Lanka (Taporobana or Ceylon), all of which were taken care of by clergymen who were ordained in Persia.

In the Island of Socotora there are many Christians of that generation, which was converted by St Thomas. They have churches and crosses and their mode of worship is similar to the Chaldean. On the whole, they live as Christians. They are monogamous. In course of time certain errors crept in for want of instruction and doctrine. The Moors [Muslims] are their neighbours with whom some of them intermarry.

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There are more testimonials about them during the first half of the 16th century. Some Jesuits made an unsuccessful attempt to restore them to the status of a full-fledged Christian community.

Another community is mentioned by St Francis Xavier in and to the south of China, but details as to their life and practices are so few that it is difficult to say whether they were Christians at all. Since China and its south and south-east islands and peninsulas were once evangelized by the East-Syrians, it is very probable that a few Christians (may be theirs was a very loose form of Christianity at this time) might have remained in those parts. It is significant that the four East-Syrian bishops who came to India some time in 1504, were entrusted with the mission by their patriarch "to go the countries of India and the islands of the sea, that are between Dabag (Java) and Sin (China) and Masin (Mahachina or Great China)." It is not improbable that one or two of these bishops (one a metropolitan) proceeded to East Asia not long after their arrival in India. However, we do not have any mention of these Christians in any other document of the 16th century. Compared to these communities the lot of the Christians of India was far better.

Relations of the East-Syrian Church with India[13]

The various sources of tradition are unanimous in evidencing that the original community constituted by Apostle Thomas suffered a decline in course of time. But it was reinvigorated by groups of Christians who came from 'Babylon' (Persia). Many such immigrant groups of East-Syrian Christians are mentioned. Two of them are better known: one is associated with Thomas of Cana (4th century), and the other with two saintly men, Sapor and Prot (9/10 century)[14].

End Notes

1. The Persians are a group of the Aryans of Central Asia who migrated to the mountains north and east of Mesopotamia in 2000 B.C. Hence the names of Iran and Iranians (Aryana), cf. Reither 1949: 27.
2. Schurhammer thinks the error is the outcome of a geographical, ethnical and linguistic confusion, see G. Schurhammer, "Armenian Bishop in Malabar?",

in Arquivos do Centro Cultural Portugues, Vol. IV, Paris 1972, pp. 141-48. R, Gulbenkian in another article in the same volume, pp. 149-76: "Jacome Abuna, An Armenian Bishop in Malabar (1503-1550)", thinks that Mar Jacob was a real Armenian, and all the bishops as well as others coming from Persia came to have been known as 'Armenians'. This last opinion is difficult to endorse.

3. For this survey of Mesopotamian region, see Reither 1949: 15-21, 27-30; Messina 1947: 35ff.; Young 1979; Mundadan 1967: 17-19; De Vries 1951: 29ff., 40ff.; cf. also Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche, words: "Persien", "Seleukia", "Bagdad". Cf. also Moffett 1998: 11-13.

4. Patriarch Timothy I wrote: "If Rome is accorded the first and highest rank because of the Apostle Peter, how much more should Seleucia and Ctesiphon on account of Peter's Lord. If the first rank and position is due to the people who confessed on Christ before all others, and believed in him, then we Easterns were the ones to do so. We showed our faith openly in the persons of our Twelve Envoys, who were guided by a star, and in the gifts which they offered to Christ-gold, as to the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords; frankincense, as to the One who is God over all; and myrrh, to signify the passion of his humanity for our sake...Thirty years before all others we Easterns confessed Christ's kingdom, and adored his divinity". Timothy, Letters, 15, quoted in Young 1974: 3.

5. The following legendary works are acknowledged sources for the beginnings of Christianity in Persia: Acts of Taddeus, Doctrine of Addai: more important is Acts of St Mari. Cf. also J. Tixeront 1888; and Urbina 1937; and Messina 1947: 35ff.

6. J. R. Harris, The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909.

7. Jerome, Commentary on Galatians. It is interesting to note that the great champions of asceticism like Tatian, Tertullian were also great nationalists.

8. Mar Jacob arrived in Kerala in 1504 and served the Christians here for about 50 years, i. e. till his death about 1552, cf. Mundadan 1967: 82ff. He gave this testimony in the 1533 inquiry organized by the Portuguese about St Thomas and the tomb at Mylapore, cf. Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus, Goa 31: f. 18f.

9. It is derived from Zoroaster who lived probably before 1000 B. C. He has always been revered as the Iranian prophet of Persia's heroic age. His teachings were handed down orally for over a millennium or more before they were finally collected into a sacred book, the Avesta. It is conjectured that this was done in a Sassanian reaction to the spread of the Christian Scriptures in western Asia. How far the Zoroastrianism of the Sassanians resembled the ancient faith they thought they were reviving , no one knows.
10. A religion syncretic in content, which the young burning prophet Mani was propagating in Persia. It came into confrontation with the Zoroastrian priests. E. G. Browne in his A Literary History of Persia (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909) contrasts Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism: The first was national, militant, materialistic, imperialist, the second quietist, ascetic, unworldly.
11. For the following sections cf. Mundadan 2001 History I; 84-90.
12. Narsai or Narsetes was the founder and director of these famous schools. About them cf. Mundadan 2001 "Dharmaram Patrimony"): 18f.
13. Cf. Mundadan 196:24-28.
14. The relation of the Indian Church with the East-Syrian Church ended in 1600. It was partially restored at the close of the 19th century by the Thrissur based Church of the East.

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24/01/19

EARLY EAST SYRIAN CHRISTIANITY

D.Christudas

Christianity which was born in Asia has become 'Alien' in its own land. One of the important reasons for the 'alienness' of Christianity is that the history of Christianity in Asia is either forgotten or ignored even by the Asian Christians themselves. In order to participate fully in the historical process in this continent Christians must regain their own identity through the sense of their own history. It is a surprise to many people to learn that there was a large and widespread Christian community in Asia during the early centuries. In this paper an attempt is made to discuss the beginning of the East Syrian Christianity.

East Syrian Church is one of the most ancient Churches. It is believed that it has an apostolic origin. At the same time it has a distinctive character of its own. It is genuinely an Asian Church. As in the case of most of the Eastern Churches, the early period of its history is shrouded in ambiguity. With regard to the beginning and early life of Christianity there, no authentic proof is available. However Crawford Burkitt observes that:

> The historical sources are scanty, and most of the accounts of the early periods that we possess are compilations in which at least two inconsistent historical traditions have blended. But if we have to understand the Syriac Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries, we ought to have some idea of the early development of the Church in Edessa; the first center of Christianity in the Syriac-speaking world. (*Early Eastern Christianity* 6)

Most of the details are provided in the form of the legends and traditions or documents written later. Wigram comments, "the Church of the Easterns was the daughter, not of Antioch, but of Edessa and was never included in the patriarchate of the former city" (*An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church* 26)

Geographical settings

Syria is a geographical name applied to different epochs to different areas. The geographical position of the Church we are discussing is of much

importance, especially during the later course of time. Its position has get much impact on its political situations that in turn contributed a great deal on formulating religious ethos and responses. Edessa was the capital of a small buffer State, east of Euphrates. This town was re-founded by the Selucids (Greek) and was called by them as Edessa. But the Aramaic speaking people continued to call it Urhai, "name of uncertain meaning', from which the Greeks formed osrhoene (orrhoene) for the name of the district" (Burkitt 6, 7). The modern name for the town Urfa is derived from this root. Osrhoene (Urhai) was on the coast of the Roman empire and in between the Roman and Parthian empire. During the commencement of Christian era, Edessa was the capital of this small independent kingdom ruled by Beduin king, Abgar. This city was near a caravan route which had been used since before Abraham's time (John Foster 84). Haran (Genesis 11:31) lay a few miles away. Edessa was also on a tributary of the great river Euphrates, flowing south to the Persian Gulf. So it was in a strategic position for further advance eastwards. Armenia lay adjacent to Osrhoene. The region of Adiabene lay north east of Osrhoene on the eastern side of River Tigris. Arbel is the most important city of that area. This area was a part of the Parthian empire. Adiabene was a Jewish centre and the local king of that region during the first century was converted to Judaism. Thus the land was being prepared for the advent of Christianity.

Syriac Language

Syriac is the name given to the language used by Christian writers in the region east of Antioch, including the Christian subjects of the Persian Empire. It seems to have been originally the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa. Syriac has the same 22 letters as Hebrew. The forms are ultimately derived from the old Hebrew and Phoenician alphabets. The Syriac language used at this part was through the dialect of Aramaic but not identical to that of the language used in Palestine by Jesus and his disciples. Even after the occupation of the Greeks and the Romans, she continued to use Syriac as her language. Because of this it stood in contrast with the Greek-speaking or Latin-speaking churches of the east and west and made it an indigenous church.

Political History

The great emperor Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) died on June 323 BC. After his death, his Generals (marshals) contended for the control of the country. So the Kingdom got divided among his generals. Egypt went to Ptolomy, Babylonia to Selucusa, Asia Minor to Antigonous and Syria - Palestine to Lanmedontus. There arose conflicts between them for supremacy. About twenty years later, stability was attained and the Middle East was divided into two powerful kingdoms: Egypt under the Legides dynasty (descendants of Ptolemy 325 - 30 BC) and Babylonia and Iran under the Selucides (descendants of Selucus, 312- 65 BC).

The Selucids were a foreign dynasty in an inhospitable land. It was a confederation of homogenous territories. Selucids tried to unify them. For that purpose they made cities and tried to implant many Greek communities there. The chief of this was Antioch founded in 300 BC on the banks of Ornates following the conquest of Syria. They also founded cities like Seleucia, Laodocia, Beroca, Edessa, etc. City of Selucia on the western banks of Tigris was made capital for the first time and then Ctesiphon which lay opposite on the eastern bank. But finally Antioch was made the capital city whereby the importance of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was subordinated to that of Antioch. During the period of the Third Selucid king (Antiochus 11, 261-246 BC) the eastern part of Syria under Arsaces rose against the Selucids and a Parthian empire was formed in 250 BC. Parthians under Arsacids ruled this area until 226 AD. They had their capital at Selucea-Ctesiphon.

In the meanwhile the relationship between the Selucids and the Ptolomics was strained. In 205 Ptolemy Philopator died leaving an infant son to occupy the throne. Seeing this opportunity Syria planned to attack Egypt that was previously attacked and plundered Syria. But this attempt was checked by the intervention of Rome. Following the decline of the Egyptian power, it was Rome which was gradually drawn into interference in the affairs of the East. Further the relationships between these powers continued worsening from time to time. Each of them was looking at the other with suspicion.

The nomadic tribe called Beduins, occupied the long strip of land that stretched from Arabia to the Euphrates. Some of them in the later periods made settlements (that afterwards became independent kingdoms). The most important of the Beduin kingdoms was that of Osrhoene, inhabited by Mardani tribe. King Abgar was their ruler who established himself in the city of Edessa. His dynasty continued in power until AD 216.

During the beginning of the first century, the kingdom of Osrhoene was an independent state in between various hostile imperialistic powers. Therefore identifying with any of these necessarily brought the wrath of the other. Even if they did not identify or the imperialists suspect them of identifying with their enemies, they were at the recurring end. This was because of their geographical position in between the mighty Roman and the warring Persian Empire. When Trojan (98-117) was fighting, the Persian counterpart the Romans stormed Edessa and destroyed it in 116 AD.

Origins of Christianity in Edessa

When did Christianity come to Edessa and who brought it? We did not have authentic historically proved source to find out the history of the beginning of Christianity in this area. There are so many traditions, suppositions and legends that are in circulation in connection with the founding of the Christian Church in the East.

Through the wise men visited infant Jesus

Some people attribute the beginning of faith in Christ to the event of seeing the stars by the wise men (Matt. 2). For them further messages from any of the sources described above might have supplied authenticity in accepting Christianity. This tradition has the acceptance among the scholars. Timothy I, the Patriarch of the East (779-823 AD) meant this when he wrote:

> If Rome is accorded the first and highest rank because of the Apostle Peter, much more should Seleucia and Ctesiphon be accorded on account of Peter's Lord if the first rank and positions were due to the people who confessed Christ before all others, and believed in him; then we Easterns were the ones to do so. We showed our faith openly in the person of our twelve envoys, who were

> guided by a star and in the gifts which they offered to Christ-gold, as to the king of all kings and the Lord of all Lords; frankincense, as to the one who is God over all, and myrrh, to signify the passion of his humanity for the sake . . . thirty years before all others, we Easterns confessed Christ's kingdom and adored his divinity. (qtd. by William G. Young 3)

This is only a distant possibility, and without a historical evident source.

Through those who were present at the Pentecost

Luke with his strong western and European connections did not forget to maintain the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem eastwards, further into Asia and in North Africa. His account of the day of Pentecost includes a list of fourteen areas from which those who heard the preaching came. Five of these areas were in the coast: Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesapotomia, Arabia and two in Africa: Egypt and Cyrenaica. Luke hints that people from these areas were among the three thousand Jews and proselytes "baptized and added that day" (Acts 2:9,11)

Earlier we saw through the conversion of the King to Judaism that the land became a Jewish centre. Those seem to be no problem in the participation of the people from this land to the Pentacostal Festival – mentioned in Acts 2. This tradition says that the first messenger of Christianity in this region was the Christian converts of this region through Peters' sermon on Pentecostal day. One ancient Syriac document says that after hearing the apostle Addaeus, Ebednesu chiefs of the priests of the town came to the chief temple. They cried before the altar of the temple, "verily this is the disciple of that eminent and glorious master, concerning whom we had heard all that he did in the country of Palestine" (Ante Nicene Fathers 661). Acts 13 says about the beginning of Paul's mission from Antioch. It was a short step, but one which led to a different part of the world. Antioch belonged to the Mediterranean area. From Antioch to Edessa it is only have a hundred and thirty miles distance. Edessa city was an important caravan route those days. The idea that there is a possibility of the spread of the Gospel to these through the converts must be welcomed. While accepting this possibility we must look for more definite evidence of Christianity's progress in the Eastward direction.

Legends of beginning of the Church

The beginning of Christianity in this area is presented through various legends. Of them is the legend relating to Abgar Ukkama (uchomo = the black) and this is of much importance. This legend itself is presented differently. The legends has a Syriac version, which is prevalent in the East Syrian Church, and the Greek version which is found in the ecclesiastical history of Eusebins of Caeserea. Though both are identical in nature, they do present any significant changes.

Abgar Legend
Doctrine of Addai – Syriac source

We have at least two versions about the Abgar legend. The first one is given in the Syrian work called Doctrine of Addai by an unknown writer. (We can read the work in full in *Ante Nicene Fathers* Vol. VIII, *Translation of the Writing of Fathers down to AD 225*). Craford Burkitt is of the opinion that the legend attained its present form and was composed by the end of the fourth century before the reforms of Rabbula (Burkitt 11). Abgar Ukkama, son of Manu was the a king of Edessa and was contemporary to Jesus. He was ailing from an incurable disease. He sent his representative to Sabinus, the Governor of Emperor Tibirians at Eleutheropolis. Members of this embassy were two Edessan noblemen, Mariyabh and Shanshangram along with the notary Hannan the scribe. On their way back they visited Jerusalem on hearing about Jesus and witnessed what was happening. They reported about this to king Abgar. The King sent a letter with Hannan to Jesus. The letter begins as "Abgar Ukkama to Jesus the good physician" (*Ante Nicene Fathers* Vol. VIII, 652), other details remained almost identical with that of the letter found in Eusebius. To that Jesus responded:

> Go and say to thy Lord that sait unto me 'Happy art thou, that though thou hast not seen me, thou has believed in me; for it is written of me that they which see me will not believe in me and they which see me not, they will believe in me. Now as to what thou hast written to me, that I should come into thee – that for which I was sent hither hath now come to an and, and I go up unto my father that sent me; but when I have gone up to Him, I will send thee one of my disciples, that whatever disease thou hast he may heal and cure. And all that are with thee

> he shall turn to life eternal, and thy town shall so blessed and no enemy again shall have domination over it for ever'. (Burkitt 13-14)

After getting this message Hannan painted a portrait of Jesus and took it back to the King. After Pentecost, Judas Thomas sent Addai (Addeaus), one of the seventy-two disciples, to Edessa. He came and stayed with Tobias, a Palestinian Jew. Tobias introduced Addai to Abgar and Addai healed Abgar. Abgar was converted to Christianity along with a large number of his subjects and a number of Jews. Legend also says that neither the apostle nor the King "forced any one to believe in Christ" (*Ante Nicene Fathers* 661). Thus Abgar became the first Christian King in the history of Christianity.

Addai built a church in Edessa and furnished it. This will be the first Christian Church building in the history of Christianity. Before his death he ordained a Convert Aggai (Aggaeus) who was a 'jeweller and a wig maker' for the King. When Aggaeus was consecrated, Abgar was still living. Addai died in peace. The fate of Aggai was not similar. After Abgar's death, Manu, one of the sons assumes the throne. He was not a believer. He ordered Aggai to make a piece of heathen ornament for him. Being a Christian Bishop Aggai refused to make that ornament for the King. Monarch became angry and sent his soldiers. They stormed into the Church and broke Aggai's leg while he was sitting in the Church. Thus Aggai died a martyr's death. Because of his sudden death it was not possible for him to consecrate a successor. Therefore Palut a disciple of Aggai went to Antioch and was ordained by Serapion the Bishop of Antioch who in turn was ordained by Zephyrinus of Rome.

Eusebius version and its problems

Eusebius (C 260-340), Bishop of Caesarea and the famous ancient Church historian gives the legend almost identical to that of the Syriac version but with some obvious changes. Eusebius states that the ailing Mesopotamian Monarch, Abgar who heard of Jesus performing the healing act was convinced that Jesus could heal him. He sent a messenger with a humble request to Jesus to come and heal him. Addressing part of Abgar's letter also shows change. "Abgar Uchama the Toparch to Jesus, who has appeared as a gracious saviour in the region of Jerusalem" (*New Eusebius* 31). Here he uses Saviour instead of the great physician as we read in the Syriac version of the story. Another notable

difference is the omission of Jesus' promise to Abgar that "Thy town shall be blessed and no enemy again shall have dominion over it for ever" (Burkitt 14) by Eusebius. Eusebius omits the consecration of Pault by Serapion mentioned at the last part of the story as we see in the Syriac version.

In his record the apostle who preached the Gospel to the people of Edessa is Thaddeus and not Addai. Following Jesus' ascension, Apostle Thomas sent Thaddeus one of the seventy-two to king Abgar. He came and stayed with Tobias. He healed many. Later Thaddeus was prosecuted before the King. That led to the conversion of the King and others.

The letters are given by Eusebius (*Eccl. His.* I 13) who declares that the Syriac document from which he translated them had been preserved in the archives at Edessa from the time of Abgar. The differences in the narration of the legend according to Syriac and Greek version may be of simple reason. The confusion of names might have arisen from the similarity between them. Addaeus could possibly be mistaken as Thaddeus or vice versa. The change in addressing Jesus might also be out of historic and theological compulsions of an Eusebius. As a person who was a participant of the Nicea Council, Eusebius was cautious of presenting the personality of Jesus. He might have thought that the usage of good physician would not communicate the personality of Jesus in a holistic way as that of a Saviour.

Taking these matters into consideration, it may be said that the first part of the Syriac version of the legend up to the conversion of king Abgar and others might have originated early though it might have been recorded late. Eusebius might have incorporated this legend with possible misspell of the Apostles' name and calculated editing of the other details. Regarding the confusion caused by the consecration of Palut by Serapion, it might be a later addition to the legend in the affirmation with the hierarchical set-up of Christians with Rome as the top authority and Antioch falling next and the other centres coming below.

This legend survived in various forms, and has given note to much discussion. The correspondence was rejected as apocryphal by Pope Gelasius (Bishop of Rome – 492-496) in a Roman Synod (C 495). Though it is true this view has not been shared universally by the Roman Church. Among Protestants

the spuriousness of the letter is almost universally admitted (*Encyclopedia of Britanica* Vol. I, 44). It is suggested that the legend arose from a desire to trace the Christianizing of this kingdom to an apostolic source.

Positive indications of early Syriac Christianity

1. A coin issued during Abgar's reign show a cross on his head dress showing that he was a Christian. However, this is not the Abgar who lived at the time of Jesus, but Abgar II, and the coin was issued during the period of 180-192 A.D. The coin is now in the British Museum (John Foster, *First Advance* 85).

2. A Syrian official record from the region preserved in the *Edessan Chronicle* written about 590 A.D. gives a source what detailed account of a violent flood happened to November 201A.D. Records say, "The waters broke down the western wall of the city and entered the city, and overthrew the great and beautiful palace and our Lord the King and . . . they destroyed the nave of the Church of the Christians" (*Edessan Chronicle* 12 and *Encyclopedia Britanica* Vol. 7, 953). This is a clear positive reference to the Christian presence and Church building at Edessa before AD 200.

3. *Martyrdom of Barsamya*, a Syriac writing also speaks of early Christianity in Edessa. Barsamya is mentioned in the Doctrine of Addai. He became the Bishop of Edessa in succession to Abshelama who succeeded Palut. He converted Sharbel, the chief priest of Bel and Bebo. He was arrested and after severe torture was put to death (*Antenicene Fathers* 685-689).

4. About the end of the 2nd century, Edessene Christianity seems to have made a fresh beginning. The ordination of Palut by Serapion of Antioch may mean that things ecclesiastical took a westward trend. Mention should here be made of Bardaisan (154-222 AD), known as the Aramaean philosopher. He became a Christian and is famous for his *Chronological Speculations*, but was reckoned heretical. He was a contemporary of Abgar and refers to king Abgar as a believer (*Encyclopedia Britanica* Vol. 7, 953). In his book *A Diologue of Destiny of the book of the Law of the Lands* (about AD 196) he states: "When king Abgar became a believer he commanded that every one

that (continued this avail practice) should have his hand cut off, and from that day until now no one does so in the country of Edessa" (William Young 11).

Conclusion

We were on the search of origin of Christianity in Syria. The details are presented through legends. We discussed the various versions of Abgar legend and other traditions related to Edessan Christianity. They trace the origin of these churches to the apostles. It is true that there is no concrete proof to support these claims. There are some differences and problems with the legend. Yet there are no valuable reasons to negate the traditions related to it. Even if the thesis regarding the Abgar legend is negated then also there are reliable references to the existence of a well-developed church in Syria much before the Constantine period. There is all the possibility that the Christian Community took its root at Edessa during the apostolic period. The later history evidently shows Christian message spread from Edessa to Adiabene and to the other parts of the Parthian Empire.

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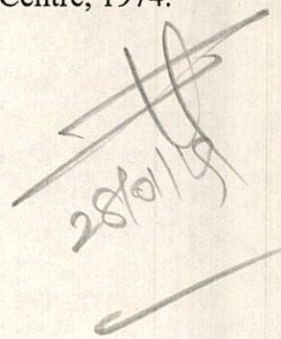
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EARLY MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES WITH REFERENCE TO EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

J. Joe Prakash

Formation of the Tranquebar Mission on the east coast of Tamil Nadu in 1706, marked the culmination of the evangelistic desire of the European Protestant church which itself is a separate denomination. Nevertheless, the advent of Christianity in India was traced back to the first century A.D. Since the kingly control of church councils under Constantine, the Great from the fourth century A.D., the doctrines of Christ came to be interpreted differently. The Catholic Church, as it was called, asserted itself as an institution with the Pope of Vatican as its head. It emerged as a single domineering religious ideology during the middle ages. The landing of Vasco-da-Gama at Calicut in 1498 A.D. contributed to the Catholic missionary enterprises in India. The arrival of St. Francis Xavier at Goa in 1542 A.D. opened a new era for, the Catholic faith consolidated as a religious creed in Tamil Nadu. It was under such circumstances that the Protestant church too visualised to expand its missionary work in this part of south India. In fact, propagation of the Gospel in the East started with commercial intercourse between Europe and Asia. Yet uncertainty prevailed about the precise date in which it was introduced in India.[1] As stated by Julius Richter, "the historical background of this justly famous epoch in the story of missions was dark and complicated".[2] However, tradition takes us back to the first century A.D. with the arrival of St. Thomas.

Martyrdom of St. Thomas

It is believed that St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ introduced Christianity in India in the first century A.D.[3] Hence his followers adopted the name of St. Thomas and called themselves Saint Thomas Christians.[4] However, contemporary source did not supply evidence to establish this fact beyond doubt.[5] There is a tradition that the Apostle landed at Malankara, a small Island quite close to Cranganore [6] in 52 A.D.[7] Apostle Thomas, accompanied by Habban, after disembarking at Muzuris, reached Kodumgallur and was supposed to have attended the celebration of the marriage of the only daughter of the

Kerala ruler.[8] It is said that he converted the king of the country and many of his people to Christian faith. St. Thomas is called "the guide and governor of the church which he founded and ruled in India".[9] He was said to have preached to the Jewish colony settled there and converted a number of local families to the Christian faith.[10] The Brahmins and other high castes were also converted by him.[11] Another tradition says that Apostle Thomas was sent by Christ to the east together with St. Bartholomew and St. Judas Thaddeus.[12] Thus tradition connects the introduction of Christianity into Travancore with St. Thomas though there is no historical proof to substantiate this argument[13].

It is also believed that St. Thomas came and preached in India and died as a martyr at St. Thomas Mount and buried at Mylapore near Madras.[14] After coming to the West Coast of India, he made many converts and built seven churches[15]. Of these, one was at Palayur near Chavakad in British Malabar, another at Malankara itself near Cranganore in the Cochin State, a third at Kottakayal near North Parur, the fourth at Kothamangalam or South Pallipuram, a fifth at Quilon or Kollam, a sixth at Niranam in Tiruvalla and a seventh at Nillakkal near Chayel, the last five being in Travancore.[16] The Apostle, it is said ordained priests to look after these churches. Thereafter he crossed over to the East Coast and reached Mylapore (New Fort of Madras city) where he carried on successful evangelical work.[17]

According to Hindu tradition, during the reign of Kandappa Rajah in the First Century A.D. the people of Mylapore saw a huge log of wood floating out at sea near the city. The Rajah directed his fishermen folk to bring it to the shore. They tried in vain and pleaded their inability. Elephants were also employed, but with no success. At last St. Thomas was sent for to bring the log to land. He reached the spot by boat, touched it by his holy hand and returned ashore. The log of wood followed St. Thomas as a mere stick. Kandappa Rajah could not contain the joy in his heart. The saint used this mighty log to raise a church, which he built of his own.That church still exists at Thirumayilai in Fort Street and bears the name of Thomayarcoil (Thomas Church)[18]

The ministers of Kandappa Rajah were annoyed to see the Rajah and his son drifting under the influence of Parangi[19] priest (St. Thomas). At first they planned to force the Rajah to send him away. They failed in their attempt. Then

they made another plot and carried it into execution.[20] To avoid his enemies, St. Thomas fled and took shelter in a cave in the Little Mount, eight kilometres to the west of Mylapore. When this was known to the enemies he again fled to the Big Mount which is also called St. Thomas Mount, four kilometres from Little Mount. Tradition says that while praying, he was overtaken and pierced with a spear and attained martyrdom.[21]

St. Thomas tradition tells that Christianity first came to India (Kerala) not from the west but from the east.[22] It stands to say that the Indian Church is historically one of the most ancient churches in the world otherwise as old as Christianity itself.[23] The religion thus stepped into this sub-continent with Apostle Thomas in the 1st century A.D., had to wait for about 1400 years to attain further shape and structure. This had happened with the arrival of the Portuguese.

Coming of the Portuguese

India established commercial relations with the countries of the West from time immemorial. From the seventh century A.D. her sea-borne trade passed into the hands of the Arabs, who emerged as a great power in the Indian Ocean.[24] The Europeans required pepper and other spices for which, they obtained supplies from India through Arab merchants.[25] Pepper provided the historical incentive to the geographical explorations. The Portuguese were the first European power that presented itself actively in this region of India.[26] Many of the Christian kings of Europe believed themselves to be under an obligation to convert the heathens, taking the divine directions of the Pope,[27] who granted exclusive rights in the undiscovered countries of the East to Catholic powers. The pronouncement of the Pope was universally regarded throughout Catholic Europe, as the highest possible expression of international law.[28] The trade and commerce with India undoubtedly made Portugal rich and prosperous.[29]

When Immanuel succeeded John II as the king of Portugal, he decided to send Vasco-da Gama a gentleman of his household, to find out the lands beyond the wide southern seas. Accordingly on 8 July 1497 Vasco-da Gama sailed from Portugal with three small ships - San Gabriel, San Rafael and San Miguel, each with 100 to 120 tons' burden at the command of 170 crew.[30] Eleven months after

leaving home, they sighted the West Coast of India. They anchored near the city of the Zamorin or Ruler of the seas in June 1498. People rushed to the shore and crowded the- beach to have a glance at the Portuguese ships and the sailors.[31] As a Catholic by faith, Vasco-da Gama endeavored to bring the Christians of Malabar under the rule of the Pope. For the time being they succeeded in doing so by force.[32] One Portuguese fleet arrived in A.D. 1500 for protection, thereby starting the Roman period in that year. In the 16th century, when the power of the Portuguese was broken by the Dutch, many of the Malabar Christians, also called Syrians, threw off the Papal yoke and placed themselves under a Bishop consecrated for them by the Patriarch of Antioch. A large number however, still clung to the Roman Catholic Church and their descendents are the Romo-Syrian Christians numbering about one-fifth of the population of Kerala State.[33]

While generally believing that their two clear obectives were of missionary and commercial in character, they nust also have been motivated by the establishment of political sovereignty. Vasco-da Gama arrived in India for the second time In 1502. This time he came to Cochin and received a deputation of Christians living near Cranganore, who wanted protection against Muslims and heathens.[34] This event was a great victory for the Portuguese.[35] The Popes repeatedly requested the Portuguese kings to send missionaries to the nearby discovered areas of the East and the West. Accordingly the second Portuguese fleet for India sailed under the Franciscan Order in 1502.[36] Following this every ship brought some zealous missionaries. Their missionary work had the backing of the State. The converted Goa became their headquarters for religious work.[37]

In 1509 Alfonso Albuquerque became the Portuguese Governor of India. He gained control over the main centres of trade and laid the foundation of the Portuguese Empire in the East. He built fortresses at Quilon and Cranganore in 1518 and 1531 respectively.[38] When the Portuguese arrived in India, the Moors had monopolised the trade. They were involved in the importing of Arabian horses and exported spices in return. Slowly the Moors had gained control of the Pearl Fisheries of Tuticorin and came into contact with the Paravas.[39] In a bid to gain absolute control of the trade, the Moors persecuted the Paravas. Unable to bear their oppression, the latter sought the help of the Portuguese at Cochin. In 1532 a deputation of the Paravas reached Cochin for the purpose of getting aid. The Portuguese saw this as an opportunity to expand their interest in the

Coromandel Coast.[40] They started with their fleet in 1533 accompanied by Father Michael Vaz, the Vicar General at Cochin and some other priests.[41] The Portuguese, who were waiting for a chance to propagate their religion, made use of the situation and convened a meeting of the leading Paravas. In the meeting the Paravas agreed to embrace Christianity. Accordingly thirty five Parava leaders went to Cochin and embraced Christianity. The protection provided to the Paravas created a tense situation between the Moors and the Portuguese, both on the seas and the lands.[42]

The Portuguese endeavours could see the required effect and in 1534,[43] Pope Paul III established the Diocese of Goa with its jurisdiction over the whole world.[44] After Goa was raised to the status of a Bishopric and placed under the charge of Bishop Joao De Albuquerque, Fr. Michael Vaz, the Vicar General of Goa conducted the needed ceremony in December 1535. From that time onwards Parish priests visited the Pearl Fishery Coast which paved the way for the spread of Christianity in this part. [45] After the death of Bishop Albuquerque, Goa made an Arch Bishopric and thus it became the headquarters of the Portuguese power in South India. The Portuguese established commercial outposts on the Coromandel Coast at Nagapatnam, Santhorme, Ceylon and South East Asian regions.[46]

During the administration of Nayak Chief Sevappa Nayak of Tanjore (1530-1560), the Portuguese settled at Nagapatnam.[47] Mass conversion to Christianity began with the Portuguese.[48] The gratitude of the Paravas to the Portuguese for deliverance from the Mussalmans had an everlasting influence on the course of the history of the southern peninsula. [49] After overthrowing the Muhammadans, Vaz baptized 20,000 Paravas. Later the whole tribe along with their chief embraced Christianity.[50] The conversion of Paravas of the Fishery Coast and the Portuguese dominance over them caused fear in the mind of Ramaraya,[51] the Vijayanagar ruler. He conquered the Fishery Coast to check the domination of the Portuguese.[52] In 1588 Ramaraya conquered Mylapore and cruel treatment was meted out to the missionaries.[53] In spite of this conflict, the Portuguese relation with Vijayanagar seemed generally cordial. This is clear from the letter written by Philip III, the King of Portugal to Venkata I (1585-1614) saying that "I have come to know the good hospitality you have extended to the religion of the society who dwell in your kingdom and the favour and assistance

you have bestowed on them, as to things concerning Christianity for which I demand that it was my duty to thank you".[54] Despite this cordial relationship Christianity did not have much hold . in the Vijayanagar Empire. The Portuguese ultimately established an empire in India under the guise of commerce and missionary activities.[55]

Like Goa, Kayal in the far South on the Fishery Coast figured prominently in the affairs of the Portuguese. Enriched with pearls, it was regarded as the earliest Portuguese centre of attraction on the Fishery Coast.[56] The control of Arab merchants over the fishermen of the southern coasts further enhanced the Portuguese chance in the region. In the 16th century Arab merchants chiefly Moplahs and Labbay had monopoly over most of the sea-trade. They controlled the pearl fishery and reduced the fishermen to slavery.[57] The Zamorin's support to the Arabs added to the suffering of the fishermen and made them to seek the help of the Portuguese. However, the arrival of St. Francis Xavier[58] gave an additional impetus to their religious creed and Catholic faith in India.[59]

Work of St. Francis Xavier

St. Francis Xavier was one of the greatest missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church, who arrived at Goa on 6 May 1542.[60] His missionary enthusiasm, self-denial and aspirations after a holy life are lessons for all time. Francis Xavier, being a noble by birth and a scholar by education, gave up all that was dear to him for the cause of religion and humanity. In this part of the missionary land, he was often found in sufferings and difficulties mostly due to the changed atmosphere and the unfriendly nature of the natives. Yet he bore all those sufferings patiently for the further promotion of his mission.[61]

The arrival of Francis Xavier brought far-reaching changes in the evangelical work. A number of churches and congregations of Indian Christians sprang up in the Portuguese territories and between 1557 and 1619 A.D., dioceses were established at Cochin, Mylapore and Cranganore.[62] St. Xavier succeeded in his missionary work on the coastal regions.[63] He was a Jesuit priest and it was he who began the work of the Society of Jesus in India.[64] Within a short period of his stay in India, he achieved many a things in the religious field.

Xavier had come out not as an ordinary man, but as the friend and correspondent of the King of Portugal. He was also armed with considerable powers by the Pope and control of all missions in the Far East. He spent a little more than four years in India; but at a number of points his work was decisive for the whole future of the Indian Church. The first call for wider activity came from the Coromandel Coast, the long strip of land lying between Madras and Cape Comorin.[65] He also got the necessary instructions about the Paravas of the Pearl Fishery Coast and their superstitious beliefs. Enriched with the situations at the Pearl Fishery, Xavier continued his journey to instruct and confirm those who had been formerly baptized.[66] In a month's time, he baptized 10,000 fishermen known as Mukkuvas from Poovar to Pollam.[67]

Having understood that Travancore region was a fertile ground for missionary work, Francis Xavier established the Cape Comorin Mission. From there he visited the Pearl Fishery and Kottar. The cosmopolitan atmosphere at Kottar attracted Francis Xavier, which resulted in his frequent visits and prayers offered at the altar of 'Blessed Mother'. Finally he made his settlement at Kottar.[68] It was during his stay at Kottar, Xavier helped Unni Kerala Varma, the King of Venad to ward off the invasion of the Badagas.[69] He promised only his prayers since he was a missionary and not a soldier. This historic incident brought Xavier and the Venad king closer. As a token of his help, Kerala Varma permitted him to carry on his missionary work without hindrance together with the assignment of land to build a church. Since a large number of the Paravas embraced Christianity he constructed a chapel in 1544 at Kottar. In course of time, it was expanded and attained the present shape. This church is called St. Francis Xavier Church.[70]

After five months he went to work among the Paravas, who lived on the South East Coast, opposite to Ceylon. It is now the district of Tirunelveli, where he found the Paravas living in thirty villages between Cape Comorin and Tuticorin which were Christian in name, but entirely ignorant of faith and without church services of any kind.[71] It is said that 20,000 persons were baptized in thirty villages and the 'Fisheries Mission' was founded.[72] The missionary work of Francis Xavier in the Fishery Coast and the subsequent conversion of the Paravas into the Christian fold had an immediate effect on the other parts of India.[73] Francis Xavier found that there was no organised Christian Community in the

coast.[74] After this Francis Xavier went to Japan, founded a Mission there and he returned to Goa in 1552. In the midst of severe opposition he organised a Mission to China, but died on 3 December 1552 at Sanchan Island near Canton.[75]

Dom Georges Themede, the second Bishop of Cochin made a pastoral visit to the South in 1556 and he found that the Cape Comorin Mission was flourishing. In 1557 Goa was raised to the status of Arch Diocese. With Travancore and Pearl F'ishery Coast, the territory of Kottar passed under the jurisdiction of Cochin. The Diocese of Cochin was developed as a suffragan to Goa.[76]

In 1602 the Vicar-Province of the Society of Jesus for Malabar was formed with its headquarters at Cochin. In 1605 it was raised to the status of a province which included forty-four Christian villages and thirty-six churches from Quilon to Cape Comorin with four priests of the Society of Jesus looking after them. In their endeavour to build the Cape Comorin Mission, the Jesuits appointed additional priests at various places - Fr. Jacob Guz, a priest from Cochin was Vicar of Midalam, Fr. Francis Nunez was Vicar at Kottar and Fr. Andreas Vaz, a Parava by caste was Vicar at Cape Comorin - caring for the villages upto Rajakkamangalam.[77] At the dawn of the 17th century the Christians met with severe persecution, but later on by the nobility and sanctity of the priests, the kings were made to realise their mistakes and gave a free hand to the missionaries to propagate their faith. However, with the ascendancy of the Dutch power in India especially in the Malabar, this trend changed completely. They could work freely to establish churches in Travancore and the missionaries did not meet with opposition to preach the Gospel and could make adherents as much as possible.[78]

The conversion of the Paravas slowly had its impact upon the suburbs of Tirunelveli and the interior of Madurai, the abode of Brahminical learning and culture. The Catholic Mission of Tanjore district showed unusual interest from the days of St.Francis Xavier, who is said to have preached at Nagapatnam in the 16th century. The precise date of the advent of the Roman Catholic Mission into Tanjore is not known. But it is doubtful whether the district was ever within the sphere of his personal activities.[79] In the 16th century however, the Portuguese certainly conducted missionary enterprise from Nagapatnam.[80] As the earliest

Mission during this period,[81] the Roman Catholics of Tanjore consisting of some Portuguese and converted Parava Christians and their chaplain Franciscan, Vicar de Vara arrived at Nagapatnam in 1552. A few years later they founded a church at Velanganni to 'Our Lady of Health'. Following the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustinians and the Jesuits too built churches at Nagapatnam. Branches of the Franciscan Mission were later opened at Tranquebar, Thirumullaivasal and Karaikal and all of them were placed under the Jesuits.[82]

Though their churches and chapels were scattered over the whole district- of Tanjore, Nagapatnam, Velankanni, Tanjore, Vallalm and Kumbakonam formed their principal centres.[83] Towards the end of the 16th century, the Jesuits settled at Mylapore (1595), Madurai (1595), Nagapatnam (1597), Jinji(1598) and Tanjore (1598).[84] The Jesuit' annual letter of 1602 tells about the origin of the Catholic community of Tranquebar.[85] The Catholic missionaries must have chosen Nagapatnam as their main centre of activity and constructed a church ten kilometres south of it at Velankanni only after the Portuguese settlement was formed in that place in 1612.[86] In the 16th and 17th centuries, there were some isolated Christian communities in several of the harbour towns of these districts. The earliest and the most numerous of these was the one at Nagapatnam. Smaller groups existed at Tranquebar, Cuddalore and Pondicherry.[87]

Nagapatnam was a flourishing commercial town in the territory of the Nayak of Tanjore. Its harbour was the best along the entire Coromandel coast. The Portuguese settled at Nagapatnam sometime between 1618 and 1630. When the Nayak of Tanjore attacked Nagapatnam, the Portuguese decided to flee; but due to insufficient number of boats, some sixty Portuguese, 200 Eurasians and 3000 Indian Christians were trapped. This shows that Nagapatnam had a large number of Christians by then. The Franciscans converted some fishermen at Velankanni.[88] The advent of the Franciscans, Dominicans and later Jesuits as missionaries to India to spread the gospel appeared a landmark in the missionary history of India.[89] 'The Fishery Coast is still an almost entirely Roman Catholic.[90] The Indo-Europeans were commonly known as Portuguese on the Coromandel coast, even if they actually had no Portuguese blood in them.[91]

In 1647 there were three Roman Catholic churches in Tanjore with a resident missionary and three catechists. Subsequently the Mission moved its

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headquarters from Tanjore to Nandavanampatti near the Fort of Vallam. From 1675 it extended activities to Mannargudi and Pattukottai under missionary John-de-Britto.[92] Christians were found all over the district; but in large numbers in Tanjore taluk. This appeared mainly due to the attention that was paid by missionaries as the headquarter of the district. It is needless to say that all Christians owe their origin as a separate community to the proselytizing activities of the Christians that came in the wake of European traders. These missions are the Roman Catholic Misssion, the Tranquebar Lutheran Mission, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in .Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) and the Wesleyan Mission.[93] With the arrival of the Danes at Tranquebar in 1620 and the capture of Nagapatnam by the Dutch in 1660, the influence of the Roman Catholic Mission on the coast began to wane. Yet in the interior the Madura Mission, which had been established in 1606 by Robert de-Nobili[94] extended its activities and made many converts.[95]

The Madura Mission

The successor of Francis Xavier in the Fishery Coast was Father Crimale who took up the thread where Xavier left abruptly. Father Crimale was killed in 1548 and thus became the first martyr of the Society of Jesus in India.[96] His successor Father Henry Henrique, who became the superior of the Fishery Coast Mission was the path-finder of the old Jesuit Mission of Madurai. Henry Henrique was the first missionary who gained some real knowledge of the vernacular which was thereafter followed by the Jesuit missionaries. He died in 1600 leaving behind twenty-two parishes[97] with more than 90,000 Christians spread over these.[98]

The earliest missionary to visit Madurai in 1595 was a Portuguese named Father Fernandez.[99] His congregation consisted largely of Paravas whose fore-fathers have been converted by Francis Xavier. He was friendly with the Nayak ruler, Veerappa (1572-1595) and got permission to build a mission house, a hospital and a school in 1595.[100] There were nearly one hundred Christians at Madurai and for them he built a church and a presbytery. There is no record to show that he was anxious to convert people. So the purpose of sending him to Madurai turned out to be a failure.[101]

Father Robert de-Nobili arrived at Madurai along with Father Laerzlo, the Provincial of the Jesuits in November 1606.[102] With his arrival, a radical change occurred in the methods adopted by the missionaries. Madurai was noted for its learning and Brahminical influence. In 1606 Muthukrishnappa, (1601-1609), the Nayak ruler, who favoured missionary activities, came to power.[103] Robert de Nobili soon perceived the reason where Fernandez had failed: "The excessive European character of the mission and the lack of consideration for native needs and customs were mainly responsible for the fact that Christianity seemed too foreign especially to the Brahmins whose influence was dominant".[104] His first step was to make Christianity not the religion of Parangis, but a true religion ("sathiya vedam".)[105]

Robert de-Nobili wanted to be an Indian to convert the Indians to Christianity and he believed that it was the way to make the high castes embrace Christianity.[106] He deeply analysed the religious, social, cultural and political situation in the country, especially the unique organisation of the caste system. Having acquired a complete knowledge of all these deep-rooted prejudice, he persuaded that he must make himself all things to all men in order to win them all to Christ and decided to start what was known as the 'Adaptation method'.[107] In five years from 1607 to 1611, he baptized eighty seven Brahmins.[108] In course of time, the Madurai Mission spread over a wide area in Tiruchirappalli and Dindigul.[109] Robert de-Nobili wore a thread with five strands, three in gold showing the Holy Trinity and two in thread representing the soul and body of Christ.[110] He built a church and a presbytery from where he continued his active preaching of the Gospel.[111]

However, the new method, propagated by De-Nobili tended to opposition within the church and made him to write a long letter to defend himself which was known as the Apologia. His defence was not accepted and the matter was reported to Rome. Robert de-Nobili himself wrote a fresh explanation of his method and sent it to the Pope. Pope Gregory XV appointed a Pontifical Commission to investigate the matted in 1612'. Only in 1623 after a disastrous delay of twelve years Gregory XV approved the 'Adaptation method1 of de-Nobili. Accordingly de-Nobili was enabled to resume the work and "his new method became the official method of the Jesuits in all other missions in India".[112]

In addition to the little Christian community at Madurai, de-Nobili converted Yadavas of Klaneri, twelve kilometres west of Madurai city, a little south-east of Nagamalai Pudukottai. There he purchased a paddy field and built a small chapel, dedicated to St. Annie.[113] After planting this church, de-Nobili brought all the castes to the same church, but the out-castes were separated by a balustrade and were in a lower place.[114] The women were allowed to attend the church. They were separated by a curtain from the males in the congregation.[115]

Robert de-Nobili dressed like Indians and declared "I will make myself Indian to save the Indians".[116] He allowed most of their former customs, and Christianised some strict Hindu practices. He christianised marriage functions, burial ceremonies and Pongal festival.[117] He used prasadam, instead of grace and kovil instead of lareja. He used poojai for mass.[118] He translated the names of the Christian saints and made them sound Tamil names. Thus Fidelis became Visuvasam, Honoratus became Aasaarappan; Constatins became Dairiyam. Peter became Malaiyappan; Hilary became Muttudaiyan; Joachim became Devarambar, Lazarus became Devasahayam, Elizabeth became Devannamal, etc.[119]

Albert, the Brahmin teacher was the first to embrace Christianity in Madurai. His conversion was soon followed by several people of the Nayak rule. Robert de Nobili baptised another very respectable young man called Alexis Nayak- He also baptized two other noble Badagas viz., Ignatius arid Eustace Nayaks. On Pentecost Sunday, Robert de-Nobili baptized two more Badagas and a Vellalla.[120] After the conversion of Albert, the next important was the conversion of another famous guru, Pandaram called Dakshinamurthy.[121] His contribution to Tamil earned him the name as 'first oriental scholar, and he was known among the Tamils as Tathuva Pothakar Sami. He died in 1656 at Mylapore at the age of eighty.[122] Although Robert de-Nobili's labours were confined to Tamil Nadu in general and Madurai in particular, his influence extended beyond its boundaries, into Andradesa and Karnataka through the missions of the Carnatic, Mysore and Kittur.[123] His example has been an inspiration to many missionaries in other parts of India.

Even though St. Thomas established Christian churches, his efforts could not be continued in full vigour for want of a dedicated leader to succeed him as well

as of the socio-political inequillibrium that had existed in Tamil Nadu. In the political sphere, the native local rulers and chieftains, supported by a superstitious and traditional local religious system worked against the infiltration of a new faith. All the rulers were ardent Hindus and they could not understand the tenets of a new religion. In the social field, the fragmentation of the society into different castes and groups on occupational basis impeded any form of desire for change and progress. The people, who were mostly conservative and superstitious in nature, were reluctant to lend their ears to a new faith. Consequently, the work of Catholic missionaries was restricted among a few caste groups. By supplying food, clothing, education and other welfare works, they endeavoured to attain changed atmosphere in the socially and economically degraded Tamil society. The name of St.Xavier and Robert de-Nobili are ever remembered for their ardent spirit for the spread of Christianity in Tamil Nadu.

End Notes

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when the latter came to Paris for his studies. The two became good friends. (Chambers Encyclopaedia, Vol.V, London, 1977, p.132.) During this time the Reformation Movement was in progress in Europe. Ignatius was anxious to reform the church from within, to put an end to the vicious and corrupt practices of the then Christendom. Hence he started the Society of Jesus and the members of the Society came to be called Jesuits. Ignatius was responsible for making the constitution, rules and regulations of the Society of Jesus. In 1529 Francis Xavier joined St. Ignatius and they decided to offer their service to the Pope and go wherever he was pleased to send them. At the request of St. Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier went along with him Rome to seek the blessings of Pope Paul III. (Ibid., pp.143-154.) The Pope received them kindly and granted their request. Francis Xavier was ordained as a priest in 1537. While he was at Rome, Xavier met a messenger from the King of Portugal for recruitment of missionaries to the East. Driven by missionary zeal, Francis Xavier offered his services as a missionary to the East. With the blessings of the Pope, he started his journey on 15 March 1540, reached India on 6 May 1542 and settled at Goa. (Schurhammer, G., op.cit., pp.413-415.)

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PRE-PORTUGUESE CHRISTIAN HISTORY OF GOA

Cosme Jose Costa

God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to be its Savior, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life (John 3, 16-17). On His part, the Son sent the Apostles to go out to the whole world and to gain disciples for Him among all nations (Mathew 28. 19). The disciples went and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and proved that their preaching was true by miracles (Mark 16. 20).

Introduction

Most of the documents dealing with the Christian history of Goa, so far have traced the origin of Goan Christianity to its conquest by the Portuguese in 1510, and the coming of European missionaries, one of them being the Jesuit pioneer, St Francis Xavier, Apostle of the East and Patron of the Missions, who landed in Goa in May 1542 and left it for South India in September 1542. He laboured unceasingly for ten years), a missionary in a hurry in the East (1542 - 1552), going to South India, Ceylon. Indonesia and as far as Japan, making the presence of the Church known and felt in lands that hitherto had not heard or believed to have not heard the message of the Gospel of Christ. During that decade he returned to Goa only three or four times, just for about a fortnight each time, until he breathed his last on the borders of China

No doubt, other missionaries, as the Franciscans (who were already in Goa and in the East from 1510), the Jesuits, Dominicans and others (who came after 1542), supported by the patronage (Padroado) of the King of Portugal, evangelized Goa in the 16th and 17th centuries. This paper is not contesting this great work of evangelization under the Padroado. Its scope is very limited to find out who could have introduced Christianity in Goa. Recent archaeological finds point to a different direction, to the existence of pre-Portuguese Christianity in Goa, probably from apostolic times.

Goa and its Capitals

Goa is situated in the Konkan, on the West Coast of India. The name may have originated from the Mundari word Goen-bab, meaning "inclined ear of paddy''. The first agriculturist people who migrated to Goa were the Kols and Mundas according to A. R. S Dhume. These tribes introduced the cultivation of paddy. As the land was virgin, the ears were inclined at one side due to the weight of the corn.

From this word Goen-bab, came the contracted word Goe-ba. This later gave the word Goen (Goem in the local Konkani language), from which arose the word Goe, Gove or Go we.[1] Others are of the opinion that the name comes from earlier names like Gomant, Gomantak, Govarashtra, Goparashtra and Gomanchal which have been mentioned in the Mahabharata and the Puranas The syllable 'go, common to all these different words, means 'cow' in Sanskrit: hence it is supposed to be "the land where cows abound".[2] Naturally, Goa as it is presently known, being an agricultural land, cows would abound in it.

The first port of Goa. known as **Gopakapattana.**[3] was situated on the banks of the river Zuari, facing the sea, in the present Goa Velha village. Some local dynasties also had another port, further down the same river, much in the interior, known as Chandraura or Chandrapura.[5] In the 6th century, a certain Ventuvallabha of a Sindh family obtained a field from a Chalukya ruler and desilted and fortified the port of Gopakapattana according to a copper plate inscription found in Chiplum.[6] Hence, in honor of the Sindh family it was also called Sindapura,[7] corrupted to Sindabur[8]. Sindabor or Cintabor,[9] abbreviated to Sibor[10] or Cibor. In the 8th century the Shilaharas built the city of around this port, and made it their capital.''

By 11th century the Kadambas, who had their capital further down south at Chandrapura (modern Chandor), defeated the Shilaharas and transferred their capital to Govapun by 1050 AD.[12] This city continued as the capital for over three centuries. Being at the mouth of the river, a lot of siltation went on over the centuries, so that by 1380 AD, the port and the capital city had to be abandoned.[13] The fringe of the outer wall of this submerged port is still visible at low tide.[14]

Next, the Sultan Yusuf Adil Shah of Bijapur, was building as his second capital on the banks of the river Mandovi,[15] when the Portuguese conquered and made it the headquarters of their vast possessions in the East.[16]

From the beginning of the 18th century, however, Old Goa was struck by plagues and so was abandoned.[17] At first the Portuguese made an attempt to shift the capital to Mormugao but soon gave up the idea for [18] which, even after the Liberation of Goa, from Portuguese domination, on 19th December 1961,[19] continues to be so till today.

Trading Center

Going back to Gopakapattana, the port of Goa was known to and frequented by seafarers, voyagers and traders like the Sumerians, Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs from very ancient times, though they called it in different names at different times. A modest effort is made here to trace a brief history of this trade center and this trade route, and name a few of these seafarers, the names they gave to Goa and its ports, and the identification of these names, from available documents, as. far as possible:

Sumerians

Gudea (2143-2124 BC), the ruler of the city-state Lagash of Sumer, as his records prove, carried on trade in gold, cedar and copper with countries as distant as Egypt and India. Dr. Waddell says that it is admitted by Assyroiogists, that:

Gudea mentions in his records, that he personally visited and ransacked for material to build and adorn his temples...; that from the mountains of Megan (Sinai) and Guhi and Dilman via the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, he brought precious wood and diorite blocks by ships to the port of Lagash, for his statues and friezes.[20]

Historians have identified all the places indicated in the inscription of Gudea except Gubi. They say that this place should be anywhere on the West Coast of India. According to A.R.S. Dhume Gudea's Gubi, is identified as Goa, based on his interpretation of the origin of the name Goa as explained in the

previous section.[21] It is also to be noted that most of the statues, sculptures and friezes in old Hindu temples were made from a hard and dark speckled rock, like the French diorite, that is available on the hills of Goa, and forests of precious teak wood abound in the locality.

Greeks and Romans

In the Hellenistic world, scholars are divided in their opinion as to the exact identification of Goa with any of the several places on the west coast of India, which the Greek sea-farers have mentioned such as Ariake, Aegidii, Nelkinda or Melinda. The Greek geographer Ptolomy (circa 150 BC) however, mentioned Goa, as Gouba, whose corrupted version by the Greco -Roman voyagers is Kouba or Kowa.[22]

With the occupation of Egypt by the Romans in 30 B.C., the way was opened for Romans to have direct trade links with Indian ports. [23] In 5 A.D., Strabo. a Roman geographer wrote:

"I was with Gallus at the time he was prefect of Egypt, and accompanied him as far as Syene and the frontiers of Ethiopia and I found that about one hundred and twenty ships sail from Myos-Hormos to India "[24]

Of late, a team of archaeologists from UCLA and the University of Delaware have excavated at Berenike. a long abandoned Egyptian port on the Red Sea near the border with Sudan, and unearthed the most extensive remains to date, from sea trade between India and the Roman world through Egypt. Among the buried remains of buildings that date back to Roman rule, the team discovered the following;

" ....vast quantities of teak, a wood indigenous to India and today's Myanmar, but not capable of growing in Egypt, Africa or Europe. Researchers believe the teak, which dates to the first century, came to the desert port as hulls of shipping vessels. When the ships became worn out or damaged beyond repair, Berenike residents recycled the wood for building materials. The team also found materials consistent with ship-patching activities, including copper nails and metal sheeting.. Besides, they uncovered the largest array of ancient Indian

goods ever found along the Red Sea, including the largest cache of black pepper from antiquity - 16 pounds ever excavated in the former Roman Empire. The team dates these pepper-corns, which were grown only in South India during antiquity, to the first century. In some cases, Egypt's dry climate even preserved organic material from India, including sailcloth dated between 30 and 70 AD. as well as basketry and matting from the first and second centuries. In a dump that dates back to Roman times, the team also found Indian coconuts and batik cloth from the first century.'"[25]

Note that Goa exported teak-wood, copper, iron hoes or mamuty (an African word). and coconuts from very ancient times.[26]

Even after the discovery in 47 A.D., of the special westerly wind by Hippalus a Roman merchant, sailed straight across the Indian Ocean from the Persian Gulf to Muziris in Malabar and to Ceylon.[27] most of these ships, in fact, did not go across the Indian Ocean, but along the coastal waters of Arabia and Karmania to the Indus mouth, and then to Barygaza (near Kalyan). and to the ports in the Southern part of the peninsula[28] and vice-versa This sea-route from Egypt to South India passes through the West coast of India. As Gopakapattana, lies on this route, it was a port of call for the Roman ships, especially during the rule of the Satvahana dynasty (2nd century BC to 203 AD)

The discovery of some pieces of Roman amphorae and black glass of the first century AD, and 2 coins of Constantine the Great (4th century), at a depth of 18 feet in a tank in Goa Velha, not far from the old port, and exposed in the Pilar Seminary Museum, confirm the Roman contacts, with the principal port of Goa, at that time. Similar artifacts are also found in Kerala and Tamilnadu. [29] R M. Cimino says:

The amphora for transport though pertaining to a class of material lacking in intrinsic artistic value constitute one of the most valid instruments for historical investigation, being the type of containers most diffused among those used in ancient times for transport and preservation of numerous liquid and solid products almost exclusively foodstuff, wine, oil, vinegar, honey, olives, fruits, etc".

Persians

After the fail of the Roman Empire of the West around 476 AD. the Persians eclipsed their Indian Ocean trade. From the time Ardashir defeated the corrupt Arsacids (Parthians) in 224 AD, the foundation, not only of the Sasanid dynasty of Persia, but also of the transoceanic trade with India were laid- The Sasanid dynasty (224-870 AD) founded or re-founded 8 ports on the Bushite peninsula on the Iranian coast and on the Arab coast, and traded with India including Tamilnadu, Ceylon and even as far as China.[31]

The Byzantine Emperors, Justin (518-527) and Justinian (527-565) wanted to break this Sasanid hold on Asiatic trade by seeking the support of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). However, the Sasanid ruler, Khusrau I (531-578/9). routed the Ethiopians from Yemen and began to control the trade traffic in Bab-el-Manded and in the Red Sea, thus denying access to the Byzantines and their Ethiopian allies to penetrate into the East, including India."[32] There is evidence of Goa's trade with the Sasanids in the form of silver coins of Khusrau II (6th century) found on the banks of the Mandovi. at Chimbel village.[33] Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari speaks of a commercial envoy being sent to the Sasanid Court by the Chalukyan ruler Pulakesin II (610-642) of the Deccan, a geographical unit which then also included Goa.[34] It is also said that a painting in one of caves of Ajanta represent the return of the embassy from Persia to the Chalukyan Court.[35]

Arabs and Turks

When the Shilaharas. mentioned in the previous section, founded the city of Govapuri in the 8th century, they encouraged trade with Arabs through Gopakapattana (on the banks of the Zuari) and Chimbel (on the banks of the Mandovi). where Modamod, one of the richest Taji merchants, had a ship building yard and a repairing station.[36]

In 870 AD. the Arabs defeated the Sasanids, conquered Persia and Islamised the people and also the Indian Ocean trade.[37] Some of the Arab traders and Persian writers of the Middle Ages named Goa as Kuve or Kuwa.38 The Turkish Admiral, Siddi Ali refers to it as Gowai-Sandabur.[39]

When the Kadamba ruler of Goa, Jayakesi I, transferred his capital From Chandrapura to Govapuri in 1050 AD. he appointed Saddam (Chaddam), the grandson of the above-mentioned Modamod, as his Chief Minister. Saddam improved the trade of Gopakapattana, to such an extent that Jayakesi I could boast in his copper plate inscription of 1053 AD (found in Panjim, present in Lisbon), that his ships were trading with far distant countries and kingdoms like Zangavar (Zanzibar). Callah (Kwait), Srytam (Socotra), Oueita (today in Pakistan), Gurjara (Gujrat), Latta (Lothal?): Chanda, Queralla, Simhala (Sri Lanka), Pandu (Tanjore). Gaudda (Bengal), Ptishta, etc[40] The Kadamba rule and the commercial prosperity of Goa under them lasted till the beginning of the fourteenth century.[41] Meanwhile, the Yadavas, a Deccani power ruling from Daulatabad. overpowered them and forced them to disband their navy.[42] This enabled the Sultans of Delhi. Allauddm Khilji (1313 AD) and Muhammod Bin Tughluq (1327 AD)[43] to invade both the kingdoms and loot them

Finally Jarnaf-ud-dinr the Nawab of Honavar, Governor of the Delhi Sultan, at the invitation of the son of the Kadamba ruler (who had revolted against his father). attacked Goa with 52 vessels, and brought the Kadamba rule to almost an end. This expedition was commanded by Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveler, who kept a graphic account of the war and of what he saw in Goa. In his 'Travels', Ibn Batuta calls the port they attacked early at dawn, after passing the night far out at sea, by its old name: Sindabur, situated on an island with 36 villages surrounded by a bay.[44] Some authors have confused Ibn Batuta's Sindabur with Chandrapura, however, the description of the topography of the bay and accessibility at dawn from the sea fits only Gopakapattana, for Chandrapura, is far in the interior, with no bay around it.[45]

From 1345 to 1375 AD. Goa was ruled by different local petty rulers, one of them being Bhimabhupal, who controlled the city of Govapuri and its port.

Bahamanis and Vijayanagar

From 1375, when Hasan Gangu founded the Bahamani kingdom over the ruins of the Delhi Sultanate, Goa became a pawn in the game between the two Deccan powers, i.e. the Bahamani and Vijayanagar kingdoms because of the commercially lucrative port of Gopakapattana or Sindabur,[47] which traded rather

profitably in Arab horses.[48] so necessary in the constant wars, between those two powers.

The names Chiniabor and Cintabor. mentioned in European documents of the fourteenth century, have been identified with Sindabur / Gopakapattana.[49]

The last time we hear of Gopaka as the capital of Goa, is from an inscription of 1380 in Sanskrit and Kannada of Madhavmantri, the able minister of Marappa, Raya or ruler of Vijayanagar. Madhavmantri had conquered Goa from the Bahamani Sultan, and had been appointed the governor of the Konkan.[50] From 1378 to 1472 Goa had been included as a Rajya or Province of the empire of Vijayanagar[51] Ribandar (Rai - Bandr in Konkani, meaning the port of the Rayas), on the banks of the river Mandovi, was their substitute port for Gopakapatiana.

Goa was re-conquered by Muhammad Gawan, the Bahamani General in 1472. He describes Goa in glowing terms, thus: "Goa is the 'envy of the islands and ports of India and famed for its fine climate, its coconuts, its betel nuts, as well as for its springs, canals and plenty of sugar-cane". He says that owing to the abundance of its trees and springs it is like the mirror of the Grove of the Genii and a copy of the Cistern of Plenty".

Soon after the death of Gawan, the Bahamani Sultanate broke up into five independent Sultanates, and by 1501, Goa passed under one of them, the Adil Shahi of Bijapur. The founder, Yusuf Adil Shah made Ela (Old Goa) his second capital, and considered Goa 'as the brightest jewel in his crown'.

The Portuguese

In 1498, Vasco Da Gama. the Portuguese sailor had discovered the new sea route to India by rounding Africa. This resulted in clashes between the old and the new world systems of trade. The old world trade route started from Malabar, through Goa, and the West Coast, through Persian Gulf and terminated in Venice through West Asia and the Mediterranean involving Muslim countries. The new system diverted the trade at first from the West Coast of India, including Malabar, to the Atlantic oriented Lisbon centred world system.[53] Faced by ruin,

the Muslim forces of Egypt and Gujrat combined with the Adil Shahi of Bijapur to oust the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean waters. So with their help of Yusuf Adil Shah was building a naval base at Old Goa, when on 25th November, 1510, at his second attempt, Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa for the Portuguese, who then made it their commercial emporium of the East.[54]

Christianity comes to India (and Goa)

Historically speaking early Christians in India had close identity with Christians in Syria and Persia. This is the region from where St. Thomas and probably St. Bartholomew also, two Apostles of Jesus Christ, are believed to have come by overland and sea routes to India: the former by land to Taxila (in the North, before the Council of Jerusalem55) and by sea to Kerala (in the South, after the Council, in 52 AD) and died martyr in St. Thomas Mount (Tamilnadu, in 72 AD); and the latter to the West Coast during Satvahana rule and died martyr at Kalyan (India Felix) Both these theories have been expounded, quoting ancient documents, by AC Perumalil S.J. in "The Apostles in India'[56] Few will doubt today, about the apostolate of St Thomas in India, in the face of documentation available as well as the living tradition of the Christians of Malabar, who proudly call themselves St. Thomas Christians.

But quite a number of historians doubt St Bartholomew's apostolate in India, whereas others are much positive about it. As said above, A C. Perumalil gives the arguments of those who accept and of those who doubt, and also refutes those who doubt St. Bartholomew's apostolate in India.[57] Those arguments and refutations are not very relevant to this study. Taking for granted A C Perumalil's study here are some of the documents, with special reference to the apostolic Christianity of the Konkan. which includes Goa.

Eusebius of Caesarea

In his writings, (the first known historian of antiquity of the 4th century), Eusebius of Caesarea, states while referring to the visit of St. Pantaenus in the 2nd century to India, that this herald of Christ, found there that the Gospel according to Mathew had anticipated his own arrival among some who knew Christ and to whom

St. Bartholomew, one of the Apostles, had preached and left with them the book of Mathew in Hebrew script, which was also preserved until that time.[58]

St. Jerome

In the 5th century St Jerome's Martyrology, we read "On the 9th Kalends of September (corresponding to 24th August), the natal day of St Bartholomew, the Apostle, who was beheaded for Christ in Citerior India (corresponding to the West Coast of India), by order of King Aslnges (Greek version of the name corresponding to Aristakaran, ruler of the Satvahana dynasty).[59] St. Jerome also says that Pantenus on account of the renown of his excellent learning was sent to India by Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, to preach Christ to the Brahmins and to the philosophers of the nation.[60] And again in another place he says, "Pantaenus was a man of such learning, both in sacred scripture and in secular knowledge, that he was sent to India by Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, at the request of that nation's legates. There he found that the coming of Christ, Our Lord, according to the Gospel of Mathew, was preached by Bartholomew, one of the twelve Apostles".[61]

St. Clement of Alexandria

In the last quarter of the 2nd century, St. Pantaenus had started the famous Catechetical School at Alexandria, and was its head about 180 AD,[62] and among his favorite pupils was St. Clement of Alexandria (160 220 AD) St. Clement succeeded St. Pantaenus, as the head of the above School, when the latter left for India. Hence, much before Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome. St. Clement, referring to that visit, speaks not only of Yogis, but also of the Brahmins, who, he says, obeyed the commandments of Buddha, whom they honor as god, because of the holiness of his life. This reference by Clement is conclusive that Pantaenus visited India.[63]

Greek traditions

The Constantinopolitan tradition codified in the tenth century by order of Emperor Basil II says that the Apostle went to India Felix (Happy India).[64] As the term Felix is a translation of the Sanskrit word Kalyana, it is probable that the tradition is referring to that part of India, where the old city of Kalyan stood, that

is, in the Konkan region to the north of present Bombay. This very same idea is expressed by Pseudo-Sophronius, a writer possibly of the seventh century: 'The Apostle Bartholomew preached the Gospel of Christ to the Indians who are called the Happy' (i.e Indians of the Kalyan Coast).[65]

Kalyanpur Claim

In the last decade of the 19th century, the Jacobites of Brahmavar, a Christian group of Kalyanpur (near Mangalore), which separated from the Catholic Church, have also referred to the apostolate of St Bartholomew in their exposition to the courts, claiming apostolic origin to the Kalyanpur Church.[66]

In 1915, Msgr. Zaleski, the then Delegate Apostolic to India, after deep studies of almost 28 years, suggested Kalyanpur, near Mangalore, as the India Felix described above.[67]

Israelites in India

In the Bible, in 2 Kings. 17. 5-6 it is recorded that Assyria captured the kingdom of Israel, took the people prisoners and deported them throughout the cities of Persia and Media. This happened around 722 B.C. In the seventh century B.C. some Israelites, trying to escape from the rigors of the deportation, embarked in ships and were shipwrecked on the Konkan coast. They then settled in different places in the Konkan region.[68] Dr. George Mark Moraes says that Kalyan had a Jewish colony dating from ancient times; they were the Bene-Israel removed from their homes and earned captives by Assyrian Kings. The Gospel in Hebrew language would be very useful to the Jewish converts. Following the apostolic tradition to preach first to the Jews, St Bartholomew was naturally attracted to them.[69]

Research by Fr. H.O. Mascarenhas

While researching in Rome Fr. H. O. Mascarenhas. M.A., Ph. D, D.D., from Colvale, Goa, had established in 1929, the "Indian Society" in the names of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew for the benefit of Indian students in Rome and made a deep study of apostolic Christianity in India from the documents in the

Vatican and the original letters in Spanish of St. Francis Xavier. He states that there were Jewish settlements, not only in the Bombay area but also in other parts of the Konkan Coast. Fr. Mascarenhas, further, says that the name of St. Bartholomew in the Konkan area was shortened to Bhethal, and venerated even by Hindus. Kalianpur in Tulunad in South Kanara is, according to him, a place where this Apostle preached the Gospel. He further states that there are like this, many names of places, words and usages in the coastal Konkan region, going up to Bombay and beyond which have originated from his name and his preaching. He refers to the village Barkur, for example, which is close to Kalyanpur, as springing from Bartholomew's name thus: Bar + Tulmai + Ooru = Barthoru – and so Barkuru.[70]

In an effort to corroborate the statements of Fr.H.O. Mascarenhas, this author tried to study the names of some villages in Goa and discovered that from the Talukas of Sanquelim to Salcete, the names of many villages seem to originate from Jewish settlements, e. g Siddona in Konkani, (probably originating from Sidon. A Phoenician port much celebrated in the Bible)[71] is a village on a beach in Ilhas (Tiswaddi), Goa. It has a Chapel dedicated to Jesus of Nazareth. The Sanctum Sanctorum of the Chapel has the round shape of a Jewish Synagogue, the Chapel part being a later addition by the Portuguese. The building of the old Seminary on the island of Chorao, now in ruins, had a Chapel in the same shape.

Names of villages names in Konkani such as Bhatlem, Betul, Betpate, Cana etc probably correspond respectively to Bethlehem,[72] Bethel,[73] Bethphage,[74] Cana[75] etc. So also, before being christianized, the main Hindu temples in Betalbatim (in Konkani, the above mentioned Betpate), a village in Salcete, Goa, and on the island of Chorao, mentioned above, were dedicated to Bethal.[76] The first Parish Church on the island of Chorao, constructed in 1569, is dedicated to St. Bartholomew[77]: while the Church in Betalbatim, founded in 1630, dedicated to Our Lady of Remedies, has a side altar also dedicated to this saint.

The Milagrian

Basing on Fr. H. O. Mascarenhas, in a recently, published tricentenary Souvenir "The Milagrian'' (1981) of the foundation of the Milagres Church of

Kalyanpur, one of the writers Charles E.G. Lewis, has again staked the claim to St. Bartholomew's apostolate in Kalyanpur. This writer states that Dr. H.O.Mascarenhas has published his findings in a book in Konkani "Konkanachem Kristanvponn".[78]

Kalyan to Kalyanpur

Thus, the field of apostolate of St Bartholomew could have covered the whole Konkan region, on the West Coast of India, extending from Kalyan (in Maharashtra) in the north to Kalyanpur (Mangalore) in the south. Again in the words of Fr H O Mascarenhas

Considerable evidence associating St Bartholomeo with Gomantak, could be adduced to St. Thomas arriving from North India by the coastal trade-route, found Christianity along the whole Konkan coast from Kalyan-nagar in North Konkan to Kalyanpur in South Konkan. He therefore confirmed the "Kalyan " (Konkan) Christians in their faith and proceeded further down the coast-line to evangelize Malabar and South India, till his death in 72 AD. [79]

Goa is part of the Konkan region on the West coast, the field of St. Bartholomew's apostolate. Roman ships in which St. Thomas could also have come to South India frequented Goa,[80] through the Gopakapattana port, as already expounded above. Hence Christianity in Goa too could be of apostolic origin.

Persian Traders and Settlers

In the previous sections above, commerce between India and the Sasanid ports in the Persian Gulf has been mentioned. So also allusion has been made to the Persian ships frequenting the Gopakapattana harbor. Further details of these contacts are here below:

Persian Persecution

Commerce got wider momentum at the time of Shahpur II, who drove out the Arabs from the Persian Gulf and cleared the coast of his empire for commercial ventures and for sea borne trade.[81] As long as Christians were

persecuted in the Roman Empire they could seek safety in the Persian Empire. But as soon as the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, gave freedom to Christians from 312 AD, the above-mentioned Sasanid Emperor Shahpur II, suspicious of their loyalty, started a gruesome persecution against the Christians of his Persian Empire. His successors continued the persecution, intermittently, till about the seventh century. Thence many families fled from Persia, and some of them settled on the island of Socotra, on the West Coast of India, some Ceylon families were in Indonesia and China.[82]

Nestorianism

In order to differentiate themselves from the Christians of the Roman Empire, the Christians in Persia slowly embraced Nestorianism. The Emperors too favored Nestorianism.[83] Nestorian Christians were numerous in Northern Mesopotamia so that they formed an important minority in the Sasanid Empire, and occupied key positions in the administration. Though the seat of the Chaldean Catholicos was at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Rew-Ardashir on the coast of Fars, was the seal of the Metropolitan in the south, under the above Catholicos. This Metropolitan was responsible not only for Fars but also for the Church in India and far beyond.[84]

Trade with India and Ceylon

It is reported that some time before 415 AD, the Sasanid ruler Ya digird I (399-421) sent the Nestorian Catholicos Ahai to Fars to investigate the piracy of ships returning from India and Ceylon.[85] This Nestorian dignitary seems to have been entrusted with this mission, probably because of wider contacts and networks this community enjoyed in the Gulf area, due to this community's role in the navigation between India-Ceylon and the Persian Gulf. This is further testified by the Nestorian annals, which speak of hectic Sasanid trade with India and Ceylon, in which Christians used to take part.[86]

Pahalavi Script

From 554 to 790 AD however, the Metropolitan of Fars separated his Diocese from the Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (by now the Cathohcos had

assumed the title of Patriarch), not only in the realm of religious discipline and ceremonies, but also in the realm of language. The Church of Mesopotamia had their liturgical celebrations in Syriac, to differentiate from the Zoroastrians (who were using the Pahalavi script), whereas the Church in Fars had its own Bible translation in Pahalavi by 420 A.D. and was using that language as its medium. The available evidences attest to the fact that the Pahalavi language used in Fars was also extended to India, where the missionaries and Bishops from Fars catered to the spiritual needs of the native Christians.[87] No evidence in Syriac language was discovered in India, as long as the Metropolitan of Fars maintained ecclesiastical links with India. With the expansion of Islam, the Muslims occupied Fars, and the Church in India lost its ecclesiastical rapport with the Church of Fars. It seems highly probable that Sriac came to be used as the liturgical and ecclesiastical language in South India, only after these developments.[88]

Pre-Portuguese Christian References

Mother India did not keep a record of the beginnings of Christianity in India. It was perhaps a happy fault, for no one can accuse her, today, of forging documents to prove the apostolic origin of her Christianity. Thanks to her friendly neighbors, the Christians are in a position to research the apostolic origins of Indian Christianity.[89] The same can be said about the origin of Goan Christianity, and a modest effort is being made here in this direction, from available documents and archaeological finds.

Pahalavi Crosses

After the Apostolic age, the Church in India remained cut off from other centers for about 3 centuries, when it was the Christians of West Asia who salvaged it. Among the above-mentioned Persian traders, there were Christians who planted crosses with Pahalavi inscription wherever there were Christian settlements. As mentioned in the previous section, Pahalavi, was the language of these traders, an archaic form of modem Persia, a type of hieroglyphic script without vowels, and was in use from the 4th up to the 8th or 9th century A.D., that is, till the Islamisation of Fars and of the Indian Ocean trade by the Arabs. At least eight such crosses had been located, up to now, in the Indian Ocean area.

The oldest of such crosses is today found intact, carved on a granite stone, at Mylapore in Tamilnadu. The Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department had issued a postage stamp depicting this cross in 1972, to commemorate the 19th centenary of the death of St. Thomas, the Apostle.

Other crosses of this type, showing likewise, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove above the cross, two lotus or flower buds, the rainbow and three steps on each side depicting Calvary, all three below the cross, are found in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, and in six places in Kerala: namely. Kottayam, Muttuchira, Kothanallur. Kadamattam. Changanesery and Alangad, some intact, some damaged. Similar crosses are also found in ancient Christian centers as in Rewardashir in Persia (present Iran), in Iraq, in West Asia and in North Africa.[91]

Cosmas Indicopleustes

The Alexandrian traveler Cosmas Indicopleustes, who visited India and Ceylon in the 6th century (i.e. around 535 AD), reports in his Christian Topography[92] that there are Christian settlements in India and Ceylon. He describes the pnncipal port of Ceylon (identified with Mahatitha), where there is a Church of Christians, who have settled there and a priest, who is appointed from Persia and a Deacon with all arrangements for public worship. He refers to the port of Kalhuna (Kalyan) which had a resident Bishop sent from Persia and to Male (Quilon), which has another Bishop, with vibrant Christian communities. The other important places mentioned by him are: Sindhu (Indus), Orrhota (Saurashtra), Sibor (the above Sindabur or Gopakapattana), besides five ports/marts in Malabar including Mangaruth (Mangalore), and the ports of Marallo (Marava or Marawar) as well as Kaber (Kaveripattana) with which the Christians of Persia had hectic commercial contacts.[93]

Papal letters

When Pope John XXII erected the diocese of Quilon and appointed Friar Jordanus Catalani de Severac as its first Bishop, he gave him several letters of recommendation to the rulers and Christians of India. One of these letters, dated December 1, 1329. is addressed to the Christian inhabitants of the Konkan. These letters are preserved in the Vatican Archives and were subsequently printed at the

Vatican Polyglot Press at the instance of Msgr. A M. Benziger, who was Bishop of Quilon (from 1906 to 1931).[94]

Ibn Batuta

The Arab traveler Ibn Batuta, as mentioned in the previous section, commanded the Muslim expedition of the Nawab of Honavar against the Kadambas of Goa, and visited the Sindabur port at least twice between 1342 and 1345. He has kept a graphic account of his travels and of what he saw and did In that account he states that there is a settlement of Christians (Nazrenes) on the banks of the river Zuari.[95]

Portuguese discovery

The evidence to the existence of the Christian community came to the notice of the Portuguese immediately after the conquest of Goa. Portuguese authors of the 16th century, speak of a copper cross discovered in 1510, while demolishing the wall of a house in Old Goa.[96] Barros, the biographer of Afonso de Albuquerque, says that being informed about this, the conqueror ordered that it should be taken in a solemn procession to the Church.[97] It was from this Cross that 'Rua de Cruafixo' (Road of the Cross) of Old Goa got its name. Soon after this, a stone which had the image of Christ, was found in the village of Gandaivm (presently' known also as S. Bras), which stone Afonso de Albuquerque sent to D Manuel I, the King of Portugal in the year 1511. One year after the conquest of Goa[98] Francisco Souza sj in his "Orienle Conquislado," seems to confuse the above two finds and narrates how this 'metal image of crucified Christ' was discovered and sent as a richest pearl of the East, to Portugal as a present to the said King.[99] What was sent was the stone with Christ's image, not the metal Cross (copper).[100]

St. Francis Xavier: In his letters to St Ignatius Loyola, St Francis Xavier tells about the great devotion of Christians of Goa to St. Thomas.[101] In two letters dated 20lh September 1542, he writes:

"It is four months and more that we arrived in India al Goa. which is a city wholly of Christians, a sight to be seen...[102] "... Since the people of this land

are very dedicated to the glorious Apostle St Thomas. he being the Patron of the whole of this India, I beg that His Holiness should grant a plenary indulgence on the saint's feast day and its octaves to all those who confess their sins and communicate on those days, so that there may be growth in devotion to St Thomas among all his devotees... "[103]

As already pointed out in the Introduction above, St Francis arrived in Goa by end of May 1542, when the monsoon sets in, and left it after four months in September, as soon as the monsoon rains abated. He had not stepped out of Goa, when he wrote the letters, mentioned above. It is well known that in these four months St. Francis Xavier has not done much apostolate in Goa, except preaching to the Portuguese soldiers, officers and their descendents and teaching Catechism to their children and slaves, who were the Christians who had great devotion to St. Thomas in Goa. Could they be, perhaps, the Pre-Portuguese Christians?

Fr. H. O. Mascarenhas

In fact, here the above mentioned late Dr. H.O. Mascarenhas, comes to our rescue. In his article in the New Leader on 20-6-1970, he argues that these were St. Thomas Christians of Goa.[104] He also refers to a community in Goa, called Thomasee, who, probably because of the vicissitudes they met over a considerable period of time, returned to Hinduism, at the same time retaining many Christian customs.

As mentioned in the previous section, in 1952/3, the same priest had written articles in 'The Examiner', a weekly published by the Archdiocese of Bombay, affirming the existence of pre-Portuguese Christianity in Goa. In one place he refers to his grandmother who had told him that as a young girl she had seen Syrian Crosses on hills near her native village. The people were hiding them to avoid their destruction by the Portuguese.[105] In another article on the same, he chastises the Portuguese in the following words:

The Inquisition chewed up every vestige of Apostolic Christianity not only in Goa but a good way down the coast-line to South India. In Goa, nothing has remained except the faith of the simple people, not only in the Latin cross but

also in the Oriental Apostolic cross of red weather-worn, granite stone, with all four arms equal.[106]

In another article on the same weekly, he says:

Fifteen centuries before Albuquerque stepped ashore Apostolic Christianity in India was sustained by clergy of the Syrian rite in the same way as the St Thomas Chrislianity from Socorta to South India. The local Goan tradition about this clergy has been recorded by Konkani writers like D. F. Dantas in his Gomant-Kontha 1897. Dantas affirms that in 1559 that is, one year before Inquisition began, the earlier Christian doctrine and practice, were forbidden by Papal decree and that the Oriental Christians of Gomantak were absorbed into the Latin rite ....[107]

Such a Papal decree, alluded to above, has not been found, so far, by this author. However, the Portuguese authorities may have interpreted in 1559, the general permission, to subject to their jurisdiction all the lands and peoples discovered or to be discovered by them, given by Pope Leo X on 7-6-1514 by his Bull "Dum Fidei Constantiam."[108] to absorb the Oriental Christians of Goa into the Latin rite. Fr. H. O. Mascarenhas, however, gives more details, in the next paragraph of the same article:

References to Apostolic Christianity (after the Inquisition had officially been abolished in the 19th century) will be found in Mons. Leonardo Pais' Prontuano das definicoes Indicas and in the popular Flos Sanctorum: Vida de S. Tome. More eloquent than these books are the large Apostolic Crosses dug up at Reis Magos (Verem). Agoada and Anfediv.[109]

The three names given by Fr. Mascarenhas, are the names of villages of Goa; it is not known where these Crosses are at present, however, in the Prontuario quoted by him above, there is mention of several crosses of blue and black stones, being found while digging the foundations for a fort in Anjediv Island in 1515; in another place in the same book it is said that the Island had a Church of the Christians of St. Thomas.

The above information about the 'date of publication of the Prontuano after the Inquisition was suppressed,' does not seem to be correct, as that book has the approval after proper scrutiny, by the officers of the Tribunal of the Inquisition in Lisbon, who have praised it as a very laudable venture, and permissions dated 15-2-1712, 1-3-1712, 2-3-1712, etc. were given to publish and the same got printed on its front pages. The Inquisition was abolished fifty years later, First by Marques de Pombal in 1774. when he was Prime Minister of Portugal,112 then re-established and finally abolished in the 19th century. Maybe Fr H. O. Mascarenhas had with him only the reprint of the Prontuano (Bombay 1892) and did not notice the permissions reprinted on its first pages. This only serves to strengthen the argument, as the book was published with the full knowledge of the Inquisition, and confirms the existence of apostolic Christianity and the St. Thomas Crosses in Goa.

The Prontuario also quotes a local tradition from the Flos Sanctorum: Vida de S. Tome, the names of two persons baptized by St. Thomas in Goa: one is said to have taken the name Dionysio, being the son of a local ruler, and the other, his bride who took the name of Pelagia, and both are supposed to have died martyrs for the faith.[113]

Dr. George Mark Moraes

In his book "Christianity in India, from early times to St Francis Xavier AD 52 - 1542,'' the eminent historian, Dr. George Mark Moraes, who for some time after the Liberation of Goa, was the Director of the Goa Government Archives, says that it is possible that the pre-Portuguese Christianity disappeared in Goa along with the other Christian settlements on the Konkan coast; however after the successful conquest of the city of Goa by the Portuguese, and the prestige it brought them, the Church attracted to its fold a number of persons from the higher classes. Albuquerque wrote in his letter to his sovereign (King of Portugal) on Ist April 1512, "Some Brahmans and Naiquebares (Kshatryas) have become Christians. They serve Your Highness loyally and well in this metropolis of Goa.[114]

The Latest Archaeological Discovery

All the above mentioned references found their archaeological proof when on 27th April 2001, while strolling with his Rector, near a dilapidated mound were covered with a bushy thicket in the premises of St. Peter's Chapel, at Dandi in Agasaim, at the fag end of the old port of Gopakapattana this author stumbled upon a hard granite stone, carved with an unusual Cross.

Broken Cross

The Cross had some strange inscription on its periphery, but it was damaged and broken with its 1/5 vertical piece missing. It was a decorated Cross, with the length of two and half feet. Nearby there were another three big straight granite pieces fallen down, having on them the three-nails and a crown of thorns carved respectively on each piece. He called a local lady to enquire, but she was reluctant to come, saying that it was a snake-infested place and in her childhood she had had a narrow escape from cobra snake bite there.[115]

Enquiries

Further enquiries revealed that there had been mounted on that mound, a simple but huge granite Latin cross with the marks of the Passion of Christ mentioned above, which some 6 years earlier, had crumbled down during a cyclonic storm, broken into those three pieces and shaken the mound. With this the damaged Cross, which was hidden inside the mound, had come out and was about to fall into the sea. Someone had pulled it out and placed it in front of the mound. It was also found that it had exactly the same features or at least similar to that of the Mylapore Cross (which the author had already visited way back in 1991), though one part of this one was missing. Below the carved damaged Cross there was another damaged Portuguese inscription with Roman number 642.

Pahalavi inscription

With due permissions from the Chapel committee, this author picked up the Cross, cleaned it and mounted it in the Pilar Seminary Museum, (recognized as a private museum, by the Department of Culture, Human Resource

Development, Government of India, of which he happens to be the founder and Curator). On the evening of the same day, 27 April 2001, scholars and participants of an International Seminar on the Maritime History of India (1500-1800 AD), organized by the Department of History, Goa University, came on a sight seeing and study tour to the Pilar Museum. On seeing the strange Cross, everybody rushed to it and hailed it as an important discovery, saying that the script was similar to the Pahalavi script found on other Crosses, in the Indian Ocean area.

Opinion of Experts

These and other experts, when they were consulted, confirmed that the granite, the Syrian Cross carved on it and the Pahalavi inscription were very ancient and some said it could be dated to the 6th or 7th century AD. Among these are Dr. Pius Malekandathil holding at that time the post of Reader, History Department. Goa University. He consulted Dr. Ranabir Chakravarti of Calcutta University, a Pahalavi expert, who having verified the antiquity of the inscription and analyzing the historical background, suggested in his personal letter to him that the Cross could be of the seventh century. Also the Goa circle of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) when consulted by the author, said that the Cross could be of a very early period (probably of sixth or seventh century), though they did not clearly give a dating: Prof John Evareart of Ghent University. Belgium who was visiting the Museum as a delegate of the above mentioned seminar, held the view that the Cross could be as old as the Mylapore Cross; Prof Joseph Velingkar of the Heras Institute, Bombay, said that the Cross proves, without doubt, that there was Christianity in Goa long before the coming of the Portuguese. Prof Lotika Varadarajan, the Delhi based historian, said that the artifact needed further paleographtc studies and detailed analysis of the inscriptions. Against the background of active presence of Christian traders/settlers in Sibor in the sixth century AD, as mentioned by Cosmas Indicopleustes, quoted in one of the former sections above, it seems highly probable to Dr. Pius Malekandathil, that this cross was of the sixth century AD.[116]

Dr. Pius Malekandathil also helped the author by giving wide publicity to this discovery. Almost all dailies in Goa gave coverage of their own or published

his articles from 6th May 2001 National and international dailies and magazines too brought write ups on it.[117]

Deciphering the Pahalavi Inscription

Dr. Joseph Vazhuthanapally, Director of the Center for Christian Archaeological Research (CICAR). Changanessery and member of the International Center of Christian Archaeology (ISIAO), Rome, when he came to know about this discovery, flew from Rome to Goa to study this find in January/February 2002. Being a Pahalavi scholar, he attempted to decipher the writing on the Cross. He took utmost care to transcribe the letters as truly as they were on the Cross. Since he wanted to discuss his conclusions with other Pahalavi scholars. he took a copy of his findings to Rome, and on 25th February 2002, he generously sent a letter with the correct interpretation of the Pahalavi writing, after consulting Dr. Giovanni Carlo Cereti. expert Pahalavi epigraphist in ISIAO. Rome.[118]

Like the Mylapore Cross which reads:

"My Lord Messiah (Christ), have mercy upon Afras (Gabriel), Charharbukht.
the Syrian's son, who has cut this",

The Agasaim Cross inscription, ignoring the missing portion, according to the experts interpretation sent from Rome, reads thus:

"My Lord Messiah (Christ) have mer(cy) ..... the Syrian's
son who has carried (cut) this."[119]

Who broke the Cross?

From all this study, efforts were made to conjecture who could have broken the Cross. From elsewhere it was well-known that when their relations with the Syrian Christians were cordial, at the beginning of their encounter with them, the Portuguese had excavated and reconstructed the Church and tomb of St Thomas in Mylapore. around 1523-1527 AD,[120] and had come across the so called 'Bleeding Cross which they had venerated,[121] (and which was similar to this Agasaim Cross). They, therefore, knew very well that the Syrian Christians were

reverently calling it 'the St. Thomas Cross.'[122] But, as years passed and these encounters became more intimate, the Portuguese realized the difference in the Oriental and Latin rites, and thought that their brand of Christian rituals and practices was the only correct one. Now the times had thus changed, and they had meddled with this Agasaim Cross, removing it from its original mound and tampering with it.

Half Portuguese Inscription

For, no one would engrave half an inscription on a broken cross, unless it was intact at the moment of engraving that Portuguese inscription. The number 642 was the clue. Its missing left side must have contained the number 1. Hence the Roman date was 1642.[123]

After Diamper

Since the mercantile group (Portuguese) wanted to control the spices producing group (the St Thomas Christians) in Kerala, eliminating differentiating elements and practices from the latter's community and bring homogeneity and uniformity through the Latinization process.[124] the former, through Archbishop Aleixo de Menezes, had imposed the Latin rite on the Syrian Church at the Synod of Diamper in 1599. It became now clear that the Portuguese inscription was done in 1642, almost forty three years after the Synod and eleven years before the separation brought about with the Koonam Khurisu Oath of Mathencherry of 1653.[125] at the height of mounting tension, and probably to send messages of caution and warning, to those who were still clinging to the Syrian tradition in the locality.[126]

Though broken, the Portuguese inscription, otherwise, confirms the Cross to be of St Thomas, for it reads thus:"... ADES. TOME...DOR. ILEZVS ...642" As testified by Dr. H. O. Mascarenhas, quoted in the previous section,[127] the Syrian Crosses were broken by the Portuguese, wherever they found them; precisely because after the Mathencherry Oath of 1653, they considered the Syrian Christians as "Nestorian heretics,"[128] to whom this Cross belonged. And to avoid this outrage, the local people were trying to save their ages-old heritage, if possible, by hiding them.[129]

Only those Churches, which after 1653, remained with the Jacobites (like those of Kottayam), or under Dutch or British control, like that of Mylapore, (where the increasing presence of the Dutch was felt after 1630), could preserve the Pahalavi Crosses intact. [130]

Thus the Agasaim Cross was broken by the Portuguese, and dumped inside the mound on which it was standing, and substituted by another huge Latin one. May be, with this the Portuguese also wanted to create the impression that it was they who had introduced Christianity in Goa.[131] Or. maybe the whole episode of Diamper and the breaking of the Agasaim Cross and the other Syrian Crosses in the locality could be understood in more charitable terms, quoting Joao Teles e Cunha in "Socio Cultural aspect of the Catholic Missionary works in India; thus:

"Historical fairness demands that one should look at the past as it was and not with the standards of the present day world. The visit of Dom Aleixo de Menezes to the churches and settlements of the St. Thomas Christians in Malabar was carried out against the context of Counter-Reformation in Europe. The Portuguese feared that the Malabar Christians who were following diverse rituals and social practices, could spread these errors among the newly converted Indians, which would lead to schismatic movements, within Asian Christianity, similar to those which had split the Reformation movement in Europe."[132]

Deciphering the Portuguese Inscription

Dr Pius Malekandathil has also attempted to find the meaning of the last line of this much abbreviated Portuguese inscription: 'DOR. ILEZVS...' as "DO R. (da Regiao?) ILEZ (das Ilhas'1) VS (Vizinhas?)."[133] This author has a doubt about the abbreviated 'O" in the first word above. In his supposition the abbreviated 'DOR.' would stand for "De Ongem da Regiao". Would it therefore mean: 'That which belongs to St Thomas (Christians) originating from the region of the neighboring Islands" in order to differentiate them from the Roman Catholics, converted by the Portuguese? (It is to be noted that the Portuguese gave the name Ilhas meaning 'Islands" to what is today known as the Taluka of Tiswaddi, in Central Goa in which lies Panjim, the present seat of the administration of the State, and Siddona and the island of Chorao, mentioned in

the previous section) After all, this is a conjecture, based on the happenings of that time

Differences and Similarities

Examining further, both the Mylapore and Agasaim Crosses, it is noticed that in the former, the lower arm of the cross is longer than the upper arm as in the Syrian crosses, whereas the latter has both the lower arm and the upper one equal in size as in the Greek crosses. This prompted Dr Joseph Vazhuthanapilly to suggest that the Mylapore Cross could have been made locally, based on a Syrian model, whereas the Agasaim Cross, could have been brought from Persia based on a Greek model. [134] This supposition is enhanced from the fact that one word seems to be different between the two. The Mylapore one seems to say that Afras (Gabriel) has carved it, whereas the Agasaim one seems to say that someone has carried it. The name would be in the broken part, which is missing. It is also to be noted that Dr H.O Mascarenhas in his extensive writings in The Examiner, quoted in the previous sections, has affirmed, time and again, that the Goa Crosses had both arms equal.[135]

Similar distinction is also seen in the two Crosses found in the Valiyapalli Church in Kottayam: The cross on the left side altar has both the lower and the upper arms equal like the Agasaim Cross; whereas the cross on the right side altar has the lower arm longer than the upper arm like the Mylapore one.

There are also other minor differences in both the sets, mentioned above, as follows:

a) The wings of the Holy Spirit, who is shown descending in the form of a dove, are a bit extended on the Agasaim Cross unlike on the Mylapore[136] cross and on both the Kottayam Crosses mentioned above

b) On the pedestal part on either side, the Agasaim Cross shows five delicately carved, up-turned and thin bud-like structures: whereas the Mylapore one has similar buds, but only three and quite thick; the Kottayam right side one

has. likewise, seven thinner buds while the left side one has down-turned ears of corn (or spices?), instead.

c) As already mentioned above, the vertical and horizontal beams of the Agasaim as well as the Kottayam left side crosses are straight and even; whereas in the Mylapore one and the Kottayam right side one, the beams are thicker as well as broader towards the end, and relatively narrow towards the central and converging part.

Conclusion

So far the common belief among historians and authors was that Christianity was introduced into Goa subsequent to the coming of the Portuguese in 1510 AD. But many authors in the past had affirmed that many St. Thomas Crosses had been located in Goa but at present their whereabouts were not traced.

The discovery of the 6th or 7th century Pahalavi inscribed broken Cross at Dandi in Agasaim on the banks of the river Zuari, at the fag end of the ancient Gopakapattana harbour, is an archaeological testimony to the existence of this Pre-Portuguese Christianity, probably of Apostolic origin, in Goa, as this harbour lies on the West Coast of India, visited by Roman ships from or after 30 B.C. This was situated on the trade route from the Persian Gulf to Malabar, and was an important trading center known from the time of Gudea, ruler of the city state of Lagash of Sumer (2143-2124 BC), frequented by traders from among the Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs respectively through the centuries, and called by them in different names. The Apostle St. Thomas, who landed in South India in 52 A.D., coming in Roman ships, could have stopped here. Several scholars have claimed that the field of apostolate of St. Bartholomew, who also is supposed to have come to India from Palestine, through Persia, worked to spread the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, from Kalyan near Bombay, to Kalyanpur near Mangalore, covering Goa also. The existence of Christianity in the Gopakapattana harbor area is also corroborated by the testimony of the Alexandran traveler, Cosmas Indicopleustes, in the 6th century, and by Ibn Batuta in the 14th century, much before the corning of the Portuguese to Goa in the 16th century.

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95. George Mark Moraes, op. cit pp. 154-155
96. Frei Domingos de Souza, letter to the King D. Manuel dated 22-12-1514, Arquivo Nacional dc Torre deTombo, Lisbon, Corpo Cronologico L Maco 17 doc. 30
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98. Leonardo Paes, op cit p. 121 He quotes Francisco Negrao, Taprahona. lib 1, p. L arg 13
99. Francisco dc Souza sj, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Cristo pelos Padres da Companhia de Jesus da Pravincia de Goa,* Lisboa, 1710. pp. 14-15
100. Leonardo. Paes op cit p. I21quoted from Francisco Negrao, Taprabona, lib I, p. 1, arg 13
101. Georg Schurhammer sj, *Francis Xavier, his Life and Times,* Vol. II, Rome, 1977, pp. 271-276
102. Schurhammer and Wicki, *Epistolae S. Francisci Xayerii,* Romae, Vol. L 1944, p. 121
103. Ibidem p. 139
104. Dr. H- O. Mascarenhas, *The New Leader, Catholic* weekly published from Bangalore/Madras, issue dated 20-06-1970.
105. Dr H. O. Mascarenhas. *Pre-Portuguese Christianity,* a series of articles on The Examiner, No 103, 1952,pp.651-652;No 104, 1953Tpp. 29; 133434, 192-194
106. Ibidem, dated 17-1-1953, op. cit p. 29
107. Ibidem, dated 14-3-1953. op. cit p. 133
108. C. J. Costa, *A Missiological Conflict between the Padroado and Propaganda in* (he East, Pilar Publications, 1997, p. 3
109. H.O. Mascarenhas *Examiner*, dated 14-3-1953, op. cit p. 133

110. Leonardo Paes, op. cit. Tratado V, Cap. IV, p. 121; L. Paes quotes the Bishop D. Hieronymo Ozorio, from Lisbon, who has written Accoens del Rey D. Manuel i.e. the Chronicles of the reign of D. Manuel, King of Portugal, who ruled from 1495 to 1521. This information has been taken by L. Paes from the Book (lib.) 4, p. 119, of the Bishop's chronicles.

111. Ibidem, p. 74

112. Rui Gomes Pereira, op. cit p. 13 No. 12

113. Ibidem, pp. 38-39 L. Paes quotes Fr. Diogo do Rosario m the latter's work J'los Sanctorum in the section on *the life of St Thomas* on p. 115; and also Fr Francisco Negrao in the work Taprabona, p. 1, book (lib) 2, arg 13.

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115. Paul Fernandas, Goa had links with Asian Christians 1400 years ago: Cross with Pahlavi inscription found at Agasaim. Gomantak Times, a daily published from Panjim, Vol. 14, No.78, 5-5-2(X)l, p. 1

116. Fr. Pius Malekandathil, *Discovery...*, Christian Orient, op. cit p. 132 & 135

117. Ibidem, Dr Pius Malekandathil has published a full list of the Goa dailies, national newspapers and Magazines that gave coverage to this find on pg 132

118. C.J. Costa, The Heritage ...op cit p.10-11

119. Ibidem p. 11

120. A. C. Perumalil, op. cit p. 82-87; Rt. Rev Herman D; Sou/a, In the Steps of St Thomas. Madras- Mylapore 1983, p. 35-39

121. Rt Rev Herman D'Souza, op. cit p. 56-60

122. Ibidem

123. Dr. Pius Malekandathil, *Discovery* -.-, Christian Orient, op. cit p 133

124. Antonio Gouveia, Jornada do Arcebispo, Lisboa, 1988 reprint: this book has been translated with notes by Dr. Pius Malekandathil and published

by L R C Publications, Kochi, 2003; see pp. XXIII to XXXn of the Inroduction to the English translation.

125. Joseph Thekkedath, History of Christianity in India, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore. Vol. II, Ch. 4 & 5, pp. 64-109; S63; Antonio de Gouveia, Jornada op cit, translation by Dr Pius Malekandathil, mentioned above; Gregorio Magno Antao, De Synodi Diamperitanae Natura atque decretis, Goa, 1952; Jonas Thaliyath, The Synod ofDiamper, Rome, 1958

126. Pius Malekandathil, *Discovery*... Christian Orient op. cit p. 133

127. H. O. Masearenhas, *The Examiner*, Ho 104, op cit 17-1-1953, p. 29

128. Today, among the St. Thomas Christians, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches are full fledged Catholic Churches, in communion with the Pope in Rome.

129. C.J. Costa, *Religious Identities in the Heritage of Govapuri,* article on Deccan Studies, Vol. I No. I June-December 2003, Hyderabad, pp. 64-66 130

130. C. J. Costa. *The Heritage*... op. cit p. 123

131. C. J. Costa, article on Deccan Studies, op. cit p 65

132. Joao Teles c Cunha: *Souo-Cultural Aspects of the Catholic Missionary Works in India*, The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India (1500-1800), edited by K. S. Mathew, Theotonio R. D'Souza and Pius Malckandathil, p 240

133. Dr. Pius Malekandathil, *Discovery*..., Christian Orient, op. ct p. 133

134. C. J. Costa, *The Heritage*... op. cit p. 122 no 2 referring to the interesting insights given to him by Dr Joseph Vazhuthanapalli.

135. Dr H. O Mascarenhas, *The Examiner* op. cit No. 103, 1952, p. 651; No. 104, 1953 pp. 29,133 134.

136. Pius MalekandathiL *Discovery* ..., Christian Orient, Sept. 2002, op. cit p.133.

THE CHALDEAN SYRIAN CHURCH IN TRICHUR, KERALA (52-1599 AD)

Mar Aprem

The history of Christianity in India from AD 52 till AD 1498 is common to all the different Syrian denominations in India. The forefathers of the present Syro Malabar Church, Syro Malankara Church, Orthodox Syrian Church, Syrian Orthodox Jacobite Church, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Chaldean Syrian Church, Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur and some Syrians in the Church of South India once belonged to the one and the same Church. There were no denominational divisions.

All Christian leaders who came to South India (whether from Malabar or Tamilnadu) did not belong to any separate Christian denomination, for there were no denominational differences during that early period.

After the denominational divisions and developments the Indian church especially in Malabar received Bishops from Persia, or Edessa or Seleucia - Ctesiphon near the present Baghdad close to the Euphrates river. Many church historians will agree that the Church in India was connected with East of Euphrates. The only denomination which still keeps the connection with that Church is the Chaldean Syrian Church based in Trichur.

Out of the over seven million members of St.Thomas Christians living in Kerala and in its diaspora, only 30 thousand members belong to this original connection. At the same time, over three and a half million members of the present Syro-Malabar Church under major Archbishop Mar Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil use the same liturgy of the Apostles Addai and Mari after the restoration of their original liturgy deleting a lot of Latin influence from their liturgical life.

Only these two denominations can claim the original connection, as it uses the liturgy of the pre-Portuguese Church in India. Other denominations in Kerala like the Syro-Malankara Church, Orthodox Syrian Church, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur etc., cannot claim same

heritage, as they have given up the liturgy of Addai and Mari and are using the liturgy of St. James brought to India in 1665 AD.

Unfortunately we do not have the chronology of the East Syrian Bishops who came to India from the earliest period till the arrival of the Portuguese. The headquarters of the Church of the East had shifted many times due to persecutions etc. Therefore we do not have enough archives to research on this most important topic.

We know that during the time of Mar Timothy I, the famous Patriarch of the East Syrian Church in the 8th century, there were Bishops in India sent by the Patriarch. Indian Church was a Metropolitan See since the 6th century. The controversy between Patriarch Mar Esho Yabh III and Mar Simon, Metropolitan of Riwardshir is mentioned in history.

On May 20, 1498 A.D. Vasco de Gama came to Calicut from Portugal. His return was in the middle of 1499. At the time of the arrival of Vasco de Gama there were no Bishops in India. The Archdeacon was the head of the community.

In 1504 A.D. we find five East Syrian Bishops in Malabar. Mar Jaballaha, Mar Denha, Mar Jacob, Mar John and Mar Thomas. Mar John and Mar Thomas were the consecrated Bishops in 1490 A.D. This Mar Thomas returned to the Catholicos Patriarch of the East Syrian Church. Mar John was probably the Metropolitan of India. When Mar John died, Mar Jacob became the Metropolitan of India. Mar Dinha was helper. The East Syrians Bishops ordained several priests and consecrated the altars in Kerala.

In 1502, Vasco de Gama came for the second time to India. Towards the end of the year 1524, Vasco de Gama came for the third time as the second Viceroy of India.

It was in 1542 A.D., that the Jesuits following the foot prints of Francis Xavier came to work in India as missionaries.

The Diocese of Goa was installed in 1534 A.D. followed by Cochin Diocese in 1557. After a gap of nearly 50 years i.e. in 1606, Mylapore Diocese (Chennai)

was born. In 1657, Diocese of Verapoly came into being. Then in Mangalore Diocese was born in 1674 A.D.)

After 1530 A.D. there were only two Syrian Bishops in Kerala. Mar Jacob and a young Bishop. This young Bishop was probably Mar Dinha. Mar Jacob seemed to be the prominent Bishop. According to one source the young Bishop was in charge of the area from Kollam to Cape Comorin. Mar Jacob was residing in Cranganore. Bishop Mar Abraham who came later shifted the residence of the Bishop from Cranganore to Angamali. Mar Jacob was appreciated by Francis Xavier. Mar Jacob used to cooperate with the Portuguese missionaries.

It is not clear whether Mar Jacob died in 1549 or 1553 AD. Probably Mar Jacob who retired went to the Franciscan monastery in Cochin in 1549. On January 26, 1549 Francis Xavier wrote a letter from Cochin to King John III of Portugal recommending Mar Jacob to the King. He wrote

Jacob Abuna[1] has been serving God and Your Highness in these parts these last 45 years, a very old, virtuous and holy man and at the same time disfavored by Your Highness and almost all here in India. God gives him His grace, for he wants to favour him personally, without using us as mediators to console his servants. Here he is only favoured by the Fathers of St. Francis, and by them he is favoured and one could not do more. And if it was not for them, the good and holy old man would already be resting with God . . . . . "[2]

The retirement of Mar Jacob was one of the prudent decisions and also his retirement was very much necessitated due to old age,[3] He was the only Metropolitan who probably lived nearly half a century in that capacity.

After the death of Mar Jacob the Portuguese began to put pressure on the Syrian Christians to accept Roman Catholic practices. The Portuguese began to prevent East Syrian Bishops coming to India.

In 1553 AD. John Sulaqa a monk of Rabban Hurmizd monastery of the Church of the East in Alkosh near Mosul (present Iraq) was consecrated Patriarch of the Chaldeans by the Pope in Rome. .The new Patriarch was murdered in 1555 AD

In 1556 Mar Joseph, brother of the murdered Patriarch Mar John Sulaqa, arrived in India. He was sent by Patriarch Sulaqa's successor Mar Abdisho. The Roman Catholic authorities in Malabar did not welcome this intruder who came without permission from Rome. They sent him to Rome to face a trial about his faith where he died.

The famous church in North Parur, which is under the control of the Syrian Orthodox church, was built by this Mar Joseph Sulaqa. Although Mar Joseph's tomb in Rome is still unknown, this church has the tomb of Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorius, saint of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India.

In 1585 A.D. a Malayalee named Abraham Mathai from the Punnurkaden family copied the Syriac Manuscript of Kashkul[4] in Kothamangalam, which is preserved in Trichur. That MS was used in the Doctor of Theology dissertation of the writer in 1976 to prove that there was no mention of the Mother of God in that prayer book. Only the titles of Mother of Christ or Mother of Light and Life are used in that book.

In 1597 A.D. Metropolitan Mar Abraham, the last East Syrian Bishop in India died. His tomb is in Angamalee in a Church under the control of Syro-Malabar Church now.[1] Archdeacon George of the Cross of Pakalomattam family took charge of the administration in Angamalee.

There were two archdeacons by the name George from the Pakalomattam family in this century. The first one was called Archdeacon George of Christ (died 1585) and the second one was Archdeacon George of Cross (died 1604). It is stated that both were elected to become Bishops, Archdeacon George of Christ was proposed to be the successor to Mar Abraham. Pope Gregory XIII confirmed it. But he died before Mar Abraham died. His nephew, Archdeacon George of Cross was proposed to be the Bishop. That consecration also did not take place. He was the archdeacon at the time of Diamper Synod. He died in 1604 AD, five years after the Synod.[2]

In 1599 AD, the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa Dom Alexio de Menezes came to Cochin from Goa and ordained a batch of unmarried people as priests and held the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperur) from 20 to 26 June 1599. The

Synod commenced on 3rd Sunday after Pentecost, i. e June 20th. Only 153 Cathanars were present. The lay representatives were 660. The Cathedral Chapter of the diocese of Cochin were present namely the clerics as well as the Captain of Cochin Anthony D. Noronha.

Many reforms were made. Married priests were asked to leave their wives and children. Latin discipline was enforced. The synod issued 200 decrees in nine sessions. There was no discussion in the synod. Most of the natives did not understand them as they were in Portuguese. According to the Journado and Synodo Dioceseno of Gouvea we get a wrong impression that everything was discussed well and signed willingly. But Bishop Ros thought differently. In his letter dated 20 November 1603 addressed to the General of the Jesuits in Rome, Ros wrote that not a single canon was discussed or altered in the Synod. Moreover, Archbishop Menezes added arbitrarily canons after the Synod was over. In his letter dated 27 December 1603 addressed to the Portuguese assistant to Jesuit General Bishop Ros repeats the fact that there was no consultation in the Synod. A letter written by Fr.John Campori S.J on 1 January 1604 repeats the same sad situation.[3]

Syriac prayer books were burned or corrected as they contained heresy of Nestorianism. The Syriac canon of the Bible should agree with Latin Vulgate. The Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory on October 4, 1582 was accepted. At that time there was a difference of 10 days. October 5 was changed to 15. Now the Gregorian Christmas comes 13 days before the Julian calendar, as there is a difference of one day every century except for the leap century.

Almost all Christians in Kerala, were made Catholics by force. Archbishop Menezes of Goa had temporal powers of the Governor of Goa. He had come with soldiers from Goa and had solicited the help of the local rulers to fore the local Syrian Christians to accept the faith of the Pope and to be under the Portugal authority.

In Session III, (Decree 7 of the Synod of Diamper) we read:

The Synod is painfully aware of the heresy and perverse error which is being disseminated in this Diocese by the schismatic to the great detriment of souls; There is one law of St.Thomas and another of St. Peter; the Church

founded by the one is distinct and different from the Church founded by the other; each is immediately from Christ; one has nothing to do with the other; neither the prelate of one owes obedience to the prelate of the other;
In Session III (Decree 8) states:

". . .Whereas the Patriarchs of Babylon, to whom this church was subject, are Nestorians, the heads of that cursed sect, and schismatics out of the obedience of the holy Roman Church, and aliens from our holy Catholic Church, and are for that reason excommunicated and accursed; and not being lawful to join with such in Church in public as stand excommunicated . . . prohibit all priests, and curates, from henceforward to name the said Patriarch of Babylon in the holy sacrifice of the mass, or in any other divine office, in the prayers of the Church, even without the false title of the universal pastor; but instead thereof, shall name our Lord the Pope, who is our true pastor, as also of the whole church, and after him, the Lord bishop of the Diocese, for the time being; and whosoever shall maliciously and knowingly act the contrary, shall be declared excommunicated."

In session 8, several decrees deal with the reformation that is necessary in the affairs of the administration of the church. Some of them are good and positive and contain for examples the Diocese is to be divided into the parishes and the Vicars to be appointed. This custom is followed in many denominations.

There are 41 decrees in this session. They deal with the observance of the festival days (decree 9), the capiars (sextons) to be appointed to keep the church buildings clean (decree 27), the poor people who desire to be baptized should be given baptism (decree 36) etc. Since the priests had no monthly salaries they were expecting some fees for baptizing children. So the poor people could not baptize their children. But some decrees of this session were not positive.

The decree 37 demanded that we should cross the sign of the cross from left to right, because we were crossing from the right to left, as we still do in the church of the East universally. The decree 40 granted general license to the Jesuits to instruct the native priests and the faithful. The final decree of session 8 decided that the Christians in Kerala, who were practising the Christian faith when many of the Europeans were barbarians, should be under the constitution of Goa, having reduced to the status of a suffragan diocese.

The last session on the last day was about the reformation of morals. It included topics such as inheritance, adoption, contact with non-Christians, dress, caste distinction etc. Christians were forbidden to charge more than ten percent as interest. The 6th, 7th and 8th decrees condemned witchcraft, fortune telling and other similar practices.

Jonas Thaliath in his doctoral dissertation written in Rome proved that the Synod of Diamper was not a valid synod. He observed, "It severed in one coup the age long relation that the church of Malabar fosterd with that of Babylon."[4]

From June 1599 till January 1653 for a period of 53 and half years the Syrian Christians of Kerala functioned officially under the Pope. Some away from the Latin masters must have kept their ancient faith secretly. But there were no non- Catholic Bishops in Kerala at that time.

The Chaldean or Assyrian Church of the East based in Trissur is the faithful remnant of the pre- Portuguese Christian community of Kerala.

End Notes

1. Abuna is word used to address Bishops in the Middle East. The word means our father. In Kerala the Bishops in the Syrian Church are addressed as Abun.
2. A.M.Mundadan, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552,* CLS, Bangalore, 1967, p. 145
3. ibid, p.146
4. There is another church in Angamalee near the Catholic church which is under the Orthodox Syrian Church where there is a tomb of an archdeacon of the Pakalomattom family.
5. For some details of the archdeacons of Pakalomattom family read the article of Prof. George John Nidhiry, Martha Mariam Church, Kuruvilangad in Journal Of St.Thomas Christians, Vol.16, No.4, October- December 2005, Rajkot., pp.61 -83
6. Quoted from Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India,* Vol II, Bangalore,1982, pp 69-75
7. Honas Thaliath, *The Synod of Diamper, Rome,* 1958, p. 174.

22.02.19

14

THE JACOBITE SYRIAN CHURCHES

Adai Jacob

1. Identify

The Jacobite Syrian Church in India believed to have been founded by Apostle St. Thomas in the year AD 52, is an integral part of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. How did it all come about? This is a unique feature of these churches. At the Nicene Council, it was decreed that Christians be directed among the three traditions - Latin West, Greek East and Syriac Orient. Accordingly all the Eastern Churches including that of India came under the See of Antioch whose present incumbant is H. H. Zakka II. The local head of JSC in India is H.B. Mar Thomas I.

The Primacy of Petrine Succession: The Patriarch of Antoch is deemed to be the successor of St. Peter and therefore he holds a primary position in the church just as St. Peter held a primary position in the church. It is evident from the Gospels that Peter was in the lead among the disciples. After the ascension of our Lord. Peter assumed the leadership of the Jerusalem Church. Following persecution, Peter left Jerusalem and in AD 37, arrived at Antioch, from where he established the church. Anybody who is enthroned in the Antiochaean See, is considered to he the successor of St. Peter. This standpoint of the JSC can be compared to that of the RCC. Besides the RCC, only the Syrian Orthodox Church holds the view regarding apostolic succession of Peter.

a. A.D. 52 to A.D. 325

Despite the absence of documentary evidence, there is a strong tradition almost irrefutable that St. Thomas himself preached the Gospel in India in A.D. 52 and founded seven churches and ordained priests. The first report about the existence of a Christian church in South India is related to Pantaenes who is reported to have come to Malabar coast in the 2nd AD, in deference to a request to combat the propaganda of the Saivite savant Manicavachakar. A prelate named John is a signatory on behalf of the Indian church in the proceedings of the Niccan Creed.

22/02/19

b. The First Syrian Christian Migration

In A.D. 345, a group of Syrian Christians, led by a certain Bishop Josech and a leading merchant by name Themer of Kana, Uzlli 72 families of 7 tribes having 400 members migrated to Kerala from Edessa in Syria. The point to be the noted here is that Edessa was then under the patriarch of Antioch and this expedition had the sufferance and sanction of the supreme pontiff of Antoch. Since this episode, the Christians of South India came to the called 'Syrians'.

c. The Second Syran Christian Migration

From the 4th century onwards Christians in South India remained loyal and faithful to Antioch. A classical example of the relation between Kerala or Malankara and Antioch is revealed in the transfer of the relics of St. Thomas from India to authority of the Patriarch and of Antioch. In A.D. 822, two Syrian Bishops, Mar Solea and Mar Aphroth, with a group of migrants arrived at Kollam which was at that time an important trade centre of South Kerala. They were popularly known as 'kadishe' meaning saintly persons. Certain honours and privileges inscribed on copper plates were bestowed upon them only by the local rulers.

d) The 10th – 15th Centuries

The Travancore State Manuel vouches that the Syrian Christians in South India were under the spiritual supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch and that it continued till the end of the 15th C.

e) AD 1490 – 1599 period of Nestorian domination

Most probably from the middle of the 15th C downwards, Malankara Church began to get Persian help of the Nestorian fold. It seems that they dominated the Syrian Church seenario. Neverthless, Jacobitism could not be obliterated. The Synod of Diamper itself testifies that they were believers in Malankars, who venerated the Jacobite prelate Dioscoros and used West Syriac as the liturgical language in contra distinction from the Nestorians.

f) Period of Roman Catholic Denomination 1599 – 1653

On June 20th 1599, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Menezez convened the Synod of Diamper in order to bring the whole Syrian church under the supreme authority of Rome. There took place forceful conversion ; the Malankara church, suffered servitude. In 1650, the Archdecon of the Syrian Jacobite church appealed to the Patriarck of Antiock for deputing Bishops. Mar Ahatalla was accordingly sent to India. He arrived in Surat in 1653. The Jecobites even today hold that Mar Ahawalla was drowned at Cochin, by the machination of the Portuguese. Therefore, the Jacobites assembled at a place called Coman Cruz in 1653 near the Mattancherry port, and took the famous oath that they would have no more relation with the Roman Church.

g) Restoration of the relation with the throne Antioch

In response to frequent requests of the Malankara church, the Antiochian Patriarch deputed Mar Greegorian Jaleel of Jerusalem. He landed in Kerala in 1655. Thus the link between Antioch and Malankara that was broken for about a century and a half was restored. Mar Greegorius ordained the archdeacon for the entire Malankara with the title Mar Thoma I. Once again, the Malankara church became an integral part of the universal Syrian Orthodox church, adoping all its faith and traditions.

Faith and Tradition of the Jacobite Syrian Church

They are similarities to these observed by the Universal Syrian Orthodox church. Belief in the Holy Trinity, Jesus as the incarnate word, salvation history, the Nicene Creed, the seven saraments, Intercession to St. Mary, and saints, prayer for the departed, the three stages of Holy Orders, Apostolic succession from St. Peter, the first three ecumenical councils are some of the most important ones. Sundays and special feast days are called the days of the Lord (Moranayo). Traditionally there are nine such days. They are 1. Christmas 2. Baptism of Jesus in the temple. 3. Annunciation. 4. Transfiguration 5. Ascension of St. Mary. 6. Feast of St. Peter 7. Feast of St. Paul 8. Ascension of our Lord, 9. Feast of the cross. Other sacred days are St. Thomas Day, Passover, Christmas, Good Friday, Holy Saturday & Easter. Prayers are conducted facing East. Liturgy hours are

from dawn to dusk. There are five seasons of fasting with one made obligatory, besides Wednesdays & Fridays.

5. Liturgical Language

It is West Syriac. This is an off shoot of Aramaic, the spoken language of Jesus. Translation into provincial languages of liturgies of the holy scriptures have been undertaken by the church to cater to the needs of the time. The church has got used to Syriac and Syriac became its liturgical language.

Activities of the churches
Missionary work

JSC accords great importance to the propagation of the Gospel. The Evangelistic Association of the East is a missionary organization. Though under the church it has separate administrative set up. Its aim is to spread the gospel in rural and settlement areas. They have established churches, schools and orphanages in these regions. St. Paul's prayer fellowship and St. Paul's mission are two other associations of this genre. The church is directly involved in the propagation of the gospel at the Diocesan and Parish levels. With this aim in view, a convention is conducted during 26th to 30th of December every year.

Priestly formation

The theological seminary, situated at Udayagiri is a full fledged one, with all modern facilities. It is offering coaching to the B.D. level course of the Serampore University.

At present there are 95 students and 15 faculty members in the seminary. The publication has a seminary wing.

Spiritual organizations

The church has officially five spiritual organization. They are the clerical, Sunday School, Youth and Women Associations besides the Student Movement. The clerical association consists of the clergy of the church. The whole clergy of

the church meet once in five years and discuss matters of general interest affecting the clergy.

The large organization is the Sunday School Association – Now there are 610 Sunday Schools, 8500 teachers and nearly 75000 students. It functions in almost all the parish churches. The Youth Association has its branches in all the parishes. Besides spiritual work like the organizing of prayer meeting, and retreats much social work is also being effected by this organization. The Women's Association, named after St. Mary functions in every parish. The Jacobite Syrian Student Movement functions in various colleges and imparts Christian value and morals to the students.

Ecumenical relations

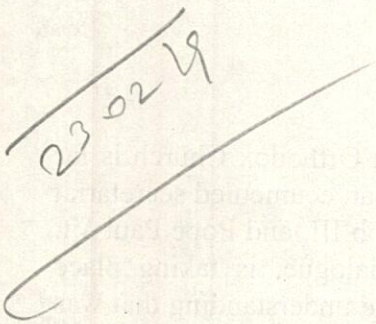
Compared to other orthedox churches the Syrian Orthodox Church is far ahead in ecumenical endeavours. There is in the church, an ecumenied secretariat promoting ecumenical communiqué by Patriarch Yokoob III, and Pope Paul VI. An illustratious example of ecumenical Thelogical dialogue, is taking place between the RCC and the JSC. One fruitful fall out is the understanding that was reached on intermarriage of the members of the two churches. The relations in the Mar Thome Syrian church, the church of the East, CSI, Malabar Independent church, Thezhiyoor are being built up on a positive note. The JSC actually co-operates in the other ecumenical bodies like the WCC, NCC, KCC, ECC, SEERI etc.

Administrative set up and statistics

The administrative set up is built on a three tier bases, on a hierarchical structure. At the lowest level in the parish; just above is the diocese. Over and above is the church as a whole. The general body of the whole church is a representative body, called the Jacoble Syrian Christian Association. It elects a managing committee, and the main office bearers like the Metropolitam Trustee, the clerical & lay trustees and a lay secretary.

An elected body called the working committee functions as the cabinet of the church. This administrative arrangement is effected through a diocese set up

so much so the church is divided into a number of dioceses, with a presiding and an auxillary Bishop. The general body of the diocese consists of the representatives for parishes and it elects a diocesan council. The administration of the parish church is passed in general body. In practice, the parish council is a semi independent Trust in all temporal matters. This democracy is dovetailed to espiscopacy. This becomes evident as the Epicopal Synod alone has the authority to take decisions regarding matters of faith, order and discipline. So the JSC may be predicted as an classical example of the harmonious blend of congregationalism and episcopacy.



ASPECTS OF IDEAS OF CLEAN AND UNCLEAN AMONG THE BRAHMINS, THE JEWS, AND ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS OF KERALA

George Menachery

Comparison is often made between the customs and traditions of the Thomas Christians and the Jews[1] on the one hand, and between those of the Thomas Christians and the Brahmins (i.e. the Nampoothiri or Malayalee Brahmins)[2] on the other.

This paper attempts, adhering to the spirit of the theme of this conference, viz. ***to study the Syro-Judaic tradition vis-a-vis the traditions of the ancient Syrian Christian Churches of India and Kerala existing in a Hindu Milieu,*** to outline aspects of the idea of "Clean and Unclean" among the Brahmins, the Jews, St. Thomas Christians or Nazranies as they are often designated, and to examine the common traits in these three sets of customs and beliefs on the above.

The overriding concern for "Cleanliness" -more importantly the desire to avoid pollution-dominates, or used to dominate, the ritual and daily life of all these three communities to the detriment of comfort, convenience, and even the unhampered pursuit of the common activities of the vast majority of people around them, and even stands frequently in the way of showing consideration, nay even common courtesy to others.

To study the prevalence of ideas of "Clean and Unclean" (Shuddham and Ashuddham) among the Brahmins the writer has mainly depended on the works and precepts of the sages[3] and elders of the community and of kindred communities as well as on the few works of an anthropological nature that exist independently or as part of general historical works[4]; for the Jews the OT, the NT and the various commentaries were chiefly made use of; and for the Thomas Christians in addition to the few scattered remarks that deal with the matter in well-known works[5], the personal experience of the writer and the knowledge

gathered from parents, grandparents, and other elders, and from the observation of the conscious and unconscious behaviour of the members of the community have been made use of.

There is a vast fund of material that deals with these issues scattered in a plethora of works which aught to be systematically tapped, not just in a paper like this, but at least by way of a doctoral thesis or two[6], and the earlier such detailed studies are undertaken, and more scientifically, the more will be the material available to investigate, both in the form of documents and living customs, and in the form of personnel in the know who are still in our midst.

Before launching into a study of the ideas about "Clean and Unclean" among these communities it would be profitable to take a quick look at the similarities that exist in their other more well known customs, practices, and beliefs. As this assembly is made up of Christians mainly, and as we are meeting in a predominantly Hindu locality let us commence by comparing the Christian customs and Brahmin customs first, bearing in mind the special relationship Kerala Brahmins have always had with west coastal Brahmins of the Konkan Coast, rather than with Paradesi or Tamil Brahmins[7]. The similarities in the customs of Kerala Brahmins and Bengali Brahmins also have been noticed by certain scholars.[8] The following are only a few of the points of comparison between the general customs of the so-called Syrian Christians[9] or Thomas Christians and the customs of the Kerala Brahmins. As the consensus among modem scholars of Kerala history, like Dr. M.G.S. Narayanan and Dr.Veluthatt Kesavan is that the Nambuthiri Brahmins arrive in Kerala only many centuries after the existence of Christian communities there it is quite possible that many of the customs and manners of the latter were imitated or borrowed by the former.[10] The similarities outlined below are only indicative, and not exhaustive.

In both communities, i.e. Kerala Christians and Kerala Brahmins, women wear predominantly white dresses only. Among Brahmins of the East Coast only widows use white dress. Otherwise dark reds, blues, greens etc. are used by Brahmin women outside Kerala.

For both communities, Kerala Christians and Kerala Brahmins, piercing the nose for nasal ornaments is taboo. For all Brahmin women elsewhere nasal ornaments are customary.

Architecture of residential houses of Upper Caste Hindus and Christians was almost identical, both residing in Nalukettu and Ettukettu houses, respectively having one inner courtyard surrounded by four {nalu) halls (cf. Span, courtyard - patio-; Ital. cortile, Rom. Atrium), and having two inner courtyards surrounded by eight {ettu) halls.[11]

Architecture of churches and temples was alike. Cf. *Temple Architecture of Kerala,* Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum, and Andrews Athappilly, *"Church Architecture of Kerala*", STCEI, II, 1973, as also id. James Menachery, *"Thomas Christian Architecture"*. Remember how Vasco da Gama and company mistook a temple for a church and worshipped Kali or Bhagavathy thinking it was Our Lady (Blessed Virgin Mery). To avoid the similarity between the temple and the church the Portuguese introduced the "facade" in Kerala churches as an extension of the wall separating the nave or Hykala from the portico or Mukhamandapam of the church. Also see the hundreds of photographs by this writer - in the STCEIW (1973) and the *Indian Church History Classics,* Vol. I, The Nazranies (1998).

Both in front of many churches (e.g. Kallooppara, Niranam, Kundra, Chengannur), and the majority of temples there are rock (granite) lampstands [photos by the present writer in The Nazranies &STCEI II & Pallikkalakalum Mattum; *the Trichur (Arch)diocesan Centenary Volume* (articles and pictures by the present writer) and the CBCI 2004 *Trichur Volume* (articles and pictures by the present writer).

In front of both churches and temples are flagstaffs are installed. (See 2.05)

Both communities are patriarchal, unlike the family system of the Sudras (Nairs) who follow the matriarchal system.

Both communities hold menstruation and delivery to be occasions of pollution, demanding elaborate ablutions and purificatory ceremonies.

Both communities have many customs connected with child birth (e.g. feeding the babe with powdered gold and honey). In the eleventh month the child is ceremoniously fed with rice for the first time. Mangoose teeth and panther toes worked in gold were part of the children's ornaments.

Ceremonies connected with marriage like ceremonial baths, Manthrakodi or Pudava (bridal cloth or veil), Thali or Minnu - the gold ornament signifying marriage tied by the groom adorning the bride's neck until "death do them part" - are all to be found / among the Brahmins and the Christians in an identical style. Similarly death and funeral ceremonies like Pula, keeping legal defilement for a certain number of days, Shradham or the several feasts in memory of the dead were common to these communities.

The above are only a few comparisons brought out here but there are several more customs, common to these two communities of Christians and Brahmins alone.

Similarly there are a number of general customs and manners common to the Judaic and Thomas Christian traditions. Here one must note the existence of a particular community of Syrian Christians or Thomas Christians who trace their descend to Thomas Kinai or Cana or K'nai and his party. Naturally Jewish customs are more prevalent in that community of Knanaya Christians than among the vast majority of Thomas Christians. However as many Jewish and *Old Testament* customs are to be met with in Christianity all over the world here one might be content merely to enumerate a few customs found commonly among the Jews and the Thomas Christians in general.

The Thomas Christians abstained from work on feasts and on Sundays. This abstention may be compared to the Jewish abstention from work on the Sabbath. Maffeus says: When the sun sets they [Thomas Christians] could work on Sundays, because Monday is then begun."[12] Again Fr. Jerome: "In the same way, also on Sunday evening they can work"[13] Gouvea's words are similar: "They may work after sunset (on Sundays), because it is already Monday".[14] Fr.

Paolino of St. Bartholomeo writes: "The feast began at the first vespers of the feast, in such a way that in that hour they used to close all the shops and end all day's work. They do not start them again until after the second vespers."[15]

The similarity in the celebration of the Pascal feast between the Jewish customs[16] and the Kerala Christian customs is noteworthy. In this there was very little difference between the Knanaya community and the other Thomas Christian communities. "Though a Pascal lamb is not used, certain elements of this meal allude to the Jewish Passover, as, for instance, the unleavened bread, the wine ["milk"], the time of the meal, the ordinary supper preceding, the standing position, the respect and reverence pervading the scene, the annual commemoration of the wonderful works of God, the bitter herbs, almsgiving, and the singing of hymns."[17]

Both communities are seen to use mostly Biblical names for their children. Names from the *Old Testament* are quite common, such as Abraham (Avara, Avarachan), Issac (Ithakku), Jacob (James, Chacko, Chakkunny, Chakkappan, Yakkob) and Joseph (Ouseph).[18] According to Ludovico di Varthema, "They use four names, John, James, Matthew, and Thomas."[19] However George is the most popular Christian name among the Nazranies today.[20]

Leaving aside for the moment the consideration of common GENERAL customs among these three communities of Jews, Namboothiries, and St. Thomas Christians let us take up the study of a few specific customs related to the idea of "Clean and Unclean" and find out how far these customs were prevalent in the said communities and with what degree of universality, and variations, if any.

This is all the more relevant in the light of the accusation at times made against modern day Christians of Kerala by Caste i.e. "high caste" Hindus of Kerala that the Christians are not sufficiently conscious of cleanliness - in their eating habits, dressing habits, and even in the matter of keeping their body and habitat clean. It would be interesting to examine the validity of this accusation and to note who was responsible for this decline in the Cleanliness fade among the Christians, which is so very characteristic of the Kerala Brahmins, and what led to this decline if any.

There are innumerable customs and practices connected with "Clean and Unclean" among the Nampoothiries, and a good number of such among the Jews. Among the Thomas Christians in times gone by, most of such customs and practices among the Nampoothiri Brahmins and those among the Jews were both in vogue together, making them perhaps the most "Clearest" community in the whole world.

In note 3 below are listed the 64 special rules for Kerala Brahmins, most of which dealing with the practice of "cleanliness", Shudham. In addition to these there are many other customs that are given sanctity and sanction and the status of law as a result of long and strict practice. In fact the very life of the Kerala Brahmin is made "Hell"[21] literally by these rules, regulations, and conventions regarding "Clean and Unclean". In addition to this, there is the strict observance of Ayitham[22] which is much more than mere untouchability. All these codes of behaviour were more or less strictly adhered to by the Syrian Christians also.[23]

The occasions on a single day when the Nampoothiri Brahmin must necessarily wash oneself or bathe are innumerable. And this bathing has to be performed not by standing under a shower, or by pouring water over oneself with a mug, but only by immersing oneself in water - in a pond, a tank, or a river. The Brahmin must bathe before cooking. Braahmanans, desirous of purity ("Suddhi") ["CIeanliness"] shall bathe if they touch a "Soodran", etc. And it must be remembered that Soodran (a member of the fourth caste - the Soodras) denotes not outcastes, but caste Hindus like Nairs, Menons, and all or at least large portions of Pillais, Panickers, and even Ambalavasis or Temple-Castes like Variers, Pisharatis, Marars etc. The duty of the Sudra community was to serve the other three castes - Brahmins, Kshathrias, and Vaisyas. In Kerala these services are extended to domestic help in the houses of upper castes by both the men and women of this fourth caste, and even the performance by Soodra women - the duties of a concubine in the unique sexual relationship prevalent in Kerala is euphemistically called Sambandham.[24]

There are many other occasions when the Brahmin must ritually and otherwise bathe. It would be tedious to describe the dozens of occasions and circumstances that would necessitate bathing by the Kerala Brahmin, for example

as a result of touching or seeing, or coming near people belonging to lower castes.[25]

Bathing, especially ritual bathing is found often prescribed for the Jews in the Old Testament.
"Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of my presence, and tell them to take a ritual bath." (Ex. 29.4)

"The person shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and have a bath; he will then be ritually clean...on the seventh day he shall again shave his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and all the rest of the hair on his body, he shall wash his clothes and have a bath and then he will be ritually clean." (Lev. 14.8-9)

Thomas Christians were always as much addicted to washing their bodies as the Brahmins or the Jews or even more so. In spite of the decrees of the Synod of Diamper and the efforts of the missionaries the Thomas Christian could hardly reconcile himself to any laxity in the matter of cleanliness. All Christians in the villages continued to observe the strictest rules that obtained among the Brahmins in matters of cleanliness and caste distinctions even till very recent times, as this writer could assert from his own experiences in and about the inhabitants of the villages of Kattur, Meloor, Chalakkudy, Ollur, Mala, Kallettumkara, Edakkulam, Chengalur, ect.in the present day revenue districts of Thrissur and Ernakulam.

The following Decree of the Synod of Diamper(Action VIII, Decree XIII. Cf. *The book of Geddes* in the ICHC, Ed. George Menachery, p.91) throws much light on how far the Christians adhered to ritual cleanliness:

"The Synod doth very much condemn what some...imagine, viz. That if they do not wash their Bodies betimes in the Morning on a Fastday, their Fast will be of no worth; and that if they happen to touch any of a base Race, or a Naires, they must wash themselves to make their Fast to be of any Merit; and declares that all such Washings and Superstitious touches, are commanded neither by God nor by the Church..."

However the old customs died first in towns and townships, as a result of English education and contact with Westerners and their ways. The habit of

taking bath for various reasons and of washing legs, hands, etc. quite often was fully prevalent during this writer's childhood and even boyhood, and was a big headache and nuisance and even a burden. There were ponds or huge wells with steps leading down in the compound of all notable families, where the river was far away. A number of Kindies or a vessel with a spout or nozzle-like side tube to pour water was always available which was used to wash one's feet whenever climbing into the corridor or verandah of the house after walking outside. The latrines were separate structures during my childhood, always at a great distance from the house.

Ayitham or untouchability, a sort of total segregation of a member of the lower caste, from a Brahmin in the form of Thottukoodayma or Theendikkoodayma was one of the strongest practices that has now more or less - only more or less - disappeared from Kerala, but after a very long and bitter struggle. Seeing the extreme forms Ayitham or untouchability, "unseeability", and unapproachability as practised in Kerala, Swami Vivekananda was forced to call Kerala a "Lunatic Asylum".

The custom of Ayitham or untouchability or segregation among the Jews is evident from these words of Peter.

He (i.e. Peter) said to them, "You yourselves know very well that a Jew is not allowed by his religion to visit or associate with Gentiles". (Acts 10.28)
Paul also concurs:

And so the Lord says, "You must leave them and separate yourselves from them. Have nothing to do with what is unclean, and I will accept you". (2Cor 6.17) And Paul goes on to add:" So then, let us purify ourselves from everything that makes **body** or soul unclean".

In the same chapter v.14 says: "Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners?"

The practice of Ayitham as it existed among the Thomas Christians, and as it continued to exit even till recently with some intensity, can be understood

from the enactments of the synod of Dianmper of 1599. To quote a little extensively

"The synod being informed, that in some parts when any one of the baser sort do but touch the Cisterns of Christians, that Christians do Disempolear or purify them, by perfoming certain ceremonies (the Synod) with great rigour command those that make the said Disempoleamento of Purification to be thrown out of the communion of the church, and to be denied Casture and to be punished with the penalties". (Act IX, Decre III of the 1599 Synod of Diamper)[26]

For Christians as to the Brahmins Nairs being Sudras was an untouchable caste, though some European writers have described the Nairs as Noblemen and so on.[27] Cf. Decree II of Act IX of the said Synod makes it clear and His Grace tries to combine religion with material benefit. He allows Christians to practise untouchability or Ayitham and to pretend to go by the existing customs of segregation, but not to perform the ritual bath after the pollution caused by going near or touching Nairs and lower caste persons if it would not come to the attention of the king and the elite! "Therefore the Synod doth command all that shall be found guilty of forbearing to touch such [Nairs], or having touched them, shall wash themselves, to be severely punished as Superstitious followers of the Heathen Customs, and commands the Preachers and Confessors to admonish them thereof in their Sermons and Confessions."

In the same Decree when the Synod is advising the Christians not to shun or steer clear of others who are Christians it is also indirectly pleading the cause of the Yavanas who were often considered Mlechas by caste Hindus and were untouchables for the native Christians too.

The undermentioned are a few points taken into consideration which are more related practices prevalent among the Christians and to draw some parallels between those and the Jewish or Brahmin customs.

The Synod doth condemn the Custom, or abuse that has obtained in this Diocese of the newly married couples not going to Church till fourth day after their Marriage, when they use to Wash themselves, which is according to the

Judaical Ceremonies condemned by the Law of Christ..." (Action VII, Decree XVI, Geddes, ICHCl, Ed. Menachery, p.89)

Heathen Musicians to be kept out of the church. Hence Kottupuras as at Kuravilangad and Palai.Geddes, Ed. Menachery, p.74.

"Faithful Christians must not only avoid the Ceremonies and Superstitions of the Heathens, but the Judaical Rites and Ceremonies also, the Synod though it doth very much commend the Holy Custom of carrying Children to Church forty days after they are born,...; nevertheless it condemns the separating of Women for the said forty days after the birth of a Male, as if they were unclean ...and eighty days after the birth of a Female; both of which are Jewish Ceremonies, that are now abrogated..." (Geddes, Ed. Menachery ICHCI, p.96, Decree V)

"Whereas the Synod is informed that the meaner sort of people are much better disposed to receive Faith than the Naires, or Nobles, and being extremely desirous to find some way whereby such well disposed people may be made Christians, so as to assemble together with the old Christians, as to why should they not, since they all adore the same God,...and conferred about the most proper methods for effecting of it...we have not been able to find any that are effectual..." *(DecreeXXXVI, Geddes,* Ed. Menachery, ICHCI, p.95). It is suggested that this is not done in order not to displease the Heathen Kings, "who would correspond with us no longer to the loss of the Trade and Commerce we do at present maintain with them". To overcome such problems the Synod suggests that "and the Prelate shall be advised thereof, that he may give order for the building of distinct Churches for them" (i.e. the meaner sort of People), "and in case they have not a church to themselves, they shall then hear Mass outside the doors in the Porch," etc. Geddes, p.95>AC.

As has been shown here again and again the overriding concern for "Cleanliness" dominates, or used to dominate, the ritual and daily life of the three communities ie Thomas Christians, Kerala Brahmins, and Jews from the earliest times. Many more examples could be given from the Holy Scripture (for the Jews), from works by Hindu scholars (for the Brahmins) and from tradition and practices (for the Christians). There is much to be said about the similarity in the

attitudes of these communities with regard to clean and unclean animals, uncleanness as a result of death, corpse, and funeral, dirts like mildew, cleaning of pots and vessels, skin diseases, bodily discharges including wet dreams and bowel movement and urination, sexual practices, and so on and so forth.

It is interesting to know that a research was conducted on the DNA of various communities from West Coast, Middle East, testing blood samples in Hyderabad and abroad. The results of the research astonishingly revealed that the Namboothries, the Jews and the Thomas Christians all have the same DNA components. Hence a deeper study and investigations may bring out lots of surprising truths to the limelight.

It has been often suggested that the West Coast Brahmins were the result of conversion from Dravidian Stock or Semitic Stock. The deep-rooted common customs about Clean and Unclean found in these three communities surely indicate something more than what one meets with naked eye, especially the fact that Brahmins are found in Kerala much later than the Christians, and they attain predominance in Kerala only around the 9th -10th Century CE, after the decline of the power of the Christians. (Cf. My essay, *"Christianity is Older than Hinduism in Kerala", in Glimpses of Nazraney Heritage* and elsewhere).

The theory that the caste Hindus of Kerala separate themselves from Christians only at the time of *the Syrian Christian Copper Plate Grants of Tharisappalli* as (849 CE) put forward by Mr.M. J. Morris of Quilon deserves a little more attention.

Notes

1. Vide Vellian, Jacob, *"A Jewish Christian Community", The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India,* Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, Ed. George Menachery, p.73 ff.; Mathew, E. P., *"The Knanaya Community of Kerala"*, id., ibid.; id., *"The Malankara Syrian Knanaya Christian Community"*, Jacob Stephen; Koder, S., *"History of the Jews of Kerala"*, id., pp.183 - 185. All the above articles have been reproduced in the *Thomapedia*, Ed. Prof. George Menachery, Ollur, 2000. Also cf. the many related papers in St. Thomas

Christians and Nambudiris, Jews, and *Sangam Literature*: *A Historical Appraisal*, Ed. Bosco Puthur, LRC Publications, *Mt. St. Thomas, Kochi, 2003.*

2. Cf: Placid Podipara, *"Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", in The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India,* Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, Ed. George Menachery, pp.107 - 112; *"Malabar Christian Customs and Manners"*, reproduced in The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India, Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, Ed. George Menachery, pp.126 -127 from D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar, Vol.1*, Bangalore, 1939; STCEl, II, *"Culture and Traditions of the Thomas Christians"*, Joseph Kolengaden, pp.127 - 131; STCEI, II, *"Character and Life Style of Thomas Christians"* by Alexander Cherukarakkunnel, pp. 131 -133. [The writings mentioned in notes 1 & 2 contain much bibliographical information for the topics dealt with, q.v..]

3. Listed below are, the 64 practices and customs ("Anaachaarams") believed to have been established by Sankaraachaaryar (788 - 820 AD) specially for the Malayaala Braahmanans or the Namboothiries of Kerala. Since these are not followed anywhere else, they are called "Anaachaatams" or non-conventions. The following list has been chiefly copied from the Nampoothiri website for convenience, the # sign and the signs have been added by the present writer, as also a few English words in parenthesis inside square brackets in order to make the meaning a little clearer perhaps. Also cf. the list appearing in the three volume *Travancore State Manual* edited by V. Nagam Aiya, Trivandrum, 1906, at pp. 267 - 271, Vol. Ill, Ch. IX, where under "Caste" *Keralacharams* as distinct from East Coast customs of Brahmins are listed with annotations and discussed. Recently Dr. M. G. S. Narayanan has observed that these Anaacharams and caste observances could have been prescribed by some later Sankaraacharyar ("Introduction", Menachery, George, Glimpses ofNazraney Heritage, Ollur, 2005):

Do not use twigs (a common practice elsewhere) for brushing teeth.

During the daily bath, do not bathe with the clothes worn till then.

Do not use the clothes worn till bath for wiping the body after bath (as a towel).

Do not bathe before sunrise.

Do not cook before bathing.

Do not use water stored (drawn from well) on the previous day for the next day's use. While performing daily rites, do not seek any results, be detached.

Excess water after "Soucham" [washing after using the latrine], "Aachamanam" ("Kaalukazhukal") [washing the feet], etc. shall not be used for other purposes.

Braahmanans, desirous of purity ("Suddhi")["Cleanliness"] shall bathe if they touch "Soodran", etc.

Bathe if lower caste persons come close.

Bathe (in a different pond), if the water in a pond is touched, and if the same has been touched earlier by a lower caste person.

Bathe upon stepping on the ground which has been swept with broom, but has not been sprinkled with water.

"Bhasmam" (ash), etc. are to be smeared first vertically once and then horizontally in three lines.

Braahmanans while performing rituals, shall chant "Manthrams" themselves.

Do not use previous day's food.

"Echil"(leftover food) of even children shall not be eaten by pious Braahmanans. Food items ("Nivedyam") offered to Lord Sivan are not to be consumed.

Food served with hand shall not be eaten.

Buffalo milk and ghee prepared from it shall not be used for religious rituals.

Rice shall be eaten only in the form of balls ("urula"), but such balls shall not be kept in the leaf as leftover.

If one is polluted in any form ("Asudhham") [defiled, polluted], even betel-chewing is prohibited.

A "Brahmachaari" (boy during the period between Upanayanam and Samaavarthanam) shall observe "Nishthha" and "Vratham".

"Gurudakshina" (appropriate offerings to the teacher) must be given after completing the study of Vedam.

Vedam shall not be recited on the streets.

"Shodasakarmams" shall be performed during the prescribed periods. Girls shall not be sold.

"Vrathams" shall not be observed with the expectation of any results in mind.

Women who touch another woman in period, shall have to bathe before eating. Braahmanans shall not spin thread.

Braahmanans shall not do the work of washermen.

Only Braahmanans are permitted to perform Siva Pooja on "Rudraaksham" (seed of the plant Eloeocarpus ganitrus), etc.

Braahmanans shall not receive "Sraadhha Dakshina" (ritual offer on the death anniversary) from a "Soodran".

Braahmanans shall perform "Sraadhham" of their father's and mother's parents. Sraadhham shall be performed on every "Amaavaasi" (new moon) day. Upon the father's or mother's death, one shall observe "Deeksha" for one year.

At the end of Deeksha on the 12th month, "Sapindi" shall be performed. If "Pula" or Asoucham comes during the Sapindi period, wait till Pula is over. Sraadhham day is reckoned based on the star of the month ("Nakshathram").

Children after being given for adoption to another family, shall perform Sraadhham of their own parents.

Cremation shall be in own land. "Samnyaasi" (Saint) shall not look at women. "Samnyaasi" shall not perform Pindam nor Sraadhham. No ritual is performed when a Samnyaasi dies.

A Braahmana woman shall not look at any man other than her husband, father, grandfather or their brothers on either side.

Antharjanams (Namboothiri women) shall not move out of the house without a maid.

They shall wear only white dress.

They shall not pierce the nose.

"Bhrashtu" (excommunication) is imposed on a Braahmanan who consumes alcohol. "Bhrashtu" is imposed also if he sleeps with any other Braahmana woman. "Pretham" (spirit) [ghost] shall not be consecrated in temples.

The idols in temples ("Deva Prathishthha") shall not be touched by "Soodrans", etc.

Offerings made to one god shall not again be offered to another god.

Marriages and other "Karmams" shall not be performed without "Homam".

Braahmanans shall not bless each other, for, they are equals.

They shall also not prostrate before each other.

Do not sacrifice cows.

Saiva, Vaishnava and other such distinctions shall not exist.

Only one "Poonool" (Yajnopaveetham, sacred thread) should be worn by Braahmanans even after marriage.

Only the eldest son in the family shall marry an Antharjanam.

Sraadhham shall be performed using rice only. Non-Braahmanans are not eligible to enter into Samnyaasam.

"Kshathriyans" and others shall perform Sraadhham for maternal uncles, since they follow matrilineal system.

A woman whose husband is dead, shall enter into Samnyaasam.

Braahmana women shall follow "Paathivrathyam" (chastity) strictly, but are prohibited from performing "Sathi" (immolation on husband's funeral pyre).

These are the primary customs prescribed by Bhaargavan. But Bhaargava Smruthi contains a large number of less important practices ("Aachaarams")- "

4. Vide, e.g., the lengthy and detailed study by K. P. Padbanabha Menon, *History of Kerala, Vol. I*, Ernakulam, 1924, Ed. T. K. K. Menon, *Notes on Letter* 1, (5) *"Descent of Namburi Brahmins"*, pp.20 -22; (8) *"Advent of Brahmins"*, pp.76 -83. Also cf. entries in the two editions of the *Travancore State Manual,* one edited by Nagam Aiya in three Volumes (Trivandrum, 1906), and the other by T. K. Velu Pillai in four Volumes (Trivandrum, 1940).
5. Such as the works mentioned in note 3 supra.
6. The writer is not forgetting the few theses that already exist on related topics.

7. Reference may be made to the doctoral thesis of Dr. Veluthatt Kesavan and his recent paper for a seminar at Mt. St. Thomas, Kakkanad, *"The Nambudiri Community: A History"* , reproduced in St. Thomas Christians and Nambudiris, *Jews, and Sangam Literature: A Historical Appraisal,*Ed. Bosco Puthur, LRC Publications, Kochi, 2003. Another paper, by Dr. M. G. S. Narayanan *on the Nambudiri migrations* also is printed in the same volume. Both papers refer to the special relationship that existed and exists between the Konkan Brahmins and the Kerala Brahmins, i.e. the Nambuthiries.

8. Vide, e.g., the lengthy and detailed study by Dr. L. A. Ravi Varma, *"Castes of Malabar"* in the Kerala Society Papers, [General Editor: T. K. Joseph] Series 9, 1932, alias Vol. II, 1997 reprint, Thiruvananthapuram, Gazateers Dept., Govt. of Kerala, pp.171 - 204.

9. Syrian Christians of Malabar or Kerala are Christians who use East Syriac as the language of their liturgy (the Syro Malabarians), or later on commencing with the arrival of Mar Gregorios of Jerusalem (1665?) West Syriac also (the Orhodox, the Jacobites, and now the Syro- Malankarites). The term does not carry any biological connotation except perhaps for the Knanaya Christians.

10. For a detailed discussion cf. Essay One: *"Christianity Older than Hinduism in Kerala"*, George Menachery, Glimpses of Nazraney Heritage, Ollur, 2005. This essay may be read with slight variations in the *Satna Diocesan Jubilee Seminar Papers,* 1999; in the World Syriac Conference 2001 papers, reproduced by SEERI in the HARP, Kottayam; in the *Journal of St. Thomas Christians,* Rajkot, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2004, pp.33 - 42; in the Light of Life, New York, N. Y.; and now in *the Souvenir of the Seminar Conference on the History of Early Christianity in India,* Concordia University, New York, 13th - 16th Aug., 2005.

11. *"Thomas Christian Architecture"*, Menachery James (Dr. E. J.) in STCEI, II, Ed. G. Menachery, 1973, see section *Domestic Architecture* pp. 148 - 149; Menachery, George, Pallikkalakalum Mattum, Trichur, 1984; Menachery, George, *Pallikalile Kala, Mathrubhoomi* Weekly, March 28, [with forty illustrations], Kozhikode, 1978; for plans of Thomas Christian Naalukettu (Ollur) and Ettukettu (Kattur) see *Thanima*, September, 2005, Alwaye.

12. Joseph Pascal Neelankavil, *"Feasts of the Thomas Christians,"* article in STCEI 11, Ed. George Menachery, Trichur, 1973, p.113, rt. col.; alias *The Thomapedia,* Ollur, 2000, 113 >g.

13. Id., ibid.

14. Id., ibid.

15. Id., ibid.

16. "The feast of the Passover is celebrated by Jews in memory of their deliverance from Egypt in the time of Pharaoh Rameses II. It is a feast lasting a week in the spring, and during that time the only bread Jews can eat is Matzah, or unleavened bread. Matzah was the bread baked by the Hebrews in the Sinai desert during the Exodus. Wheat flour is mixed with water but without the addition of yeast. When the mixture is baked the loaf is flat, or unleavened.

    The Passover celebration begins with a meal which is called the Seder. This is an important meal, and Jews bring out the best silver, china and glass. Care is also taken with the choice of wine.

    During the meal the family reads from a special book, the Haggadah, or Passover book. This is a kind of play in which members of the family take parts, and the story is the story of the original Passover." *The Wonderful Story of the Jews,* Plantagenet Somerset Fry, Purnell, London, 1970, p.15.

17. Jacob Vellian, *"A 'Jewish Christian' Community",* article in STCEI'II, Ed. George Menachery, Trichur, 1973, p.74, rt. col.; alias *The Thomapedia,* Ollur, 2000, 74<e.

18. Id., ibid.

19. *Ludovico di Varthema,* quoted by G. T. Mackenzie, Christianity in Travancore, reproduced in ICHC, I, *The Nazranies,* Ed. Prof. George Menachery, Ollur, 1998, p. 130 cited in Hakluit Society's Publication, 1863.

20. The Christian name most common today among Thomas Christians is George, i.e. its variations like Gevarghese, Varghese, Varu, Vareed, Varunny...Coincidently George happens to be the name of the patron saint of England. Paradoxically the Christian name most popular in England is Thomas, as this writer discovered in 1975 while examining the English

census reports in the British Museum (British) Library as in Thomas Becket, Thomas More, Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Cromwell...Thomas being the benefactor of King Alfred the Great of England, the only king designated as great in that country. It will be interesting to study how two names popular in the east became names in the greatest demand in England. That by way of digression.

21. Kaanippaiyoor Shankaran Nampoothirippadu, *Ente Smaranakal (My Recollections),* Malayalam, Panchangam Book Stall, Kunnamkulam, 1963: Chapter 15, "Vattum Echilum" (Dirtiness of Boiled Rice and the Dirtiness of Left-Overs); Chapter 18, "Shuddhashuddham" (Clean-Unclean).

22. Id., Chapter 21, "Aiyitham" (Untouchability, Unseeability, &c).

23. See for example articles by Ferroli, Podipara, Kolengaden, Cherukarakkunnel &c. in the St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India, Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, Ed. George Menachery referred to in note 2 supra.

24. Sambandham became an indispensable part of Kerala way of life as a result of the custom among the Namputhiri community permitting only the eldest son to marry from one's own community. While this custom preserved all Brahmin property in the same family - and all land in Kerala either belonged to the Brahmin (Brahmaswam) or to the temple (Devaswam) -from generation to generation, the younger members of the family could not marry Antharjanams or Brahmin women and had to be accommodated otherwise to satisfy their natural urges. The importance of a Nair woman often depended upon the number and quality of her nightly visitors. Often this Sambandham, emotionally though perhaps not legally, attained the status or attributes of a regular marriage.

25. For dozens of customs and rules regarding "Clean and Unclean" among the Nampoothiries no better authority could be cited than Kanippayyoor Shankaran Nampoothirippadu whose books like *Ente Smaranakal* (autobiographical work with much information on castes, laws and practices of pollution and ablutions), Naayanmaarude Poorvacharithram *(Early History of Nairs) I and II*, Elamkulathinte NambooriShshakaram *(A critique of Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai's criticism of Brahmin customs)* are recommended (all published by Panchangam Book Stall, Kunnamkulam). To

understand the real social and religious place and position of each community like Nampoothiries, Nairs, Pisharotis, Variers, Marars, Menons, Ezhavas, Thiyyas, Pulayas, Paraiahs etc., the autobiography (Jecirthapatha) of the late Communist leader Cherukadu will be very useful. It is very difficult to understand the status of a community vis-a-vis other communities without the help of these or similar frank autobiographies because most communities from Ambalavaasis to Nairs to Ezhavas to Ezhuthachans to Pulayas to Mulayas to Paraiahs generally try to keep these caste distinctions and customs hidden from others, especially in these modern times.

26. Michael Geddes, *A Short History of the Church of Malabar together with the Synod of Diamper,* London, 1694, p.96 in the SARAS edition in *The Indian Church History Classics, Vol.1, The Nazranies,* Ed. Prof. George Menachery, Ollur, 1998. This first book on the Malabar Christians in the English language may also be read in Vol.11 of Hough.

27. Cf. Works by Kanippayyoor Sankaran Nampoothirippadu and Cherukaadu, vide note 25 supra. The Nairs appear in Kerala's history only after the 11th century CE, and from the time of their appearance they are Sudras serving the other three castes, and as the Christians were equal to or only just next to the Brahmins the Nairs were their Dasas or a sort of glorified servant class. But as time went on, with the attainment of Marthanda Varma to sovereignty in Travancore, and with the custom of the kings of Cochin accepting Nair women as their "wives" ("concubines" in Dutch records), and with the increase in the clout of the Zamorins, and the decline of the Nampoothiries, the Nair classes began to assume the cultural legacy of the Nampoothiries. And as the Christians became more and more westernized they lost their say in matters of Kerala culture and aristocracy. More than the harm brought about by the so-called Latinising efforts of the Portuguese it was this de-culturation of the Nazranies that led to the decline of Christians in all spheres of Kerala life.

ST. THOMAS IN THE CHRISTIAN FOLKLORE OF KERALA

Jacob Vellian

The Christians of Kerala foster three folklore for performing arts. They are

1. *Margamkali*; a male dance among the Syrians; especially among the Knanites.
2. *Chavuttunadakam*, a western type drama used by the Latin Order Christians.
3. *Paricahmuttukali*, a gladiatorial dance with swords and shields practiced by the Hindus, Muslims the Syrian Christians and the Latin Order Christians.

There are three main folklore which sing out the story of St. Thomas.

They are

1. *Margamkali*
2. *Ramban pattu*, and
3. *Thomaparvam*

Margamkali

The Malayalam term *margamkali* means "the play" (kali) of "the way" (margam).The term margam is Biblical: Hebrew and ***"hodos"*** in Greek. Thus, there is reference to "the way" in Acts 9:2 "He found many belonging to the way", Acts 18:25 "instructed in the way of the Lord". Generally speaking, "the way" is Christian faith and religion. In Malayalam to join Christianity is rendered *"margam cheruka"*, and those converts to Christianity are called *"marga vasikal"*. Hence, margamkali is a play in which the story about Christ and Christianity is portrayed.

In fact the songs of *margamkali* sung during dance are based on the theme of an ancient Syriac apocryphal called "*Acts of Thomas*" written in the third century in Syria. It is believed that in the early part of the third century a basilica was erected in Edessa, where the relics of St. Thomas, the apostle were kept, after having been brought from the tomb of the Apostle St. Thomas in Mylapore, India. This book consisting of the Apostolate of St. Thomas and his martyrdom in India was composed most likely for the benefit of the pilgrims who came to the shrine of St. Thomas to venerate his relics.

The Malayalam rendering of the story of St. Thomas based on the Syriac text was adapted to the Kerala situation. There, instead of the reference to the King Gundaphor of North India, the Malayalam text has the reference to the King of Chozha Empire situated in South India. It is this King who wanted to get a skilled carpenter to build a beautiful and prestigious palace for himself at par with Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The King sent his minister to Jerusalem where Jesus appeared and entrusted Thomas with the task of building the palace. Instead of building the earthly palace, the Apostle helped the poor with resources given by the King, and preached "the way" of Lord Jesus to the people. The story continues with how the people accepted the way of Christ, and how because of "the way," St. Thomas was persecuted and martyred. Hence the name *margamkali*, "the play of the Way." Jesus said, "I am the way."

Historical Sketch

A sociological survey made by Dr. Chummar Choondal of Trissur in 1981 has brought to light the fact that 95% of 'margamkali performers and *margamkali* teams are among the Knanaya Christian[1]

A convoking of all the *margamkali* ashans in 1984 resulted in getting 33 ashans who were all Knanites or who learned the dance from Knanite teachers.

It is interesting to note that in a report by Hosten S. J. in *Indian Antiquity* [2] it is said:

"On February 7,1924, at the Sacred Heart Hill in Kottayam, the writer witnessed some of the very dances and listened to the very songs which 325 years earlier had delighted Dom Menezes and his numerous party. Some of these songs are in the collection now presented. It was 8.00 p.m. A party of men, Southists, armed with bucklers and rhinoceros hide and swords, came to take their Bishop and his party from the Priest's Home on the top of the Hill. They conducted us amid a display of their fencing to the new school hall, where a crowd had assembled to witness the thamasha (entertainment). Around a big brass lamp with 12 wicks, in honor of the Apostles, antique piece of furniture, a 12-petal lotus, the dances went on in endless variety for 2 hours, with clapping of hand gesticulations and prostration; all the time the men sang, resting only for a change of tune. They recounted in verse the birth of Christ our Lord, the adoration of the

Magi, Christ's life and passion; St. Thomas' coming to Malabar, his death in St. Thomas Mount and burial at Mylopore, Chennai.

A piece of information about the existence of *margamkali* is seen in the sculptures at the bottom of the famous "Granite Cross" of Kaduthuruthy, blessed in December, 1559. There are 8 sides for the base of the cross, and on 2 of them, on the front and the left side, as we face the church, dance scenes are carved. They represent parichamuttukali and margamkali. In fact, other sculptures with the scenes of war, Our Lady and the Child Jesus, Kynai Thoma, and of hunting represent in art the history and tradition of the Knanaya people at the foot of the cross of their mother church at Kaduthuruthy. Naturally, margamkali and parichamuttukali found a place among the sculptures.[3]

The antiquity of the *margamkali* songs containing 14 stanzas (padams) can be derived from the Syriac and Tamil words, which were included in its composition. There was a time when the Syriac language was used as a trade language (Lingua Franca) in Kodungalloor and surroundings. Atleast from the fourth century, the 'Knanites as well as the rest of the Syrian Christians in Malabar used the Syriac language in their liturgical celebrations. Words like maran (our Lord), alaha (God), mar thoma (St. Thomas), malaka (angel), kandeesa (Saint), ruha (spirit), nivyalanmar (prophets), Iso (Jesus), Mishiha (Christ) are seen in the lyrics. These and other Syriac words, in fact, are incorporated presently into the Malayalam vocabulary.[4] The Tamil words like *mey* (body),*pili* (dress), etc. indicate an early period of the history of the Malayalam literature, which contained Tamil words. Agood part of the lyrics of margamkali goes to the sixteenth century and a few parts like vandanaganam (the initial prayer song) may even antedate this period. The poet Ulloor in his history of Malayalam literature affirms this.[5]

In 1982, because of the literary value of margamkali lyrics a book that was written by Professor Kurian Vempeni and myself on its literature under the title Sweet Song of Tradition, Songs of *Margamkali* (Thanimayude Madhugeethi: Margamkali Pattu) was accepted as a text book for the Sri Shankaracharya University in Kalady for Malayalam MA students.[6]

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Authorship

As any other folklore, *margamkali* songs also do not have an author. It seems that the traditionally handed down lyrics were modified from time to time by the ashans (teachers) of margamkali. A certain Knanite priest, called Anjilimoottil Ittithoman Kathanar, of Kallisserry of the seventeenth century is considered to be the one who reformed the lyrics as we have them today.

Margamkali Lyrics

In 1910 Mr. P.U. Lukas edited the margamkali songs based on palm leaf manuscripts. In 1984, the song text in full with interjections and endings was printed after referring to manuscripts. There we found that although *parichamuttukali songs* were sung during *margamkali* and they were incorrectly called *margamkali songs*, in reality they do not form part of *margamkali*. Hence, we grouped the Padams of *margamkali* found with that title in manuscripts as margamkalisongs, and the rest were grouped under parichamuttukali.

Vandanapadam, which is rangapuja or prayer song, invokes the presence of Christ in the venue of performance. There is an allusion to a peacock wounded by an arrow, which reminds us of a story in which at the time of his martyrdom, St. Thomas was praying in Mylapore (Village of Peacocks), where he was seen seated on a beautiful peacock, in the midst of other peacocks.

First *Padam*, which picturizes the vision of King Solomon's temple by the Chozhan Emperor in Kerala who wanted to build a palace similar to that.

Second *Padam* speaks about sending Avan, the minister of Chozhan to the country flowing with milk and honey to look for expert carpenters (thachar). He took much money along with him for his voyage westward.

Third *Padam*: After going through the voyage of violent wind and weather, Avan safely reached the city of Mahosa, where Jesus appeared to him.

Fourth *Padam*: After a conversation between Our Lord and Avan, Our Lord promised to give him an architect within a quarter of an hour.

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Fifth *Padam*: Our Lord described the skills of the promised architect. Meanwhile, angels brought Thomas, as an artisan and he stood before Him who holds the world in His left hand.

Sixth *Padam*: Avan finds an expert architect in Thomas, and was willing to pay for him. The Lord imparts a farewell message to Thomas, but Thomas was perturbed at the thought of going to India.

Seventh *Padam*: Thomas' apprehensions and hesitations to go to India are expressed; it is a country with serpents, with shameless leaders of inhuman people, where "sathi" (the bride dying with the dead husband in his funeral pyre), the custom of people marrying the corpse of the dead girl in case she was unmarried, people who cremate the dead, and people without parent-children love. These were the impressions of the Westerners regarding India at that time.

Further, he complained that to all other places two disciples were sent together and to India Thomas alone was sent.[7]

Eighth *Padam*: Jesus strengthened Thomas by saying, "Think not that you are alone. I will be with you wherever you go. People in India are humane. I will direct your words, looks and thoughts. Your thinking is all my thinking." Avan gave a heavy sum of money to Jesus who gave the sale deed to Avan. Jesus gave the money to Thomas and sent him off speaking tender words to his heart's content. Thomas and Avan set sail and reached the kingdom of Chozhan. Thomas drew the plans for the palace and the King was pleased with it. He entrusted Thomas with the construction of the palace, and ordered Avan to supply whatever the architect wanted. Thomas left the place saying that he would return within a year. Thomas gave away the money to the needy.

Nineth *Padam*: Thomas went beyond Chozhan's Kingdom preaching *the gospel*. Once, he attended the wedding of Paul's daughter, possibly a Jew in Kodungalloor. He blessed the bride, and one of the participants got offended at it, slapped the Apostle on the face. A tiger did bite off the right hand of the offender and a dog managed to bring it back to the Apostle, who restored it to the owner and healed him. At this, Paul and his family believed and were baptized.

Thomas went to Malacka and China. To keep his word he returned to Mylapore. Then he went to Mallyankara near Kodungalloor where he preached the gospel, erected a cross and ordained worthy ministers. He then went southward and preached and erected crosses at Kollam, Niranam, Chayal, Kodamangalam, Kottakayal, and Palur. In his absence people spoke ill of him. The King became angry and sent for Thomas, who was brought to his presence. He accused Thomas of not even laying the foundation stones of the palace, even after spending a lot of money. Thomas said that a beautiful palace was already built which the King would see after his death. The King ordered Thomas and Avan to be imprisoned.

Tenth *Padam*: Chozhan wanted to resign the post of the King, and to hand it over to his brother, who, in turn, was also distressed (and died). Angels took his soul to heaven, where he saw the mansion inscribed to the name of King Chozhan.

Eleventh *Padam*: The King's brother returned to life, and explained the beauty of the mansion he saw in heaven. Being fully satisfied the King and his brother went to the prison, fell prostrate before Thomas, begged for forgiveness, and set the imprisoned free.

Twelfth *Padam*: The people did not understand the whole thing. They started murmuring as to what should be done to the squanderer of the kingdom's wealth. Some suggested the punishment of execution and others banishment. But, King Chozhan, his brother, Avan and many others received baptism, and joined "the Way".

Thirteenth *Padam*: It narrates the steady growth of the church. Once, during his journey he passed by a grove temple dedicated to the goddess Kaali. He was identified, and surrounded. He was asked to worship the goddess, but the Apostle refused and threatened to destroy the temple by fire. The temple was burned by fire. A priest escaped the flames and inflicted a mortal wound on the heart of Thomas with a lance.

Fourteenth *Padam*: The angels carried the body of Thomas in a palanquin to Little Mount, "Chinna Malai". In the midst of heavenly symphonies

they carried his soul to the throne of God. Children placed his body in the church. By God's blessings, followers of His law may live happily free of dangers.

Margamkali, the performing art form is now an item of competition in the annual school youth festival of the state of Kerala.

***Acts of Thomas*: Its Version**

The themes of the first nine padams of *margamkali* are based on the first Act of the *Acts of Thomas*; but there is a slight change in the presentation.

When the Apostle Thomas got the lot to go to India he was very much reluctant. At that time, Gundaphor, the King of Thakshasila, sent Avan abroad to find a smart carpenter (architect). Jesus sawAvan walking in the streets (of Jerusalem). He sold Thomas to him for 20 silver coins, which Jesus gave to Thomas. Avan and Thomas reached Chandragiri (Andhra)

In Chandragiri there was the wedding of a princess in which Thomas and Avan participated. While all were eating and drinking, Thomas simply spent time in prayer. At that time there was the dance of a Jewish girl to entertain the participants. Though while dancing she approached Thomas, he did not want to take notice of her, and hence a servant at the banquet slapped him on the cheek. Thomas only replied, "I will see dogs dragging your arm." While that servant was drawing water from a stream in the forest, a fox attacked him and killed him. Dogs took away his flesh and limbs. A dog carried a severed hand to the banquet hall. The Hebrew girl recognized that it was the hand that had beaten Thomas. She remembered the Hebrew words which Thomas had spoken to the servant, "A dog will drag your arm."

The King also came to know about this. He took him to the brides chamber and asked him to pray for his daughter. He prayed for the new couple, and they changed their lifestyle and became immersed in the adoration of God.

The second Act deals with the palace built in heaven by Thomas, and this is the theme of the 10th and 11th *padams of margamkali*. The 12th *padam* gives the murmuring and condemnation of people about him, not knowing what had

happened in the palace. The 13th padam narrates how Thomas was asked to worship the goddess Kaali and how his refusal led to his persecution. The church spread rapidly. The 14th *padam* is about the survival and carrying of the soul of Thomas to heaven.

The narration is a little different from that of the *margamkali* song. Thomas was introduced to the King, who entrusted him with the construction of the palace and gave him sufficient money for it. Thomas distributed the money to the poor and the suffering.

After a long while, having no news about Thomas or of the palace, the King furiously summoned Thomas to his presence. Thomas said that long ago he had built the palace, but the King would be able to see it only when he departs from the world after death. The King ordered Avan and Thomas to be imprisoned and to kill them after proper enquiries.

Meanwhile, the brother of the King became seriously ill. His last wish was to kill Thomas "the magician;" he expressed it before the King, and entered into a long deep sleep. The sick man saw angels carrying his soul to heaven. He saw a beautiful mansion in heaven. He wanted to live there, but the angels told him that it was a palace built by Thomas for the King, his brother. After a while the brother of the King was awakened to reality. Upon hearing the news, King Gundaphor set Thomas and Avan free, and expressed his desire to worship Thomas' God. The King and his family repented and were baptized; Thomas celebrated the Eucharist for them.

Evangelisation in India is attributed to the Apostle Thomas in the very beginning of the Act of Thomas where the apostles are said to have divided the countries of the world among themselves. "And India fell by lot and division to Judas Thomas the Apostle" (para I)[8]. The Acts goes on to say that the Apostle was sold to a merchant named Habban sent by the Indian King Gundaphar who sought a skilled carpenter. It is interesting to note that in the nineteenth century, coins of a certain king Gundaphar of the first century A.D. have been unearthed in India.[9]

Habban and Thomas embarked for India (para 3) Many miracles, Prayers and sermons of Thomas are given in the Acts. He converted several people, including those of the royal family. He is believed to have travelled extensively. According to the Acts, Thomas was martyred by the order of the king.[10] He was buried in a royal tomb (para 159-69). The narrative ends with a miracle which informs us that the bones of Thomas were transferred[11] to Mespotamia (para 170). Recent excavations have shed new light on the tomb of Thomas.[12]

Even those who agree that St. Thomas preached in India do not agree in details. Thus, for example, J.N. Faquhar[13] thinks that the Acts speaks about the North Indian and South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, whereas A.F.J. Klijnls[14] holds that "for the present Acts, Thomas went to South India only."It seems that the Acts consists of two textual traditions, Edessan for the South Indian apostolate and Alexandrian for the North Indian apostolate."[15]

Ramban Pāṭṭu and St. Thomas

Another ancient song on St. Thomas called *Ramban Song* presumably rewritten in 1601 A.D. by Maliekal Thomas Ramban of Niranam, the successor of the first Thomas Ramban of the family. This song, (448 lines) to which a dance is not seemingly attached, has practically much of the content of margamkali. The text has more Sanskrit words and it gives many miracles, and conversions in thousands (17,550). According to this, St. Thomas died on the third of the month of Karkadakam in A.D. 72. *Ramban Pāṭṭu* wants to be very meticulous when it states that Thomas stayed four and a half months in Mylapore and four and a half months in China. It refers to Thiruvanchikulam and Malayattoor, which is not in *Margamkali* Pattu. It is interesting to note that two lines of *margamkali* songs are seen as such in the *"Ramban Pāṭṭu"*, which suggests that the *Ramban Pāṭṭu* is posterior to *Margamkali Pattu.*

Ramban Pāṭṭu is one of the texts which contains the traditional beliefs concerning the ministry and martyrdom of St. Thomas, composed by a disciple of St. Thomas, which is a legend. But the texts state it was written in 1601 by a certain priest named Malekayl Thomas of Niranam. As it was printed by Fr. Bernard Thomas (TOCD) in Mar Thomas Christians there are 448 lines.

In line 43 it speaks about the king of Kodungalloor residing at Thiruvanchikulam. Kodungalloor and Thiruvanchikulam were on the northern branch of the Periyar river.

The arrival of St. Thomas at Kodungalloor is described in lines 21 -26 and 41-65. The texts in lines 22-26, 48-144, 196-225 states that St. Thomas founded churches (communities) at Chayal, Kodungalloor, Kottakav, Kokkamangalam, Kollam, Niranam and Palayur.

In lines 33-40,145-192 the song speaks about the entrusting of the contruction of a royal palace to Thomas. It also speaks about Thomas converting and baptizing many Brahmins the number o of converts is very legendary (lines 69-70,77-78, 85-86,103-4,117-8; 125-6,139-140; 171-74; 179-180, 199-200; 293-204)

The apostle appointing priests and Bishops is given in lines 181-188; 221 – 236).

About the martyrdom of St. Thomas (lines 325-29) it says that when he was passing by a Kāḷi temple (Kavu) he was asked to worship Kāḷi. He refused to do so, and he burned out the temple with his verbal command. This created hatred amongst Brahmins and one of them mortally wounded him with a lance. The same idea which was transmitted as an oral tradition is also in Tamilnadu with the specification that Brahmin priests of the Kāḷi temple conspired to kill him, and one of them thrusted a lance into the body of the Apostle.

There is also a local Tamilnadu tradition which is shared by the Keralites, namely that St.Thomas was accidently killed by the arrow of a fowler. *Margamkali* songs also speak about the martydom in a few padams.

St. Thomas in *Thoma Parvam*

Mar *Thoma Parvam*: This text is different from *Ramban Pattu*. It is unpublished. Dr. Jacob Kollaparambil has discovered the text in a palm leaf manscript of purathanapattukal. It is numbered into 17 folios of which folio 14 is missing.

About the life and ministry of St. Thomas in India we see the following in the *Thoma Parvam*, a poem whose author is unknown. The language of the *Thoma Parvam* is Malayalam with great influence of Samskrit words. This shows that the text is not very ancient.

"The one who heard the word, gladly bent his knees wholeheartedly and with patience. He went to the Malanadu. There he met the local king whose daughter was given in marriage at that time. There were many who were invited for the marriage meal. A foreign girl was singing the glory of the Almighty, with musical instruments and dance. Thomas did not relish it. A wicked man slapped Thomas on his face. But with patience Thomas told: "Son, why do you do this? The Almighty will show its consequences to the people. While he was saying this, a tiger came and attacked the man and tore him into pieces and he died. People around praised the Lord. This came to the notice of the king and he was pleased with Thomas. The king and the people received baptism.

The king asked Thomas to build a palace, beautiful and without any deficiency. Thomas received a sum of money and went to different thickly populated towns and spent the time in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. After a while the king wanted to see the palace and he heard that nothing was built. The king got furious and ordered to capture the 'wicked' and to imprison him without any delay. The order was executed.

The brother of the king died three days after this. He came back to life and showed his brother king a beautiful palace with different mansions which was built by Thomas in heaven for the king. The king found that the palace was very magnificent. Soon the king visited Thomas in the prison, respectfully greeted him, and asked forgiveness. The repentant king asked baptism from Thomas in order to praise the true Lord. Thomas asked the king and his brother to spend seven days in prayer and worship. The two kings along with a lot of people were baptized.

Thomas then exorcised a lady possessed by Satan. Seeing this miracle several people believed in Jesus and received baptism. Thomas celebrated the Qurbana with them and all devotedly received the Body of the Lord. He did several such miracles and many approached him to receive baptism.

St. Thomas went to several places including Kollam where he announced *the Gospel*, cured the sick, and baptized those who believed. Thomas went to Mahadevarpattanam, namely Kodungalloor. People repented of their sin and were cured from sicknesses and mental strains. He built a church there. The King offered a land and a city to the Nazranis. He met the king of Palayoor and gave the Good News. He discussed the doctrines with Brahmins and leaders and many received baptism. At this great ministry, Thomas met with opposition and he went to other cities like Mylapur where he did wonders.

A lady, Magdonia by name had great difficulty in giving birth to a child. She requested the help of St. Thomas who gave his blessings and she gave birth to a child. She believed and received baptism. Her husband Carius got annoyed over the intervention of Thomas. He complained against Thomas before the king stating that Thomas was taking his wife away from him, because she was with the company of the preachers. Thomas was brought to the presence of the king and was questioned about his master in whose name he was preaching. Thomas replied that his master was the One who created the world with one word and preserves it continuously. The king got annoyed and imprisoned Thomas. Thomas asked Magdonia to live with her husband and love him but she said her actions were in accordance with the teaching of Thomas and she was totally committed to Jesus.

We find such descriptions in chapters two, five, nine, 10, 13 of the Acts of Thomas.

Conclusion

It is a fact that the Acts of Thomas contain several legendary narrations. At the same time, there is no doubt that its background is historical.

Even in the absence of a historical written documents of the time, the St. Thomas tradition expressed through various elements states that St. Thomas the apostle reached Kodungalloor in AD. 52 and died at St. Thomas Mylopoor in AD 72.

Though there are no historical proofs of the first century, there are many testimonies from the early church to support the strong tradition of the St. Thomas Christians regarding the Apostolate of St. Thomas in India.

The Malabar tradition is supported by early Christian documents. The early church fathers like St. Ephrem, St. Anbrose (4th cent) Isidora (7th cent) and world travellers like Theodore of Syria (6th cent) Marco Polo(13th cent) as well as historians especially from Kerala, like K.P. Padmanabha Menon, and A Sreedhara Menon, K.M. Panikar support this.

The fact

"The Malabar tradition is not written on hard stones or sheets of parchment, but in the hearts and memories of men and women assuredly as enduring monument as those of granite".

The presence of the tomb, the chapel and the cross as well as architectural remains and a group of Christians in Chinnamala area compel us to believe that St. Thomas was living among the Tamils.

The performing art of *Margamkali* shows that the belief in the Apostolate of St. Thomas in India was relished by the believers. Other songs on St. Thomas are corroborate with these beliefs. The act of Thomas, the *Margamkali* and the *Ramban Pattu* agree on the details in general regarding in the ministry and martyrdom of St. Thomas in India. *Thoma Parvam* though small in size basically agrees with the general scheme of these three texts

End Notes

1. Dr. Choomar says: "Knanaya Christians have the most ancient and varied art forms. *Margamkali* is their dance form. Generally, it is said that *margamkali* is said in vogue among the Syrian Christians, but a close and critical observation will show that the practice and propagation of *margamkali* were among the Knanites. During my research in the 1960s, I could not find this art form practised in the regions like Trissur and Pala where the Syrians are thickly populated. The traditions of margamkali can thus be analyzed: 70 %

among Knanaya Catholics and 25% among Knanya Jacobites." He further says that 100% of the margamkali teams at that time were from among the Knanites, so also, the genuine generation of margamkali ashans. See Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Rev. Dr. Francis Kalarackal, Kottappuram, 1993, pp. 57-62.

2. Vol. 51, July 1928,p. 123.

3. J. Vellian "Prayer at the Foot of the open Air Cross at Kaduthuruthy" in Folly of the Cross, Souvenir for V.Pathykulangara. Bangalore 2000.

4. J. Vellian, *"The Use of Syriac Words in Malayalam."* Symposium Synacum, OCA 236 (Rente 1990), 331 - 334

5. Ulloor, S.P., *Sahithya Charithram,* Trivandrum, 1957.

6. J. Vellian, *Thanimayude Madhugeethi: Margamkalipattu*, Kottayam, 1995

7. Jacob oj Serugk a Syrian writer (sixth century) taking up such feelings of St. Thomas wrote three homilies under the title "1will not go to India" (see J. Vellian "*Thanimuyade Madhugeethi*" pp. 70-74).

   Stay together "always remember my children that the relationshipmay not be severed. " (From the song "*Innu Nee Njangale*, " Purathanapattukal. p. 8)

8. In this Introduction we follow the paragraphing in Klijn.

9. Cf. Eugene Tisserant, *Early Christianity in India trans*. E.R. Hambye Westminister, 1957), p.3. For the sketch of the Gundaphar coins, cf. A.E. Medlycott, op. cit., p.7

10. Marco Polo who visited India in 1293 heard another story in Mylapur: "Having returned to a hermitage where he (the Apostle) was engaged in prayer, and being surrounded by a number of pea-fowls, with which birds the country abounds, an idolater of the tribe of Gavi who happened to be passing that way, and did not preceive the holy man, shot an arrow at a peacock, which struck the Apostle in the side. Finding himself wounded, he had time only to thank the Lord for all his mercies, and into His hands he resigned his spirit." William Marsden (ed), *The Travels of Marco Polo the Venetian* (Altana, 1968), pp. 286-287. For a study on this story, cf, George Schurhammer, *"The Peacock-story of St Thomas," Placid Special*, ed. Hormice C. Permalil (Alleppey, 1970). pp. 19-28;

11. For the transference of the relics of Thomas cf. M. Monserate de Villard, "*La Fiera di Batne la Traslazione di* S.Thomas a Edessa,"Rendimenti dell' *AccadamiaNazionale dei Lincei di Scienze* MoraliVI (1951), 77-104; Paul Devos, *Le Miracle Posthume* de S. Thomas 1' Apotre, *"Analecta Bollandiana*, LXVI (1948), 231-275. St. Ephrem, singing about the transference of the relics of Thomas, puts these words into the mouth of the devil: "The Apostle whom I slew in India has overtaken me in Uraha (Edessa; The merchant brought the bones: Who will show me the casket of Iscariot whence I derived courage? But the casket of Thomas is slaying me, for a hidden power residing there tortures me". T.J. Lamy, op cit Egeria says that she visited (384) the church of St. Thomas with his relics (martyrium). She leaves the impression that it was of recent origin (nova dispositions); cf. GE. Gingras, p.77. But it could be that it was the old Cathedral church of Edessa which was reconstructed after the floods of A.D. 201 and 303. It is also possible that there were other churches in Edessa dedicated to St.Thomas, and the relics of Thomas were kept in one of them until the Cathedral church was reconstructed, cf. J.B. Segal, Edessa *"The Blessed City"* (Oxford, 1970), p.373; Paul Devos, *"Egerie a Edessa. St.Thomas* 1' Apotre. Le Roi Abgar," *Analecta Bollandiana*, LXXXV (1967), 381-400. The relics were taken to the island of Chios in 1144, and to Ortona in Italy in 1258, Cf. F. Schneider, *"De Translations ad Ortonam,"* Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienschen Archiven, XXIV (1933, 112-128)

12. Geroge Schurhammer, *"New Light about the Tomb of Mylapur,"* The Malabar Church, ed. Jacob Vellian(Rome, 1970). pp. 99-101

13. See chapters one and two of this book.

14. A.F.J. Klijn, op. cit. p. 29

15. PJ. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians'* pp. 31 note 9.

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ST. THOMAS AND THE NORTH INDIAN KING GONDOPHORUS

S. Chinnappan

It is the tradition of the Universal Church that India was evangelized by two immediate disciples of Christ - St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew. Recent research has tended to confirm this tradition though its historicity is still called in question in certain quarters. Till the discovery of the coins of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophernes in 1817, scholars discarded the whole story of the *Acts of St. Thomas* as a mere myth; but after the discovery of the coins and the *Takht- i - Bahi inscription,* however, scholars began to affirm that king Gudnaphar of the Acts is identical with the Gudpharna of the coins. This is a humble attempt to throw light on the apostolate of St.Thomas in Taxila, the capital of king Gondophorus.

Political and Cultural importance of Taxila

The first Indian State to be reached after crossing Indus river was the Kingdom of Taxila (Takshasila) by Alexander the Great.[1] Asoka (273 -232 B.C) was viceroy at Taxila before he ascended the throne. After Ashoka, about 138 B.C., Taxila passed into the hands of the Parthian king Mithradates I who was installed as satrapy in the city. Taxila remained the capital of Satrapy until the time of St.Thomas[2]. Inscriptions and coins disclose the names of many scytho Parthian kings and provincial governors. The Parthians ruled over some parts of India for some time. Their rules include Mithradates I (171 to 136 B.C), Mithradates II (128B.C. to 81 B.C.), Azes I, and Azes II. Azes II who came to the throne C.30 B.C. seems to have had the longest reign in the annals of Indo Parthian history.[3] After Azes II the Sovereignty of the Indian border land passed into the hands of Gondophernes, a Parthian.[4] Tradition associates his name with that of the Christian apostle St. Thomas.[5]

The last but the greatest king of the Parthian dynasty was Gondophernes. His bravery and ability was ineffable. He ruled for a period of 25 years. He began to reign in 19 A.D. and was still reigning in 45 A.D. [6] He strove hard to maintain his authority in India. It is believed that St. Thomas visited India during his

period, with the aim of spreading and preaching Christianity.[7] St. Thomas succeeded in achieving his purpose. But V.A. Smith does not agree with this view, and thinks it entirely fictitious.[8]

The king's name is unquestionably Pahlava (Parthian), for the various forms in which it appears on the coins are merely attempts to render local pronunciations of the Persian Vindapharna, 'The winner of glory', in Greek letters. Many of his types are continued from the money of his predecessors, and, like them, may be traced back to Yavana originals. They seem to indicate that he succeeded to the dominions of the Pahlavas and Cakas both in eastern Iran and in North West India. That he ruled also in the Kabul Valley, which was probably annexed before his reign, appears to be shown by the large numbers of his coins which were found on its ancient sites by Masson and other explorers at the time when such exploration was still possible.[9] Coins show also that his immediate predecessor on the throne was Azes II; for the two monarchs are associated with the same strategos or 'Commander - in chief Aspavarman, son of Indravarman[10] in their service.

Under his (Gondopharnes) sway the Pahlava power attained its height; and it appears probable that this power was now controlled by a single suzerain who reigned supreme over both eastern Iran and North West India; for the coins of Gondopharnes bear the types both of Orthagnes and of Azes II, and seem to show therefore that he had succeeded to the dominions of both of these suzerains.[11]

The traditional date of the arrival of the Apostle in India is the year 52 A.D. The Acts of St. Thomas compiled in Syriac at the beginning of the Third century and according to Harnak before the year 220 A.D., relates that when the world was divided for the evangelisation among the twelve Apostles of Christ, India was assigned to Thomas who at first protested against the choice. Subsequently Christ appeared to him, and he was sold to Habban, the envoy of an Indian king named Gondophorus. This Habbaan had gone to Syria in search of a carpenter for the construction of a place for the king.[12]

In those days there was a brisk trade between India and the Roman enpire. The growing luxury of Rome increased the demand for the precious goods of

India. Pearls, precious stones, pepper and other spices, cotton textiles and silk from China sent via. India, were the goods most in demand. India was the only country to supply then. Therefore many traders plied between India and the Roman empire on two Principal routes, one over land and through the Persian gulf, the other via the Red Sea. A road joining this route passed through Galilee, north of the lake Genesareth, leading on to Damascus and further to Parthia. St. Thomas must often have seen the caravans from the east, the camels heavily loaden with precious merchandise and their drivers wearily walking by the side. Or other caravans going in the opposite direction, carrying valuable goods for exchange in India. However, this over land route was tedious, unsafe and high levies were exacted by the kings through whose countries the road passed. For these reasons the merchants preferred the sea route. Though much longer than the overland route, it was safer and more comfortable. The starting point was Alexandria in Egypt, the Roman empire's foremost emporium for the eastern trade.[13]

Habban or Avan was the envoy of Gondophorus. Dr.Farquhar writes of the journey of St. Thomas and Habban to India thus: "Habban and Thomas would start from Alexandria to sail up the river Nile. The next day would bring them to Andropolis, where according to the Acts of Judas Thomas, the ship landed at Andropolis, the chief city of Andropolite. Nome was a large town in the delta, on the left bank of the Nile. The modern town on the site is called Chabur or Shabur. If Thomas had been preaching for some time in Alexanderia he might quite well have had friends in Andropohs. Eleven days later they would reach Koptos; and they would then march over the desert for some days to Myoss Hormas. The sea voyage would begin early in May. The year may have been A.D. 48. They would leave Okalis, the last part of the east side of the Red Sea, early in June, and a few days' sailing would take them out of the Gulf of Aden when they would find themselves exposed to the full force of the great seasonal wind from S.W. They would then have to endure more than a month of worst sailing in the world, driven furiously over the tempestuous Arabian Sea by the irresistible monsoon lashed by wild rain storms, the heat, and the damp unendurable, many of the passengers sick and ill, day and night.[15]

Though the above quotation would create the impression that St. Thomas and Habban proceeded to Taxila without entering Malabar, the real fact according

to Malabar tradition and history is that the Apostle landed at the port of Muzuris or Cranganore, and then proceeded to Taxila from Cranganore.

Since there are two different routes indicated on the passage of St.Thomas to India, one ending in North India, and the other in the South, there are some writers who have expressed the opinion that the Apostle entered India twice from the western countries, the first time landing in North India and afterwards in the South western corner of the country.[16]

Taxila, the capital of the Gandharas, was then a flourishing centre. Its ruins now cover an area of 25 square miles, in the present Punjab, about miles North of Rawalpindi. Taxila derived its name from Taksh, Son of king Bharat. Others say Taxila means "hewn stones" (taksham & shaila), since most of Taxila's buildings were of hewn stones. When the Aryans immigrated from Central Asia, they settled first in the Punjab. In course of time, Taxila became the foremost centre of *Vedic* learning. From far pupils came to Taxila to be instructed in the Vedas. The sons of Bharmans and princes were sent to the university of Taxila to complete their education.[17] This varied past had left its indelible imprint of the racial, cultural and religious constitution of Taxila's inhabitants. At the time when St. Thomas arrived in the city, its culture was a blending of lndo - Aryan, Greek and Parthian elements; in religion the Taxilians were divided between Brahmanism and Buddhism, but there were also Jains and Zoroastrians in the city, besides Assyrians, Medes, Parthians, Jews, Syrians, Greeks and Romans, who professed their own religions. The Taxilians spoke Sanskrit, and Pahlavi, Persian and Greek, and even Aramaic. The latest excavations at Taxila bear witness to the cosmopolitan character of this city. Many Buddhist temples, monasteries and stupas were found, but also Jain temples, fire temples, and houses and temples in Assyrian and Greek style. A fire temple was excavated, 185 ft. long, 85 ft. broad and 25 ft. high. Temples and figures of Greek gods were found in great number.[18]

This was Taxila as St. Thomas found it when he entered the city with Habban, the merchant of king Gondophorus. Here St. Thomas could first contact his own countrymen and tell them the good tidings of the arrival of the Messiah whom they had so longingly expected with the rest of the Jews. And St. Thomas could also discuss his religion with the learned Brahmans, with Persian priests

and Buddhist monks. This city appeared thus as an ideal place to spread the Christian religion among the multitude of races and peoples, to win disciples and followers of some social and cultural standing, of persons who after conversion were capable of leading others into the Church.[19]

The name of Gondophorus, and possibly those of two princes of his family, Guda and Abdagases, have been preserved in connexion with the legends of St. Thomas in the literature of the early Christian church. The apocryphal Act of Judas Thomas the Apostle, which contains an account of the ministry of St. Thomas in India, exists in Syriac, Greek, and Latin versions; and of these the earliest, the Syriac, is supposed to date from before the middle of the third century A.D. The story, as told in this version, begins thus :

And when all the apostles had been for a time in Jerusalem.... they divided the countries among them, in order that each one of them might preach in the region which fell to him and in the place to which his Lord sent him. And India fell by lot and division to Judas Thomas (or the Twin) the Apostle. And he was not willing to go, saying: 'I have not strength enough for this, because I am weak. And I am a Hebrew; how can I teach the Indians?' And whilst Judas was reasoning thus, our Lord appeared to him in a vision of the night, and said to him: Tear not, Thomas, because my grace is with thee.' But he would not be persuaded at all, saying: Whithersoever Thou wilt, our Lord, send me; only to India I will not go.' And as Judas was reasoning thus, a certain merchant, an Indian, happened (to come) from the south, whose name was Habban; and he was sent by the king Gudnaphar, that he might bring to him a skilful carpenter.[20] Because of the unwillingness of St. Thomas, our Lord appears, and, claiming him as His servant, sells him to the merchant Habban for twenty pieces of silver; and St. Thomas journeys with Habban to the Court of King Gondopharnes.[21]

There can be no question that Gudnaphar, who is definitely called 'the king of India' is to be identified with Gondopharnes; and Gad, 'the brother of the king' may possibly be the Guda or Gudana, as seen with him on the coins. The legend of St. Thomas has thus been furnished with a historical setting which is chronologically possible. The fact of St. Thomas's visit to the court of Gondopharnes may be doubted; but the story remains to show that the fame of this king had spread to the West.

This king is the only character in the Acts (besides Judas Thomas) who can perchance be identified with a historical person. Some say he is the same as Gondophernes or Guduphara, The Indo - Parthian king who ruled over Arachosia, Kabul and Gandhara (modern Afghanistan and Pakistan) from about 19 to 45 A.D. The Acts gives no vital information about him, his reign, his city, or his country except to say that it is in "India" that he can be identified as Parthian from his name, the original persian form of it being Vindapharna.[22]

The mission of St. Thomas to the court of Gondophernes is described in the Acts of St. Thomas. It is an apocryphal work attributed to Bardesana, which was probably written in the beginning of the third century either at Edessa itself or some other place in upper Mesopotamia. The work is divided into nine parts, of which eight are called "Acts", and the last "The Consummation of Judas Thomas".

Habban could show St. Thomas the most magnificent palace of his king, 352 feet long and 270 feet broad. King Gonduphar was indeed a powerful king, one of the most important kings of Parthia in Taxila. True to the cosmopolitan character of his capital, king Gonduphar was no religious fanatic. As a Persian he professed to be a follower of Zoroaster, but he tolerated and perhaps even favoured other religions. On the coins which were struck during his reign, we see the figures of the Greek gods Zeus and Athene, but also the figures of Shiva and several other Indian gods.

St. Thomas had been called by king Gonduphar to build him a new and magnificent palace, in order to enhance the king's glory and to perpetuate the splendour of his reign. St. Thomas, however, thought of another palace of which his Master had spoken when he said: "I go away to prepare you a home in heaven". He felt that he was called to build such a spiritual palace for king Gonduphar and his people.

The author of the *Acts of the Holy Apostle St. Thomas* then proceeds to relate how St. Thomas built for king Gonduphar not a palace of stone, but an everlasting dwelling in heaven. In a poetical form he tells us how the Apostle of Christ became an 'Architect' to build the church in India.

St. Thomas the Architect

"Through St. Thomas a spendid mansion was built for India in the heights of heaven" (Syrian liturgy).

The *Acts of the Holy Apostle St. Thomas* relate this episode of the life of the Saint as follows:

"Habban the merchant introduced the Apostle St. Thomas to king Gonduphar. 'My Lord', he said whilst greeting the king, 'here I am back from the journey on which you sent me. I have been successful in my errand and according to your orders I have brought a good carpenter with me. Hearing this the king was glad and had Thomas come and asked him, 'Are you the skilled carpenter who wants to work for me? What craft do you know?' St. Thomas replied, 'I am a carpenter in deed, the servant of a carpenter and architect {Jesus). I can work in wood and in stones and can build monuments, temples and palaces for kings'. The king said, 'Such an architect I am looking for. Can you build a palace for me?" 'Yes, I can', said St. Thomas, 'for I came for this very purpose to you'."

"Thereupon the king took him outside the city gate and showed him a nice spot, and began to talk how he wanted his place to be laid out. St. Thomas looked at the place, examined it and said, 'In fact, O king, this is a very suitable place for a palace. Here is a beautiful meadow, next to it a woody place and over there is plenty of water. Here I shall build a palace for you'. 'When do you start?' asked the king. Thomas said, 'I will start in autumn and finish in spring time'.[24] The king was astonished and said, 'But everyone builds in summer here; how can you get the palace ready during winter? But if necessary, you may have your will. Go ahead for I must leave now, and I hope to be back not before long. Therefore draw me a plan here right on the spot'."

"Now the Apostle took out the measuring rod and began to measure and draw the outlines of the palace on the ground. 'The doors must point out to the east' he said, 'to get the early morning light in. The windows must face the west to catch the cooling breeze. Towards the north the water pipes must be fixed, and the kitchen towards the south'. The king stood there in amazement when the outlines of the palace were drawn there in front of him. He could imagine how

well everything was laid out in the right proportions, and everything was fixed at the right place. 'I see', he said 'that you are a good craftsman, worthy to serve a king'."

"Before the king went on his journey, he had much silver and gold given to St. Thomas so that he could buy the material and pay the workmen. From time to time he used to send more. But St. Thomas took the money and went around in the cities and villages to help the poor with that money and relieve the afflicted."[25]

"After some time the king sent messengers to ask how far the building had come. 'The building is ready so far', Thomas said, 'only the roof is still to be done'. Thereupon the king sent more money so that the palace be completed very soon. The Apostle thanked God for the money and he went on doing good to the poor and the orphans, the widows and the afflicted.

"After some time the king returned to his capital. He was very anxious to see the palace that the new architect was to build for him. But his friends told him, 'Lord, the one to whom you have entrusted your money is a great fraud. Neither has he built a palace for you nor has he done anything of that which he promised to do for you. Listen to what he has done with your money. The architect Thomas goes about the cities and villages and whatever he has he gives it to the poor. He is teaching them of a new God. He heals the sick, casts out demons and does many other wonderful things. We think he is a sorcerer. Yet his compassion with the sick and the cures which he makes without receiving any money, further his simplicity, kindness and piety, all this shows that he is a righteous man or an Apostle of the new God about whom he preaches. He fasts and prays continuously, he eats only bread and salt, his drink is only water, he wears only one garment in summer and in winter alike. He received nothing from any man. On the contrary, whatever he, has he. gives it to others'."

"When the king heard this report he shook his head and stood in silence for a long time. Finally he sent for Thomas and Habban to be brought before him. 'Did you built that palace for me?" he demanded from them. 'Yes, 1 did', said St. Thomas. 'Then we shall go and see it', said the king. 'My king, you cannot see it now', replied St. Thomas. 'But when you depart from this life, then only shall

you see it'. Hearing this the king got very angry and he ordered that both, Thomas and Habban be cast into prison till he would find out what had happened to his money. And then he would put them to death".[26] In the mean time he had made up his mind to burn them to death.

The Apostle went to prison without any fear. And he told also Habban, 'Be not afraid. Believe in Jesus Christ and everything shall be well'. In the meantime the king had made up his mind to flay them alive and burn them to death."

"Now it happened that this very same night the king's brother Gad fell sick and was about to die. He called the king to his bed and told him, T must now die. But you see to it, that you punish this foreign sorcerer, otherwise I fear I shall not find peace in the other world, for he has harmed you so much'. And as they were still talking, Gad died. King Gonduphar was very much in grief about the death of his brother, for he loved him very much. He ordered that he be buried in a royal and magnificent sepulchre."

"The soul of Gad was taken from his body and brought up. Angels showed him then the most beautiful palace with many mansions and asked him, in which of them he wished to live. Gad came nearer and said, 'Allow me, I pray you, to live in one of the lowest rooms, and that will suffice for me'. For so beautiful did the palace appear to him, that to live even in the lowest room seemed enough for him. 'But you cannot yet live in them as yet', the angels told him. 'Why?' he asked in amazement. Then they told him, 'This is the most splendid palace which Thomas the Christian had built for your brother'. 'Then please let me go back to my brother', he asked, 'that I may tell him about this beautiful palace which Thomas the architect has built for him in heaven. My brother may take possession of it and do no harm to the Apostle of God'. Thereupon the angels let his soul go back on earth."[27]

"Here they were just about to put his grave clothes upon his body, when his soul returned to his body and he came to life again. All were amazed seeing him alive again. King Gonduphar came running, not able to say a word at this strange sight. Finally Gad broke the silence and said, 'Dear brother, I know you love me very much, and you would give half your kingdom for me, had any one

asked you for it. Now I am asking one favour from you: Do sell to me that wonderful palace which you have in heaven'. Gonduphar was amazed. 'Which palace should I have in heaven?' He answered, 'That which Thomas the Christian has built for you; and you in turn have put him into prison and punished him with terrible torments'. Then he began to relate to his brother the king what had happened to him, and how he had seen that beautiful palace which St. Thomas had prepared for him in heaven."

"At last the king understood everything: With the money that he had given to Thomas, he had built for him a palace, not on earth indeed but in heaven. He called Thomas out of prison, fell at his feet and asked pardon for what he had done in his ignorance. He said, 'I beg you, servant of God, to pray for me and to pardon the wrong I have done. Pray, make me worthy to enter into that palace which you have built for me in heaven. Please make me also a worshipper and a servant of the God whom you announce'. In the same way also Gad asked to be admitted as a disciple of Jesus Christ."[28]

"After seven days St. Thomas the Apostle baptized them, making them children of God and he confirmed them with the holy oil and gave them Holy Communion. Together with the king and his brother a great many were received in the fold of Christ by Thomas the Apostle in India."

Is there any clue indicative of Gondophernes' own religious affiliation or belief? The late Mr.T.K. Joseph, who was an ardent supporter of St.Thomas' appstolate in the Punjab while describing his mission to Malabar and the South, said that he had discovered in one of his titles - Deva -Vrata - which Gondophernes bore and in what is taken as one of his characteristic symbols, a sufficient indication of his profession of Christianity. He wrote: King Gondophernes of the Punjab, St. Thomas's convert, had preferred the title *Deva - Vrata* (=devoted to God - Singular) to the then usual titles of *Deva - Putra and Devanam Priya* (=son of God, and dear to the Gods -plural), and also adopted what historians calls his "characteristic symbol" -viz., a small "V" surmounting a large "O" standing on an inverted "T" (⊥) as its base. The three combined look like a big wine cup (=Chalice) such as chalice used by Christ at His last supper with his 12 disciples, and ever after that by all Christians at the Eucharist in the

Punjab as the Acts (ca. A.D. 220) tell us. And the chalice, and not the Cross, is the earliest known Christian symbol.[29]

Till the discovery of the coins of the Indo - Parthian king Gondophernes in 1817 scholars discarded the whole story of the fictitious Acts of St. Thomas as a mere myth; but after the discovery of the coins and the Takht-i-Bahi inscription, however, some scholars began to affirm and are still affirming that kind Gudnaphar of the Acts is identical with the Gondophernes of the coins, that Gondophernes ruled from 19 A.D. to 45 A.D., and that St. Thomas preached in his kingdom. But the whole conclusion rests on the supposition that Gondophernes and St.Thomas are contemporaries.[30] Recently Mr. T.K. Joseph of Travancore has brought forward some other 'documents' to show that St. Thomas preached and died in N.W. India.[31]

St. Thomas Leaves Taxila

St. Thomas preached for several years the gospel in Taxila, the capital, and in the kingdom of Gondophernes. After that he left for another vineyard of the Lord. About the circumstances which led to the departure of St. Thomas from Taxila, the *'Acts of the Holy Apostle St. Thomas'* gives the following account:

When St. Thomas was at the court of king Gonduphar at Taxila, one day Siphur, a messenger of king Mazdai brought him the invitation of this king to come and cure his wife and daughter who both were possessed by an evil spirit. St. Thomas was moved by his entreaties and prepared for the journey. He put his deacon Xanthippus in charge of the Church in Taxila, and set out with Siphur in a chariot drawn by oxen. After many vicissitudes he arrived at the court of king Mazdai where he cured and converted the queen and her daughter, baptized them and gave them the Holy Eucharist. Many of the king's household and others in the capital were also converted. The king however was not pleased with this development. He believed that St. Thomas had bewitched his wife and daughter. He imprisoned the Apostle and intended to have him executed. But afraid of the numerous followers of the Christian religion, the king ordered his guards to remove the Apostle from the city and to kill him secretly. St Thomas was brought to a hill, about one mile from the town, and pierced with lances. His disciples

took his body and buried it not far from the scene of his death. But after some time the body of St. Thomas was taken to Mesopotamia.[32]

This is in short the story which the *Acts of the Holy Apostle St. Thomas* have to tell. Here arises the question, who this king Mazdai was and where he reigned. However, the author gives us no information of these points. The name Mazdai is probably a Syriac rendering of the Indian Mahadev or Vasudev. But many Indian kings of that name are known. It is therefore extremely difficult to ascertain which king is meant.

There is an independent local tradition in India to support the above mentioned account. Three separate versions of it have been handed down, one held by the *Christians of St. Thomas* of Malabar, another by the *Malabar Hindus* and a third by people around Mayilappur. The first exists in ancient songs whose antiquity cannot be accurately fixed. For, owing to damp air and heavy monsoons, all ancient traditions had to be periodically re - written, and naturally embellishments must have been made from time to time.

The substance of the Malabar tradition is that in the year 52 A.D. the Apostle St. Thomas arrived in Malabar from the island Socotra. He landed at Muziris or Kodungallur (the present Cranganore), travelled and preached all over South India, established seven Churches in Malabar, ordained priests and Bishops to succeed him, and in 72 A.D. (or 68) received the crown of martyrdom near Mayilappur. The faithful buried his body at Mayilappur.[33] But many years after, his remains were taken to Edessa in Mesopotamia.[34] Turning to the Coromandel Coast, tradition associates San Thome or old Mylapore with burial place of the Apostle St.Thomas who is said to have suffered martyrdom at St. Thomas Mount.[35]

We see that the *Acts of the Holy Apostle St. Thomas,* the tradition of the St. Thomas Christians and the Coromandel Coast tradition agree in essential points. In the following pages we shall examine the tradition current in Malabar. It was handed on to us in a poetical version said to be written by the priest *Thomas Malikayil*, a disciple of St. Thomas himself. The original poem was written in archaic Syriac, but later translated into Malayalam, the modern language of the St. Thomas Christians. Since the moist climate of Malabar does

not allow the survival of ancient documents written on perishable palm leaves, we cannot judge to what extent translators and transcribers have altered or embellished the original text.[36] But supporting evidence from outside India is almost entirely absent, and what there is, is contradictory or at least ambiguous.[37]

If the account given in the Acts of St. Thomas and in the Malabar tradition are correct, we ask at once why the Apostle left the Christian Church at Taxila. We do not know the answer and can only make a guess. Possibly it became increasingly difficult for St. Thomas after the untimely death of king Gonduphar in 48 A.D. to continue his apostolic work at Taxila. The Kushans were already at the gates of Taxila and, as elsewhere, the Christian converts may have been blamed for bringing the wrath of the gods upon the whole city for their apostacy from their ancient faith.

St. Thomas was certainly not the man to run away from presecution. But the message from king Mazdai must have appeared to him like an indication of the will of God. Here at Taxila his work was done. The Church was firmly established, his deacon Xanthippus was well able to become its first bishop. New conversions could not be expected in these troubled times. Now came this urgent call from another king. Could St. Thomas do otherwise than accept the invitation?

The *Acts of the Holy Apostle St. Thomas* describe in detail the leave - taking of the Apostle from his flock at Taxila. After the Saint had prayed to God for enlightenment and discussed the matter with his co-workers, he decided at last to accept the invitation of King Mazdai. Accordingly he laid his hands on the head of his deacon Xanthippus and consecrated him Bishop of Taxila. To him he entrusted the young Christian community, to govern and guide it in his name. For the last time he called the faithful together and admonished them. Then he said, 'The peace of the Lord be with you!' and took leave. The Christians were sorry to lose their pastor.[38]

There can be no doubt that, soon after the reign of Gondophorues the Pahlava power in India came to an end;[39] the rule of the Parthians, was brought to an end by the Kushans.[40]

While the work of St. Thomas did not bear any permanent fruit at Taxila, and the Church on Socotra died out after a long lingering agony, the seed planted in South India blossomed and bore fruit and has not perished.

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20/02/18

ST. THOMAS MOUNT
- A PILGRIMAGE SPOT

J.B. Santiago

Out of the many documents that pertain to the arrival of St. Thomas to the coromendal coast in the city of Chennai, there is this mount named after the apostle. Here is a record of a memorable visit by the writer to this very spot.

Fr. S. J. Anthonysamy says "The saga of St. Thomas continues. The Lord has his own ways of raising up personal to maintain the rhythm of his work. Looking back into the corridor of history can be a great faith experience. Every event in the long saga of our great apostle can still give us impiration and courage."[1]

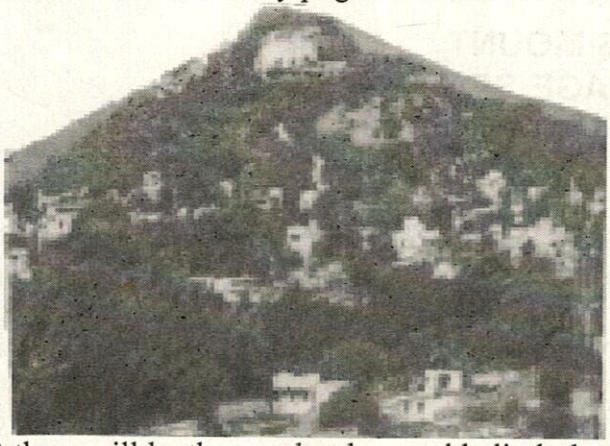
The English who came to India in the 17th century called the place St. Thomas Mount and named the wide road Mount Road to mean that the road leads to the Mount. For many many years this was popularly known as Mount Road and people who have been here since those early years in the city still call this road as Mount Road.

The Protuguese called the Mount as 'Monte Grande' meaning Big Mountain. The people who lived around named it Parangi Malai to refer to the Portuguese who occupied the place. Even the Railway Station nearby bears the name Parangi Malai.

The ancient church on top of St. Thomas Mount used to serve as a lighthouse for the Portuguese and Armenian ships sailing the Bay of Bengal in the 16th and the 17th centuries. The sailors, it is said, used to say their prayers for a safe journey when they sighted the Church.

The spot of the historic martyrdom of St. Thomas, the apostle known as St. Thomas Mount is a rising of 300' above sea level. It is situated in the southern part of the city of Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu. This place is close to the airport, Meenambakkam, from where planes take off to every city in India and every country in the world. It is estimated that there will be one thousand visiters

each day[2] to this Mount. It is visited by pilgrims from all over the world. During



the season of lent there will be thousands who would climb the 134 granite steps as an act of penance and sacrifice. By the side of the steps there are 15 stations of the cross depicting the agonizing scenes of Jesus as traditionally treasured. The figures that are erected have been moulded with a rare metal that is quite impressive. As each one takes time to gaze at each scene, there is much recollection and reviewing of the Master's last days in his life. The climbing and the viewing would all bring about a spiritual exercise to the well meaning viewer. The annual gathering of people in very large numbers for the Mass celebrated by the Bishop on Palm Sunday evening will mark the culmination of the Lenten exercise.



On top of the Mount, one is enthralled to see an erected scene of the crucifiction of Christ with the three standing at the foot of the cross. This imposing masterpiece was erected in memory of His grace Archbishop Louis Mathias in the year 1963. One who reaches the top of the Mount can see many devotees kneeling in prayer before this monument. This brings about an inspiration unique in itself.

There is a grilled open space over here and from this vantage point, a person can have a panoramic view of the city of Chennai. If it is a little late in the evening, one can spend captivating moments watching the glittering planes take off now and then while the whole city with glittering light can be viewed from one place. Those familiar with the city's landmark could spot some places like the St. George's Cathedral near the Gemini Flyover and the LIC Building on Mount Road (now known as Anna Salai).

The Carved Stone Cross

The pilgrims who come to the altar of the Chapel stand before a cross carved on a stone. They see an inscription around the cross. It is in 'Nagari Palidu' script and the meaning of the cross is deciphered as 'Through the cross suffering the Messiah - Jesus Christ brought salvation to the world'. This cross was discovered by the Portuguese in the 16th, Century A.D. when they dug the foundation for the shrine Church.

It is believed that this cross was carved by St. Thomas himself and he used to pray before it. It was on one such occasion that he was pierced from behind with a lance as he lay in prayer before the stone cross. As a result of the piercing blood had splashed on the cross.

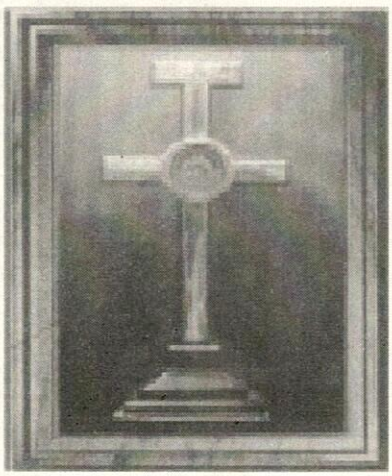
During the Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Gasper Coelho on the 18th, December 1558, this cross sweated blood, according to records. People have received miracles while in contact with this cross in faith. Today, one can see a natural dampness on the surface of the cross that inspires.

This is the blessed sanctuary reputed to be the spot where St. Thomas was martyred .

Painting

There is a painting that one sees on entering the Chapel depicting the scene wherein a man is ready to kill from behind St. Thomas. One cannot but stand still and spend moments in front of the painting to call to mind that terrible event. After a while and alongside that wall, one can see the portrait of St. Thomas, an impressive one where his eyes are looking a little beyond and with a charisma.

The Sacred Relic



To the left of this carved stone cross, there is a sacred relic, a piece of the bone of St. Thomas casketed in a beautifully ornamented monstrance. It is said that people have witnessed many miracles that others had experienced while in contact with this relic.

The Picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary

To the right of the stone cross, one can see the picture of the Blessed Virgin reputed to have been painted by St. Luke, the Evangelist. St Thomas had brought this picture along and kept it specially while in prayer. Therefore this picture is known as the 'Scapular of St. Thomas'.

People who come here and see this painting cannot but be impressed. One gets to think that this is how Blessed Mary would have looked really since it was done by St. Luke who was close to that age and time. This picture is considered to be one of the oldest and the most regarded paintings in India.

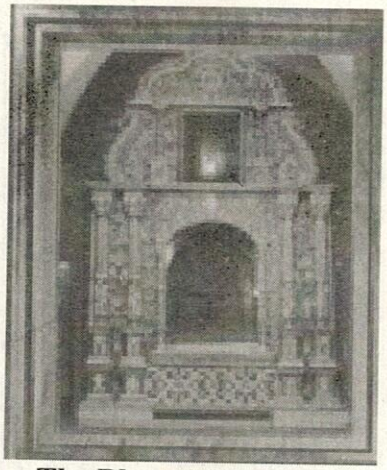


After a while the visitors are seen in prayer positions in the Chapel, some lost in thought. One of those who was seen there is a Lutheran who makes it a point to visit this shrine every month. Three belonging to the C.S.I. tradition had come there to see and to sit for a while in prayerful posture in one of the rows of benches. Some keep praying earnestly. There are many foreigners too among the visitors with cameras in hand. Many recall in silence those early years of life of Jesus intertwined with the life of Thomas.

Thomas called the Twin was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. Scholars opine that he was called the Twin because of his close resemblance to Jesus. This would perhaps explain the reason why Judas was asked to identity Jesus so that only Jesus may unmistakably be taken by those who sought his life.

Thomas' attachment to his Master was so deep that on one occasion, he said to the others who were with him 'Let us also go with him and die with him'. When we consider Thomas' words quite seriously we would infer that from the innermost depths of his heart, there was a deep desire in him to be Jesus' true follower in letter and in spirit. When he said to his companions 'Let us also go

with him and die with him', he envisaged to accompany his Master to the Mount of Calvary but his Master accompanied him to another Mount in Chennai, India where he finally arrived.



The Blessed Sanctuary

Thomas is referred to as 'doubting Thomas'. While there is no such phrase in the Bible describing his character, there are many others in the Bible who have doubted in their lives such as Abraham, Sarah and mother Mary too and yet we do not label them and say doubting Abraham doubting Sarah and doubting Mary.

Vedanayagan Sastriar in his musical discourse[3] on the 15th, January, 2007 at the venue of the Institute of Asian Studies, high highted the character of St. Thomas, as one who wanted to have a personal encounter with Jesus. That proved to be the most unique experience for him which prepared him for a life long journey and which ultimately culminated in giving up his life.

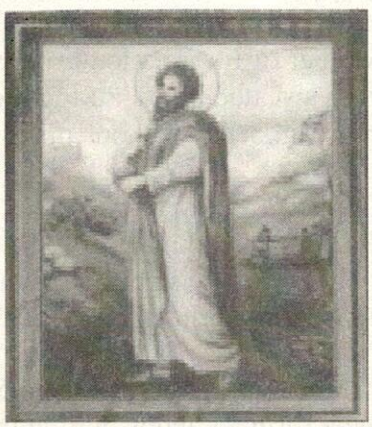
Dr. T. Dayanandan Francis wrote a book entitled *'Anbanzaippu'* (Loving invitation)[4] wherein he gives a vivid description of the events in Jerusalem from that of Jesus' procession up to the rousing resurrection and that of his appearance to many of his disciples except Thomas. Nallan befriends one by name Napthali who accompanies him upto Jerusalam. This Nallan is much impressed with the last journey of Jesus wherein people cheer him along the way Golgotha. Nallan

listens with apt attention the words of kindness coupled with deep sorrow from Jesus as he hung on the cross. Then he stays on in Jesusalem in anxiety having been impacted with the events. Many days later he gets an opportunity to meet Thomas who had just then emerged out of that poignant interaction, having felt his Master's wounds with his own hands and profession of faith 'My Lord and My God' inspired him.

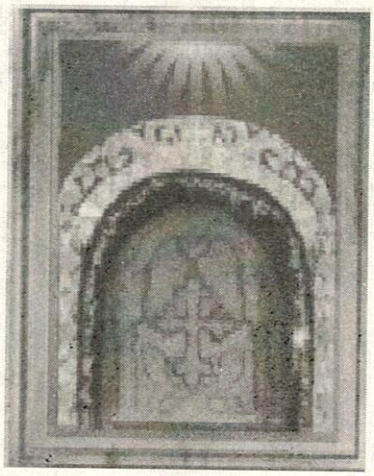
This poetical narrative has the probability of occurrence given the fact that trading was carried on during those days when Tamilians did venture out to far off lands. There is a Tamil saying to the effect that one needs to cross the sea even to seek wealth. In those days it is very probable that this Tamilian merchant by name Nallan would have gone and would have had the rare privilege of being there during the festival in Jerusalem. His way of relating to people was based on philosophy of life prevelant among Tamilians that every place is worth the counting and every one a neighbour. Nallan, a trader from Tamil Nadu had been there at the time of Jesus' last phase of life.

Some days later Thomas' thoughts extended to the far away lands in the East as he listened to his Master's words after resurrection. It is in this context that Nallan extends his loving invitation to St. Thomas to come to Tamil Nadu. He invites his friend Napthali also and in response he too expresses his desire to come over to see the land of the Chera, Chola and Pandia kingdoms.

Framed Picture



Coming back to the shrine at St. Thomas' Mount, the images of the twelve apostles and that of St. Paul and Christ – in all 14 in framed pictures are on the wall with a miniature depiction of the manner with which each of the apostles laid their lives or glorified Jesus in their very final frame of their lives. One gets to have a glimpse of their lives, though in a brief pictorial sketch. To some visitors to this little gallery, the time is never ending because they are really amazed at the call these disciples received from their Master and the willing obedience to that call – whatever that meant to them.



The peak structure of the Hill was built by the Portuguese in the year 1523. The 18th December is the day of the Annual Feast of this Chapel that is just a week before the 25th of December, the Christmas Day. The Blessed Virgin Mary is honoured as the Mother of Expectation on this 18th December because it was on this day that the cross sweated blood during the Holy Mass. The pilgrims who stand before this cross cannot be without observing the dampness on the surface of the cross.

Before the main altar one is captivated by the serenity and the quietness that prevails though the visitors are constantly arriving there to say a prayer or gaze at the cross or read the words imprinted on the wall.

Dr. T. Daynandan Francis in his play entitled St. Thomas in Tamil Nadu *(Thamighagathil Thomaiyar)* brings about the culmination of St. Thomas' mission. With the murder that took place, those who rush to see him at that time

find that he is already gone. They were aghast with agony but at the same time they were moved to see the extent of one's love. 'Those without love would like to have everything for themselves but those with love would give away even their bones to others'. This couplet from *Thirukural* as penned by Thiruvalluvar, the great poet expounds the very essence of the life lived out by St. Thomas.[5]

His mortal remains were shifted to Santhome where the Basilica of St. Thomas was created to entomb the Apostle's body.

Yet another place where pilgrims go to see in connection with St. Thomas' visit is the Little Mount called Chinna Malai in Tamil. It is believed that St. Thomas used to spend time in meditation and prayer in a cave. A fountain brought forth fresh water to quench his thirst. The visitors make it a point to see this place as well. It is near Saidapet about 10 Kilometers from the heart of the city of Chennai. It is 200 meters off the main road which leads from Maraimalai Adigal bridge (Saidapet) to Raj Bhavan (The official residence of the Governor of Tamil Nadu).

There is a tradition that St. Thomas the apostle was actually handled brutally more than once. In order to save his life he had sought refuge in the thicket of the little Mount. The cave which visitors come to see has an opening, a small one, of about 2 ½ feet which throws a dim light into the cave. It is through this opening that St. Thomas escaped while being chased, it is said. One can see the hand impression believed to be that of St. Thomas.

St. Patrick's Church

This church is situated on the plains of St. Thomas Mount. This is the Parish Church for this shrine area. The Shrine church comes under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Chingleput.[6]

St. Thomas Stamps

In the year 1964, the India post & Telegraph Department released a postage stamp with the picture of the Ortona silver bust of St. Thomas. The

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second one was released in connection with the 19th centenary of the martyrdom – that was in 1972 wherein the bleeding cross at St. Thomas Mount is depicted.[7]

His Holiness Pope John Paul II visited this Mount along with his Cardinals on the 5th February, 1986.

The Apostolic Nuncio to India His Excellency Pedro Lopes Quintana paid a visit to the strine on the 21st May, 2006.

So, this place has gained importance over the years. Now there are plans to renovate and restore the place and its antiquity. Museum is to be instituted to bear witness to the faith and tradition of the believers. A cosmic prayer junction for people to come and to spend a time of prayer and meditation has also been planned.

End Notes

1. Fr. S.J. Anthonysamy: 'A saga of faith – St. Thomas the apostle of India'. P.123.
2. The writer visited the Mount on the 24th February and had a word with the seller at the book shop by the Shrine. After perusing the books and the brochure made available to the visitors, he asked him about the number of visitors. To this he said 'easily one thousand a day.' It is possible because it was the season of lent. While climbing the hill the passers by said to the writer that it would be a blessing to go up hill as that in itself is a penance.
3. Addressing the delegates of the Second International Conference on the History of Early Christianity in India, Vedanayaga Sastriar. The occasion was the evening cultural programme at the venue of the Institute of Asian Studies when Vedanayagam Sastriar in his musical discourse talked about the characteristic traits of St. Thomas, the apostle. He threw a new light stating that we must not label Thomas as a doubting Thomas. There were so many others in his day who were doubters. The words 'Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe' surely points to those who would come generations later (like us) and who now believe in Christ's resurrection.

4. The 24 page booklet *'Anbazhaippu'* by Dr.T. Dayanandan Frances (1981) is a poetical rendition of a voyage by Nallan who left for Palastine with merchants. Then he reaches Jerusalem. It was at this time that he meets Napthali who in turn introduces him to the Greeks who had come there to see Jesus. This is an excellent masterpiece that enables readers to think of the possibility of such an occurrence.

5. The book by Dr. T. Dayanandan Francis was first published in 1985. The writer had the privilege of viewing the play when it was staged in Bain School, Chennai. The 65 page booklet portrays St. Thomas' visit to Chennai and his interaction with the people along the coast. His friendliness and his frankness, his meditative nature coupled with his emotional countenance make an impression in this play. He is fluent in Tamil – a possibility because it was on the day of Pentecost that the disciples spoke in tongues – a gift of the Holy Spirit.

6. Much of the information is from the brochure entitled "St. Thomas Mount, Chennai the spot of the heroic martyrdom of St. Thomas the apostle" which was available at St. Thomas Mount bookshop. The salient features of the Mount have been given pictorially in this brochure, as compiled by Rev. Fr. Rector & Parish Priest of St. Thomas' Mount Shrine.

7. This information is made available in a little a folder that is very handy and it is entitled 'St. Thomas monuments in Chennai'.



St.Thomas

SAND FROM THE TOMB OF APOSTLE ST.THOMAS

C.A. Simon

Tradition, custom, devotion and miracles attributed to the sand taken from the Tomb of St.Thomas at Mylapore, Santhome, Chennai, India.

According to tradition, St.Thomas one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ came to India in A.D.52, martyred in A.D.72 and was buried in Mylapore. The National Shrine Basilica of St.Thomas is built over the tomb of the Apostle.

Further as per tradition the pilgrims and faithful take the sand from the Tomb along with them with great devotion. On many occasions they have reported the experiences of miraculous healing power of the sand. The first such incident believed to have taken place in the first century itself when the tomb was opened to take some earth to cure the son of King Mahadevan, the then ruler. Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveler has recorded about the healing power of the sand in 1293.

Relic & Veneration

A relic is an object, especially a piece of the body or a personal item of a person of religious significance carefully preserved with an air of veneration as a tangible memorial. Relics are an important aspect of religions.

Veneration is a religious symbolic act giving honor to someone by honoring an image of that person, and in particular of saints.

One of the earliest sources cited to support the efficacy of relics is 2 Kings

"Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb.

When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. (NIV)"

These verses are cited to claim that the Holy Spirit's indwelling also affects the physical body, that God can do miracles through the bodies of His servants, or both. Also cited is the veneration of Polycarp's relics recorded in the Martyrdom of Polycarp (written 150-160A.D). With regard to relics that are objects, an often cited passage is Acts 19:11-12, which says that Paul's handkerchiefs were imbued by God with healing power.

Romano-Christian demons and the "virtue" of relics

In his introduction to Gregory of Tours, Ernest Brehaut analyzed the Rameno-Christian concepts that gave relics such a powerful draw. He distinguished Gregory's constant usage of "sanctus" and "virtus", the first with its familiar meaning of "sacred" or "holy", and the second "the mystic potency emanating from the person or thing that is sacred. These words have in themselves no ethical meaning and no humane implications whatever. They are the keywords of a religious technique and their content is wholly supernatural. In a practical way the second word [virtus] is the more important. It describes the uncanny, mysterious power emanating from the supernatural and affecting the natural. The manifestation of this power may be thought of as a contact between the natural and the supernatural in which the former, being an inferior reality, of course yielded. These points of contact and yielding are the miracles we continually hear of. The quality of sacredness and the mystic potency belong to spirits, in varying degrees to the faithful, and to inanimate objects. They are possessed by spirits, acquired by the faithful, and transmitted to objects."

Opposed to this holy "virtue" was also a false mystic potency that emanated from inhabiting demons who were conceived of as alien and hostile. Truly holy virtue would defeat it, but it could affect natural phenomena and effect its own kind of miracles, deceitful and malignant ones. Gregory of Tours and other Christian writers were associated with the devil, demons, soothsayers, magicians, pagans and pagan gods, and heretics. False virtues inhabited images of the pagan gods, the "idols" of our museums and archaeology, and destroying it

accounts for some of the righteous rage with which mobs of Christians toppled miracles, deceitful and malignant ones.

The transmissibility of this potency, this virtue, is still reflected in the Roman Catholic classifications of relics in degrees, as mentioned above. By transmission, the virtue might be transmitted to the city. When St. Martin died, November 8, 397 at a village halfway between Tours and Poitiers, the inhabitants of these cities were well ready to fight for his body, which the people of Tours managed to secure by stealth. The Image of Edessa was reputed to render that city impregnable.

Roman Catholic classification of relics 3.1 First-Class Relics

Items directly associated with the events of Christ's life (manger, cross, etc.) or the physical remains of a saint (a bone, a hair, a limb, etc.) Traditionally, a martyr's relics are often more prized than the relics of other saints. Also, some saints' relics are known for their extraordinary incorruptibility and so would have high regard. "It is important to note that parts of the saint that were significant to that saint's life are more sacred relics. For instance King St. Stephen of Hungary's right forearm is specially important because of his status as a ruler. Similarly the right hand of St. Thomas which touched the wounds of the Risen Lord is considered more sacred. Current catholic teaching prohibits relics to be divided up into small, unrecognizable parts (Catechism of the Catholic Church and Canon Law). Thus even the many relics that are enshrined in churches and Cathedrals worldwide must be at least a finger or small bone, etc.

Second-Class Relics

An item that the saint wore (a sock, a dress, a glove, etc.) Also included is an item that the saint had, for example, a crucifix, book etc. Again, an item more important in the saint's life is thus a more important relic.

Third-Class Relics

The Third-Class Relics fall into two categories.

1) A piece of cloth touched to the body of a saint after his death.
2) A piece of cloth brought to the shrine (or site of the vision) of the saint.

Sand from the tomb as a relic

According to the relic classification sand from the tomb is classified into second-class category. As per belief, an earthen pot full of sand taken from the spot of martyrdom, soaked with the blood of the Saint was also buried along with the body of the Saint. Hence traditionally devotees believe that the sand taken from the tomb of St. Thomas qualifies as second class relic.

Practice of taking earth from the tomb

'Pious use of earth taken from the place of martyrdom seems to be a sufficiently known practice in those days. It is remarkable that Synaxarium (Brief Stories of Saints) of the Church of Constantinople says:"...the son of the king was suffering from a mortal disease and the king asked that a relic of the Apostle might be brought to his son who was already beyond the hope of recovery and near death. As the body (remains) of the Apostle was not found he ordered earth from the grave to be fetched. On this earth touching the dying man he was cured at once."

The practice of taking earth from the grave of the Apostle has continued in the course of centuries and is prevalent even today.'

First Opening of the Tomb

It is believed that the tomb was opened for the first time to take some sand (earth) to cure the son of King Mahadevan the then Ruler probably in the 1st Century.

A stone inscription at the entrance of the cave at Little Mount says that King Mahadevan ordered the death of St.Thomas. If the same King Mahadevan later took refuge in the miraculous healing power of the sand from the tomb, for saving the life of his own son, one wonders if there were many more such miracles'attributed to the healing power of the relic sand.

Acts of Thomas, an apocryphal work, there is a mention of a King Mizdai and his son Vizan. Many believe the reference may be pointing to King Mahadevan (Bazdeo, or Vasudeva) and his son Vijayan.

Second opening of the tomb

Second opening of the tomb might have happened during the time when the merchant transferred the greater portion of the relic to Edessa.

Acts of Thomas refers to a merchant from Edessa who transferred greater portion of the saints' body to Edessa.

Tradition has that between A.D.232 and 235 a merchant (called Khabin) removed most of the Skeletel remains of the saints body to Edessa. A long public tradition in the church at Edessa honoring Thomas as the Apostle of India resulted in several surviving hymns that are attributed to Ephrem, copied in codices of the 8th and 9th centuries. References in the hymns preserve the tradition that Thomas' bones were brought from India to Edessa by a merchant, and that the relics worked miracles both in India and at Edessa. The Thomas traditions became embodied in Syriac liturgy, thus they were universally credited by the Christian community there.

Girdle of Virgin Mary

According to tradition of Edessa, Blessed Virgin Mary dropped the girdle to St.Thomas at the time of her assumption to heaven and St.Thomas always wore the same tied around his waist. While transferring the relics to Edessa, the merchant carried a portion of the Girdle of Virgin Mary which was buried along with the body but still survived the decay over the years.

Thomas and the Assumption of Mary

According to *The Passing of Mary*, a text attributed to Joseph of Arimathaea, Thomas was the only witness of the Assumption of Mary into heaven. The other apostles were miraculously transported to Jerusalem to witness her death. Thomas was left in India, but after her burial he was transported to her

tomb, where he witnessed her bodily assumption into heaven, from where she dropped her girdle. In an inversion of the story of Thomas's doubts, the other apostles were skeptical of Thomas's story until they saw the empty tomb and the girdle. Thomas' receipt of the girdle is commonly depicted in medieval and pre-Tridentine Renaissance art.

"Ephrem the Syrian was a deacon, prolific Syriac language hymn writer and theologian of the 4th century. He is venerated by Christianity throughout the world, and especially among Syriac Christianity, as a saint. Ephrem wrote a wide variety of hymns, poems and sermons in verse. These were works of practical theology for the edification of the church in troubled times."

He makes many references to St.Thomas and India in his hymns. There are clear references in many of his hymns that St.Thomas the Apostle suffered martyrdom in India, that he was buried there and that he worked miracles.

Refering to the transfer of St.Thomas' remains to Edessa, he continues that Edessa became the blessed city by possessing the greatest pearl that India could yield. Further the whole church of Edessa venerated St.Thomas the apostle with great devotion.

The Edessane account may be narrated as follows.

"Probably at some date in the second and third century the Edessane merchant, with a few companions brought a case containing some human remains to Edessa. They affirmed that they were the relics of the Apostle St.Thomas, and that he had suffered martyrdom in India. They said they had stolen the relics, and had brought them from India by sea to Charax Spasni, a port at the head of the Persian Gulf. From Charax they had taken them by road to Nisibis and then to Edessa."

Gregory of Tours (538-593)

St.Gregory, Bishop of Tours in his works conveys that many pilgrims devotedly paid homage to the tomb. One such pilgrim Theodore who visited the tomb of St.Thomas personally reported to St.Gregory of his experiences.

Marco Polo (1292-1293)

Travels of Marco Polo by Yule gives vivid accounts of the tomb and the miraculous healing power attributed to it.

Discoursing of the place where lieth the Body of St. Thomas, the Apostle and of the miracles thereof:

"The body of Messer St. Thomas the Apostle lies in this province of Madras at a certain little town having no great population, 'tis a place where few traders go, because there is very little merchandize to be got there, and it is a place not very accessable. Both Christians and Saracens, however, greatly frequent it in pilgrimage. For the Saracens also do hold the Saint in great reverence, and say that he was one of their own Saracens and a great Prophet, giving him the title of Avarian, which is as much as to say "Holy Man". The Christians who go thither in pilgrimage take off the earth from the place where the saint was killed and give a portion thereof to anyone who is sick of a quartan or a tertian fever; and by the power of God and of St. Thomas the sick man is incontinently cured. The earth, I should tell you is red. A very fine miracle occurred there in the year of Christ 1288, as I will now relate."

Bishop John de Marignoli (1349) and Nicole de Conti (1425-30) are other two sources who strengthen the fact of burying an earthen urn filled with the blood soaked earth from the site of martyrdom.

Malabar tradition of St.Thomas in Mylapore

Margam Kali Pattu, Ramban Songs and *Veeradiyan songs* give vivid pictures of the Malabar tradition. Malabar tradition continued with the Christians of Kerala down the centuries.

Pilgrims from Malabar continue to frequent the tomb of St.Thomas in Mylapore even today, and take away with them sand from the place of burial (tomb) as a mark of their devotion to the Saint.

Portugese and the third opening of the tomb of St.Thomas

The first Portugese visitor was a certain pilgrim traveler Duarte Barbosa in the year 1515; the next visit was Diogo Fernandes in 1517, both of them were impressed about the tomb and the devotion of the people who visited the tomb.

Figuredo describes the findings on the opening of the tomb:

'They came upon some bones of the skull, then some of the spine...at the foot of the tomb there was ' an earthen vessel' that could contain one almude(six gallon) filled with earth...'

Pot with blood soaked sand hence arose the tradition which survived till date of pilgrims particularly from Kerala collecting some sand from the tomb and taking home with devotion.

The tradition about the sand

Pilgrims especially from Kerala always looked for a little sand from Mylapore to take back home as a mark of devotion.

Availability of the sand from the tomb was scarce as the opening of the tomb was rare down the centuries. It was a practice of the church authorities to preserve sand from the tomb for distribution among the pilgrims who requested for the same. Many pilgrims collect sand from the premises of the church thinking that it was blessed by the touch of the feet of the Saint in the event of non-availablity of the sand from the tomb. Pilgrims on returning home used to distribute the sand from the tomb to their near and dear ones in small containers. This is kept in their homes with great devotion.

Renovation and construction of crypt Chapel 2004

For the time the tomb was, opened during 2004 for construction of a crypt chapel. tev.Fr.Lawrence Raj , Rector of the Shrine who conceived and executed the project was amazed at the deep faith and conviction of the pilgrims who visit the tomb from different parts of the world.

The Cathedral arranged the distribution of the sand in small packets on the day of the blessing of the underground tomb chapel.

Carrying the sand in packets was not convenient for the devotees. The long cherished desire of the devotees of St.Thomas was finally fulfilled when the Shrine made the sand relic available in a convenient credit card format which can always be carried in a wallet or credit card holder.

Many miracles attributed to the sand relic are pouring in to the shrine according to the rector Fr.Lawrenee Raj.

The devotion to the sand relic is considered as a mark of respect to the martyrdom and the bloodshed of St. Thomas on this earth.

Notes

I. *The Holy Bible-Old testament* (NIV)

2. Catechism of the Catholic Church and Canon Law

3. *In the steps of St. Thomas* by Rt.Rev. Dr. Herman D 'Souza Synaxarium (Brief Stories of Saints) of the Church of Constantinople

4. *Acts of Thomas*

5. *Hymns of St. Ephrem*

6. Marco Polo's chronicle

7. *Travels of Marco Polo* by Yule Edited by Cordier

b. The little town where the body of St. Thomas lay was Mailapur. the name of which is still applied to a suburb of Madras (now Chennai) about three miles south of Fort St. George.

c. The use of the earth from the Tomb of St. Thomas for miraculous cures is mentioned also by John Marignolli, who was there about 1348-1349. Assemani gives a special formula of the Nestorians for use in the application of this dust, which was administered to the sick in place of the unction of the catholics. The Abyssinians make a similar use of the earth from the tomb of

their National Saint Tekla Haimanot. And the Shiahs on solemn occasions, partake of water in which has been mingled the dust of Kerbela.

9. Ancient text attributed to Joseph of Arimathaea

10. Figueredo N Voices from Dust

11. *National Shrine of St. Thomas*, Basilica Publication *'Voice of St. Thomas'*

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CHURCHES ESTABLISHED BY ST.THOMAS

B. Maria John

The present paper entitled seven churches established by Apostle St.Thomas is an attempt to trace the history and oral tradition of the seven and half churches established by Apostle St.Thomas. Historians today believe that St.Thomas planted the seed of the gospel on Indian Soil. This is the general trend of their thinking. During the Apostle's time there were well frequented trade routes by land and water connecting North India, the west coast and the east coast with north Africa, and west Asia. Thus Alexandria, Aden, Socotra, Ortnnz, Ctesiphon, Caesarea, Taxila, Brach, Kodungallur (Muziris) and even Rome were interlinked. The witness of different authors belonging to different places, churches, cultures centuries and races and often speaking different languages supporting the Apostle's Indian Mission provide an almost unassailable bulwark of evidence along with the South Indian tradition that is woven into a myriad details of folklore, place names, family traditions, social customs, monuments, copper plates, ancient songs, liturgical texts etc.

The historic proofs of St.Thomas mission in India are many. Taking into account traditional evidence available in India and abroad, it may be said that the apostle was in India for approximately 17 years. Crosses carved on stone, some of which are attributed St.Thomas by unbroken tradition, have not seen lost posterity.[2]

Oral tradition says that the foundations of Christianity were laid in India by St.Thomas the Apostle of Jesus Christ. St.Thomas is said to have reached Kodurigallur port (Muziri) in 52 A.D. On reaching the shores of the Chera country, St.Thomas is said to have received a spontaneous welcome from the Jews who already settled at Maliankara 9 km south of the port. The apostle is said to have converted 40 Jews in Anguwanam and later converted many more natives. The Kerala Syrian Catholic tradition believes that St.Thomas built seven and a half churches on the western coast. The old and small Syrian Church of St.Mary at Thiruvithancode in the former South Travancore and the present

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Kanyakumari District is said to be the half church while other seven churches were in

1. Cranganore or Maliankara (present Kodungallur)
2. Palur or Palayur (near Thrissur)
3. Paravur or Kottakaru (a place near Cochin).
4. Kokkamangalam (a place near Chertalai).
5. Niranam a place (near Tiruvalla).
6. Chayal or Nilakkal an interior hill side place (near Sabarimalai) and
7. Quilon or Kollam.

According to an oral tradition, St.Thomas converted the brakish water into drinking water in a well near a Kurusadi at Chinna Muttom near Kanyakumari. At present it is called as Thomaikinaru (Well of Thomai) The Kurusadi popularly called Thomaipalli has also been built by St.Thomas himself.

Kodungallore Church

Ancient Musiris or Kodungallore is where St. Thomas arrived. This coastal town is situated 40 kms to south west of Trichur Kerala. The schematic map of the region around Kodungallor gives only a faint suggestion of the landscape of the area which is hardly above sea land and abounding in canals and lagoons prone to flooding during rainy season. The land strip 5 to 10 km broad near the sea shore show a every sign of beings nearly formed by the sea receding in recent times. It is not possible now to locate the ancient site of chera kings precisely at any of the present sites of the environs of Kodungallor. No structure or building existing today in the area can be dated back to more than six centuries. Kodungallor of today is not even a shadow of its glorious secular past. There are sufficient historical testimonies to musires as a magnification harbor and the seat of the chera kings under the name of Thiruvanchkulam, which brings it down to about 8th century A.D but the data is too scanty to reconstruct a continuous history of the city. Kodungallor continued to be the city of considerable importance so that Portuguese, the Dutch and the English thought it worthwhile to make it one of their main bastions of power.[4]

Nagam Aiya the compiler of the Travancore State manual has no doubt about the Malabar tradition. "There is no doubt as to the tradition that St. Thomas

came to Malabar and converted a few families of Nambudiris some of whom were ordained by him as priests such as those of Sankarapuri and Pakalomattom. For, in consonance with this long standing traditional belief in the minds of the people of the apostle 's mission and labors among high caste Hindus. They wear clothes as Nambudiri women do, move about screening themselves with huge umbrellas from the gaze of profane eyes as those women do and will not marry except perhaps in exceptional cases and those only recently, but from among dignified families of similar aristocratic decent".[5]

Kodungallor is the cradle of Christianity in India. The growth of Christianity in Kerala along the sea coast and its geographical dispersion indicate the importance of Kodungallor in the spread of the gospel message in Kerala and India. According to the strong Kerala tradition as found embedded in the Ramban Song and in the collective consciousness of the whole land and people irrespective of creed or denomination. Kodungallor (Malaimkara) was the headquarters of apostle St.Thomas from where he organized and operated his various mission projects and apostolic journeys to the various mission centers .[6]

There were a number of factors that must have prompted the saint to make Kodungallor his mission headquarters. For example, he himself had first landed in the land of Kerala in Chera country and India at Kodungallor. Even if he had gone to the land of king Gondophares earlier, as for as present's day India is concerned it was Kodungallor that first met the apostle and his message. And the possibility that the apostle might have come to Kodungallor itself, the post most accessible to foreign ships and premium emporium India before embarking for Taxila or Handhara along coasted route could not be totally rejected.

In fact, something quite similar happens in the song of St.Thomas Ramban St.Thomas constantly running back and forth between Kodungallor and his far off mission stations. Perhaps he had to come to the great port city to get information, instructions and or funds from abroad via the captains of the many ships that arrived at Kodungallor [7] (Both in the writings of foreign travelers and historians and in the sangam literature there are innumerable references to the flourishing international trade that went on at Kodungallor and about the thriving flow of aliens into the land)

Another reason why the apostle constantly harks back to Kodungallor was that his missionary efforts in that cosmopolitan gateway city of India had proved highly rewarding from the very beginning. During his very first week in India, not only did the king of Tiruvanchikkulam and the royal family did accept the message but also did he enable to consecrate the king's nephew as Bishop.

Thus, as in many other places and continents it was the royal patronage that made things easy for the spread of the Christian religion in Kerala. This would also explain how the Christians in Kerala came to enjoy all those royal privileges and rights like those of the seventy-two privileges mentioned in the various copper plates, grants and other trading rights granted by the 'Tazhekkattu Sasanam' etc. It was there that the apostle established the first Bishop with Xanthipus as Bishop. In remembrance of the ancient tradition of Cranganore, His Holiness Leo XIII did allow in 1886 the Bishop of Damao, the present extinct Diocese in the Bombay Presidency the use of the title "Arch Bishop of Cranganore" [8]

Palayoor Church

The church at Palayur is unique in that the present church is a continuous history of two millennia and stands the same spot where the Apostle first established it. The first church founded by St. Thomas continued to exist for many centuries. In 1607 the Italian Jesuits Fr. Finecio decided to construct a convenient church around the existing old structure for the parish of Palayur after obtaining due permission the ecclesiastical authorities.

In true Kerala tradition, the Palayur pilgrim complex together with the Guruvayur temple and the Manathala Masjid forms a sacred triangle of religious harmony and communal amity, embracing the Arabian Sea and the Chetturai azhimukam with the elephant resort at Guruvayur providing the in comparable sight of scores of domesticated elephants. The maximum number of historical monuments and artifacts connected with the life and mission of Apostle Thomas in Kerala are to be found in and around the Palayur church.[9]

Palur or Palayur was the stronghold of the Nambudiri Brahmins ('the super class people in Indian communities) when St. Thomas arrived from

Kodungallur. Israelites had a settlement at Palayur, two thousand years ago. Ruins of an ancient Jewish Synagogue are still seen outside of a Brahmin temple about a furlong away from the churches. Broken pieces of idols, cultures and remnants of the old temple were lying around the church until a short time ago, Two large tanks on the west and east gates are tell-table relics of the ancient glory of the Hindu temple.[10]

During the Portuguese time, an attempt to dismantle the old Church to construct a new one was given up owing to the sentimental objection of the local people. Later on, however a new church was built carefully, so as to enclose the old one, which had wooden walls.

Palayur was once the seat of a Bishop. This is evident from the of Bull of Pope Gregory XII dated 15th March 1580. It admonishes and directs the faithful to be obedient to their prelate Mar Abraham and George of Christ the Bishop of Palayur Obedite Vero. Persecutions by Hyder Ali and Tippusultan, the tyrants of Mysore, in the seventeenth century, reduced this flourishing catholic centre to a state of decadence.

- The Boat jetty (Bottumkulam) where St. Thomas landed at Palayoor.
- Thaliyakulam - the pond where St. Thomas baptized the local people.
- Te replica of Chinna Malai (of Mylapore - Madras) where St. Thomas attained martyrdom in A.D. 72.
- The historical remnants of old Aryan temple.
- historical Museum
- 14 granite life size statues of various scenes from the life of St. Thomas installed on the main entrance of the church.

The jubilee door in front of the entrance of the main hall of the church depicting various important Biblical events, carved in Burmese teak. The beginning of British rule in India (1797 - 93) saw the slow and steady rise of the present church. Strangely enough, there is not a single Brahmin house at present, in the Palayur village.[11]

Kottakkavu Church (Paravoor)

Kottakkavu has a history behind its name. In the beginning of the Christian era, the western boundary of Paravoor was Venbanadu Lake. Muziris (Kodungallor) Malainkara and paravoor are located on the banks of the same lake. Kottakkavu was a kava lying adjacent to this lake. As it was near the lake, it was also known as kottakkayal (fort by the lake). Those days most of the inhabitants of paravoor were Brahmins. Pattamara parvoor was one of the earliest settlements of the Brahmin migrants who came to Kerala. Politically a local ruler ruled this area by name Pandinivattath Swaroopam that was a Brahmin family.

Kottakkavu near Parur was the next center where the apostle preached the gospel and founded a church. According to the Ramban song, the apostle succeeded in receiving into the christian fold one thousand seven hundred and seventy persons at this centre.

During the Portuguese times an attempt to dismantle the old church to construct a new one was given up owing to the sentimental objection of the local people later on however a new church was built carefully so as enclose the old one which had wooden walls.

St. Thomas who preached the Gospel in the nook and corner of Kerala reached Kottakkavu at a time when the great festival was going on in its temple. The participant in the festival looked curiously at the apostle who was clad in a strange attire and who spoke in a different tongue. St. Thomas started speaking about Jesus Christ to the people who assembled then for worship. On hearing his speech, the devotees began to laugh at the disciple and asked him to flee from there. At this moment, the elephants kept in row for the festival as well as the onlookers started falling down onto the ground. A few of them lost their consciousness. The devotees became perplexed and overwhelmed by fear, they realized that the man whom they had poked fun of was actually a holy man. They pleaded to St. Thomas Muthappan (The word Muthappan stands for a saint who is looked upon as a protector) to rescue them from the mishap. The apostle asked them to being some water. He blessed the water in the name of the Holy Trinity and sprinkled it over them. All of a sudden, they all become conscious. There is a legend that when the saint sprinkled the water a third time some drops remained

The miraculous portrait of St. Thomas venerated here was brought from the Carmelite monastery, Menanam in 1897 by one 'Albhutha Mathai' pursuant to a revelation. Now the portrait is in planted in an artistic model of a waft.

Pope John Paul II brought the Holy Relic of apostle St. Thomas ensconced here from 'Orthona' in Italy to India in November 1999. The special Novena prayer on every Friday evening is an occasion to venerate the holy Relic. Devotees, those who aspire employment, especially abroad seek the intercession of the apostle. No wonder St. Thomas who himself made an adventurous voyage is generous to them.

The seven layers of Kerala lamp glowing in front of the Holy Relic denotes the integration of seven Christian communities founded by the apostle. Pouring coconut oil in this lamp is devout practice here. Devotees collect this oil as a sacred remnant to alleviate both spiritual and physical misery.

The procession of 'Holy Mattom', the evenness scale of St. Thomas is another pious custom which assures certain favor prayed for. It is evident that the faithful carrier attains evenness in life.

The Lourdes Mariyan Groto commemorates the papacy silver jubilee of the Pope John Paul II and the Rosary year. This grotto enriched the pilgrim face of the Church complex.

Number of Biblical scenes where Jesus appear with his beloved disciple Thomas constitute this marvelous sculpture conflux. The first one is the scene of Galilee. Apostle Thomas positively responds to the call of this Master, Jesus. The next one denotes sermon on the Mount, where Thomas was eagerly listening to his master. Another visual, Jesus healing the blind man at Bethsada where his disciple St. Thomas is watching with reverence. Apostle Thomas, valiant among disciples initiates others by saying. "Let us also go to Lazarus of Bethani, along with our master, that we may die with him". In the next scene Jesus, deputes Thomas to India with the mission of evangelization. Thomas agreed to his master with utmost pleasure. Never can we find anywhere in the world such a fantastic Thomas manifestation.

Artistically instituted Marthoma Jubilee Cross is a symbol of pristine grandeur. This is a replica of the cross-founded by apostle at Kokkamangalam. This splendid granite carving is an unparallel one, in Indian church. Symbols of seven churches carved around the pedestal of the cross and the granite lamp fixed adjacent are contributing to the splendor of this Cross Menhir.

The matchless antique collection of Kokkamangalam is a treasure house of exhibits which throw light to the past. Research scholars, pilgrims and tourists can study the history and culture of this glorious land through them.

The principal feast *Puthu Njayar Thirunal* is observed on the first Sunday after Easter. Thousands of people, irrespective of caste and creed participate in the feast with utmost serenity. The celebrations begin on Thursday and conclude on Sunday. The colorful pompous procession is a special attraction.

'Dukhrana' feast that falls, on 3 July, marking the martyrdom of St. Thomas is also celebrated here with great devotion. A special 'Pachor nercha' is distributed among participants.

'The Thiruseshipu Parthista Thirunal[5] observed every 13 of November commemorates the enshrining of the Holy Relic attract devotees from all over the world.

Niranam Church

Niranam is almost midway between Quilon and Kokkamangalam is now in the hands of Jacobites. The church underwent many reconstructions and modifications. At present, the fourth building is in the place of the original church that was believed to be founded by apostle St. Thomas. It was consecrated by His grace Vattasseri Gee Varghese Deanious. The Malankara Metropolitan on 14 February 1912 A.D.

The Apostle and prince Kepha proceeded from Quilon in a northeasterly direction and arrived at Thirakapaleswarem, near Niranam. Thirkapaleswarem had Hindu temples at that time, and to provide a place of public worship to the Christian community the apostle planted a cross a few furlongs away to the west

of one of the temples. The non-Christian people in the locality did not like this and they pulled it out and cast it into the nearby river.

This desecration took place sometime after the apostle had left the place for Chayal or Nilackal. Two Christians from Thirkapaleswarem went there and requested the apostle to re-visit their place and set matters right. The cross that had been thrown out into the river moved downwards floating on the waters for some distance, and eventually rested on a strip of land on the opposite bank of the river. Here at Niranam a new site for a church was secured. During this second visit, the apostle stayed at Niranam for two months and during this period, he was giving new vigor and strength to the Christian community. He baptized two hundred persons. Local tradition is that most of the Nambuthiries having been made Christians by St .Thomas left the place after giving the boxes containing the document relating to their landed properties to a Kymal or Nair Chieftain who had since been known as Niranam Petti Kaymal. Of the various miracles performed by St. Thomas at Niranam, the most remarkable was the restoration of life to a child of barber put to death by anti-Christian families, who wanted to throw the responsibility for the crime on the apostle.

Nilakal Church

All the churches save the one at Chayal (Nilakal) are on the coast or very near it. Chayal is situated very much in the interior on the Savarimala Hill. The old churches are now in a dilapidated state amidst jungles.

When St. Thomas was doing missionary work he established seven churches and among those churches. Nilakal (Chayal) was contained. The apostle returned from Niranom to Chayal or Nilleckal. According to the Ramban Song the apostle worked here for one year and during this period one thousand and one hundred persons were converted to Christianity.

There is not any historical evidence about St. Thomas missionary work at Nilakal but it is written in old metal plates, Marthomma charitham, Veeradiyan song and many historians writing about certain vague assumption that St. Thomas established a church at Nilakal.[21]

Many Christian families in Kanjiirappaly, Ayroor and other places trace their origin to Nilakal. There is a Mar St. Thomas church at Ayroor which is still named Chayal (Nilakal). Efforts were made recently to rebuild a church at Nilkkal, which led to opposition from the Hindu community, even though there is evidence of a Christian church, and a Hindu temple, which existed there side by side in olden days, as, can be found now in many other places in Kerala. The difficulties were solved by the magnanimous approach from both Hindu friends and Christian leaders and the help extended by the Kerala Government.

Following this, a new church has been built under the joint auspices of all the Christian denominations at the site agreed upon by all concerned, a little distance away from the earlier site. This church is having historical significance as the first church built and dedicated by all the denominations together as symbol of the heritage from St. Thomas.[23]

Kollam Church

Quilon was the next scene of the labor of the apostle. Quilon (Kollam) still a big town almost the second capital of the Travancore state is one of the most ancient Episcopal sees in India. It was erected by Pope John XXII in 1330. The church built by St. Thomas in Kollam is one of the great catholic centers of India (In later stage) is believed to have existed for upwards for a thousand years, when it was swept away by the sea. The majority of the people of Quilon belonged to the Chettiar caste the recognized trading caste of the time. A good many of them accepted the gospel attracted by the preaching of the apostle and the miracles performed by him. Many inhabitants of Quilon hated the new religions and migrated from Quilon to Vanjinad to keep them away from the influence of the new religion after erecting a cross for the worship of the converts who numbered about one thousand and four hundred. The apostle left Quilon.

It is believed that in 54 A.D St. Thomas Apostle came to Quilon and found a church. The church is not a build one but, an Eclasia people of God - Group of believers who accepted faith. St. Thomas preached the word of God and lived under the tree and shadows.

Ancient fort, which had trade with ancient Roman Empire Universe Empire and therefore Kollam was the ancient port. Then for many years, there

was no evidence. In 1329, Pope John xxii erected the Diocese of Quilon by appointing Johnson Catholicize a Dominican priest as the first Bishop of Quilon. This Bishop while traveling back to Rome was martyred in Thane by pirates. There is a letter in the Bishop's house from the Pope John XXII thanking the Christians in Quilon who received the delegates of the Pope with great faith so that is an evidence that there were Christians in Quilon. In 1554 when Portuguese came to Quilon, the king of Portuguese and Quilon Dioceses made some treaty and then built a church in Quilon. For 400 years, this church was existing and destroyed by sea erosion. Remnants of the church is supposed to be seen in the deep sea even now seen by fishermen. The present church is the 4th church, foundation stone is blessed by the Pope John Paul II.[26]

Thiruvithancode Church

St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ landed at Kodunganalloor the ancient port of Malabar cost in the year of 52 A.D. There is a strong tradition among the people in Kerala that the origin and influence of Christianity in the strips of the sandy tract stretching from Kodungalloor to Kanyakumari.

The old church at Thiruvithancode from which the State of Trivancore took its name are considered to be the most ancient churches in the district and they are said to have been consecrated by St. Thomas himself. According to Kerala tradition, St. Thomas erected seven and a half Churches on the western coast and the old and small Syrian church of St. Mary at Thiruvithancode, now in Kanyakumari District is considered as a half church while the other seven churches are in Kerala.

In Kanyakumari District, one cannot forget the Church of Our Lady at Thiruviuthancode erected by St. Thomas himself, which paved the way for the spread of Christianity in this area.

It can be understood from the foregoing study that even in the absence of any documented history, the universal and oral traditions are unanimous in their views that St.Thomas' arrival in India in A.D. 52. The apostle faced martyrdom at Mylapore in Madras around A.D. 72. That he founded seven and a half

churches is true from the imprints and tradition. The present paper presenter had made an attempt to visit all the seven places and collected the relevant sources for writing this paper with a historical perspective.

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HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN TAMIL NADU

V. Gnanasikhamani

Introduction

While writing about early Christianity in India, why should Tamilnadu be mentioned in a special way? A simple answer is that Christianity not only began in Tamilnadu, but it also continued to exist.

Notable remarks by learned scholars are given here.

India's first Prime Minister, a learned Pandiji, in his autobiography has well written that christianity existed in India, the Southern end of India, ever since the first century:

"Few people realize that Christianity came to India as early as the first century after Christ, long before Europe turned to it, and established a firm hold in South India. Although these Christians have their head in Antioch or somewhere in Syria, their Christianity is practically indigenous and has few outside contacts." [1]

Panditiji wrote in his Discovery of India

"India, it must he remembered, in spite of the dominance of the Hindu faith, took various shapes and forms; Apart from Jainism and Buddhism which have largely faded away from India, it has been observed by Hinduism, that there were Christianity and the Hebrew religion. Both of these had probably reached India during the first century and both had found a place in the country. These were a number of Syrian Christians and Nestorians in South India and they were as much a part of the country as anyone else."[2]

V Nagam Aiya recorded in the 'Travancore State manual' (1906) the following:

"There is no doubt as to the tradition that St. Thomas came to Malabar and converted a few families Nambudiris, some of whom were ordained as priests such as those of Shankarapuri and Pakolamattam. For in consonance with this long standing tradition belief in the minds of the people of the apostle's mission and labours among the high-caste Hindus, we have before us today the fact that certain Asyrian Christian women, particularly of a place called Kunnamkolam, wear clothes as Nambudiri women do, move about screening themselves with huge umbrellas from the gaze of the profane as those women do, and will not marry, except perhaps in exceptional cases and that too only recently but from among dignified families of similar aristocratic descent. This is a valuable piece of evidence of conduct of the community, corroborating, the early tradition extant on the coast"[3]

Bishop Stephem Neill, a missionary in South India for many years who wrote a valuable history of the church under the title, "The story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan" asked a question : "When did the gospel arrive in India? "He has also given the answer as : "In the far South West of India, isolated between the ocean and the mountains, lives the most ancient of Indian churches, the church of the so called Thomas Christians." [4]

He further said, "there is no a priori reason for dismissing the claim as mere mythology" [5]

In his book, 'Biography' Bishop Severin, an excellent resource person for church history students, has said:

"It was St. Thomas, one of the chief disciples of Christ, who first brought Christianity to the Malayalam speaking area at a time when the language spoken there was Tamil. Malayalam developed into a separate language only a few centuries later. He came in 52 A.D. in a merchant ship, landed in Kodungallor post, and propagated the Christian religion for the first time in India. Afterwards, at several times numerous Christians from Syria immigrated to Malabar, converted local inhabitants and enlarged the Christian community." [6]

The following words of Gilber Slater are worth noting regarding early Christianity in India.

"Christianity is a much larger factor in the South than in the North. By tradition the Indian church was founded by St. Thomas the apostle, and if the tradition is inacurate, it is not misleading with the respect to the probable date of the first teaching of Christianity in India. The so called "Syrian Christians" have their stronghold in the states of Travancore and Cochin, and neighbouring parts of Madras Presidency" [7]

Tamil Nadu and Tamil

Before Tamil developed into a separate language as Malayalam and the then Tamil Chera country became the state of Kerala, the region of Tamil Nadu had enjoyed a greater portion of India as South India. We are concerned with the early history of Christianity in Tamil Nadu. The classical Tamil language is considered to be mother of the Dravidian languages, like Malayalam of Kerala Telugu of Andhra Predesh, Canada of Karnataka and also Tulu. During the British period, the Madras Presidency covered almost all of South India.

In the closing of the B.C. centuries and the early centuries of the Christian era, the Tamil language had south of India as its geographical region. For a balanced appreciation of the Tamil language it is worth reading *'The Primary Classical language of the World'* by Prof. G. Devaneyam' *'The Tamils from the earliest times to 600 A.D.* by P.T. Srinivas Iyengar; *'The Dravidian Element Indian Culture'* by Gilbert Slater. Eighteen Hundred years ago History of the Tamil by V. Kanakasabhai.

Sanskrit language after establishing its influence in the North made inroads into the South; but the language and its religious culture did not allow an easy access since the Tamil language, people and culture were more civilised and disciplined. In other words the Dravidian South had tremendous influence on the encroaching Aryan culture.

Dravidian or Christian influenced civilization

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, India's greatest Philosopher has stated the following in his work, *'Hindu View of Life'*

"The vedic culture which resembles that of the Homerio Greeks or the Celtic Irish at the beginning of the Christian Era or that of the Pre - Christian Teukars and Slaves become transformed in the epics into the Hindu culture through the influence of Dravidians. The Aryan ideas of worship during the earliest period was to call on the Father sky or some other shining one to look from on high on the sacrifices and receive from the offerings of fat of flesh, cakes and drink. But soon puja or worship which was a stricking feature of the Dravidian faith was accepted by the Aryans. The ideals of vegetarianism and non-violence (ahimsa) also developed . . contact with the highly civilized Dravidians led to the transformation of vedism into theistic religion".[8]

Gillert Slater has said after a careful research "there was in India at the time of the Aryan invasion, a Dravidian civilization of a more elaborate and developed character than the civilization if civilization it can be called of the Aryan".[9]

Historical Background of Tamilnadu

The historical religious background of Tamilnadu needs to be understood for an unbiased appreciation of the Christian gospel as it was proclaimed by St. Thomas, the apostle in the latter part of the first century A.D. or earlier by the Pentecostal day believers (Acts.2 : 1-47; 8:4).

As observed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Tamilnadu had a highly developed civilization of the Dravidians. Before the coming of Christianity in the first century A.D., Jainism and Buddhism entered the arena and both came from the north at which time Aryanism was taking root in the north. Both of them did not profess God and on the other hand they did not accept ritualism, sacrifices and the social disparity of the invading Aryanism.

Both Jainism and Buddhism produced enormous didactic literature in their respective fields, on the line of their teachings and philosophies. During the advent of the Christian gospel there were in the Tamil country Jainism, Buddhism and the beginning of Aryan contact beside the sangam literature and culture.

World empires and Tamil Nadu:
The Kingdom of God

It was wrongly thought that India was not known well by the western countries and hence they questioned the fact of St. Thomas coming to India. But India had well maintained commercial and cultural relations with the rest of world.

There are several ancient Tamil and Malayalam words found in the Bible. For example, In the Hebrew Bible the word, 'Tuki' was used for peacocks. It is 'Tokai' in Tamil and Malayalam. Cirnamon and Cassia were much in use among the Hebrews. These were produced in Madras and Ceylon. (See Exodus 36:1 - 24). Logs of Indian teak were found in the palace of Nabuchednezzar.[10]

The spices, precious gems, ivory, gold and other rare materials of India attracted merchants from all parts of the world even before the dawn of history. In the Old Testament of the Bible we read this in *II Kings 28.*

In the *book of Daniel* Chapter two, the prophet, while interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian empire spoke about the following empires:

1. The Babylonian Empire, 606 - 539 B.C.
2. The Med - Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon 539 - 331 B.C.
3. Greece or Macidonia under Alexander who conquered the Medopersian in 334. (331-146 B.C.).
4. The Roman Empire which conquered the Greeks after the fall of the Greek superamacy 146 B. C. 476 A.D.
5. The Kingdom of God i.e. eternal A.D. 34 - 2; (Acts. 2 :1 - 47) not of this world.

This Kingdom of God, which is the Church of God, established in Jerusalem in 34 A.D. is the eternal kingdom which is not of this world. During the Roman rule, the gospel was preached throughout the Roman Empire and Paul the apostle to the gentiles did his best in Rome itself (Acts. 28). The great commission of Christ (Math 28: 20) started finding its fulfillment, beginning from Jerusalem and to the very end of the earth (Acts. 1:8).

The Tamilian antiquity with the world empires and the western world is something that should be understood, in its proper sense and in this connection Dr. G.M. Moraes says: "It is an established fact that even before the dawn of history there were considerable intercourse between the Indian sub - continent and the western world". [11]

Babylonian Empire

We have earlier mentioned about the Babylonian Empire that has much reference to the biblical accounts. "There are references to the colonization of the Jews in Cranganore in the sixth centuary B.C. as a consequence of the mass exodus of the Jews who were freed from the Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 B.C). [12] Here we must note that Cranganore was the place that St. Thomas landed in A.D. 52. There is a reference in the Jataka, (the birth stories of Buddha) to Indian merchants who were called the 'panis', who traded with Babylon, by which name the summer came to be known.

Regarding the decoration materials for Solomon's temple there is a mention that they were brought through Ophir of Bombay. [13]

Medo - Persian Empire

India was brought into political relationship with the west when the Achaemenid, the Persian dynasty came to power, in the medo - Persian context. Cyrus the great pushed his eastern conquests as far as the slopes of the Hindukush on the north west frontier of India, between 558 and 530 B.C. Darius consolidated these conquests and extended the boundries, of the empire further to the east between 57 7 B. C. and 509 B. C. Darius has included India in his reign along with Gandhara and Sattgydia among the provinces reduced by his army and

tributary to him. There was constant intercourse between India and the rest of the Persian empire that stretched from the Punjab to the shores of the Mediterranean.[14]

Xerxes (486 - 465 B.C) employed Indian troops when he invaded Greece in 480 B.C. The Greek officials and mercenaries served in various parts of the Persian empire, including the Indian province, which included South India as well. [15]

Greek empire

When Alexander the great, overrunning Iran, marched into Punjab to reduce this easternmost province of the Persian empire, India was brought into direct contact with Europe.

The contact between the Greeks and Tamilnadu since the Sangam period is well known. In the north, during the Gupta Empire the political relations between the Greeks after Alexander's death in 323 B.C. through Seleucus Nicator his greatest general stands as a source for the spread of the Hellenistic culture in Asia centering around Syria. The episode of Megasthenes centered around Pataliputhra cannot he ignored.

Arnold Toyanbee, the eminent historian's testimony that the basic Greek in which the New Testament was written in the first century of the Christian era was spoken and understood from Travancore to the hinterland of Marsailles is worth nothing.

The Indu-Parthian

The Greeks were gradually suplanted by the Parthians as rulers both in Afghanistan and in the Punjab. The expansion of the Parthian Power into India could have possibly taken place only in the reign of Mithradates II (124-88 B.C). The Kingdom of Kabul was said to have passed from the Greeks to the Parthians.

Rome, during this period comes to the political theatre of the empire forming a trend. Qdores II had a victorious time with the advancing Romans. He

after his scores with the Romaus, turned his attention to the Indo -Parthian kingdom whose representatives had been flaunting the Asacid title: "King of Kings". Azes occupied the throne in 30 B.C. and he seems to have ruled for a long time in the annals of Indo-Parthian history. It was during his reign, the remmants of the Greek Kingdom of Kabul and East Punjab was annexed to the Indo Parth.[16] Azes was succeeded by Gondophemes. Dr. George Mark Moraes after a careful investigation of the historical background of St. Thomas landing in India has said aptly.

"Thus the evidence we have gathered from the sources historical, suemismatic, and inscriptional, goes to show beyond any shadow of doubt that Gondophernes reigned in the first half of the first century A.D. This is a fact of supreme importance for the history of Christianity in India, because of the divison of the world among the disciples of our Lord, for the purpose of the propagation of the Gospel, to the Kingdom of Gondophernes fell to the lot of St. Thomas." [16]

The missionary enterprise of St. Thomas with Gondophernes as portrayed in the apocriphal work of the third century A.D. 'Acts of Thomas' cannot be reasonably rejected. After his work with Gondophernes St. Thomas is traced back to Malabar or Tamilnadu.

The Roman Empire

The last, and the most important world empire that has to do with our search is the Holy Roman Empire. This empire had connections beginning from the birth of Christ Jesus until his death on the cross. His birth was recorded through the Roman census and his death was proclaimed in the Romish controlled Governer Pilate's open court trial almost around 34 years of Jesus' life and redemptive ministry.

In the first half of the first century, the discovery of the monsoon winds had further increased the trade between the west and the parts of South India. Many recent discoveries have proved beyond doubt that Roman trade centers existed along the coasts of South India. Some of the coins found in 1946 in

Eyyal, a few miles north east of Cranganore, were those of Nero Claudius, Jiherius, Augustus and Mark Antony. [18]

Augustus Ceaser (B.C. 31 to AD. 14), the unchallenged ruler of Rome strengthened the empire. It was during his time that the Roman world census was taken and the birth of Christ in Bethlehem was recorded. (Lk.2:1)

After him, Tiberius, the Roman Emperor (A.D. 14 - 37) and son-in-law and step son of Augustus reigned.

His reign was marked by many treason trials and executions. Christ Jesus was cricified during his treason and trial rule. The Kingdom of God was established in Jerusalem in 34 A.D. Nero the cruel Roman Emperor ruled (A.D. 37 - 68). He was infamous for his cruelty and his reign witnessed a fire that destroyed half of Rome and he put the blame on Christians to persecute them.

Claudius (A.D. 41-54). the Roman emperor took a different measure to deal with Christians. Constantine the great Roman Emperor (A.D 274 ~ 337) became a Christian and Christianity became a state religion but that status did not last long. He moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium which was renamed as Constantinople. This resulted in two capitals. In 395, the empire was divided between the two sons of the emperor Theodosius and two emperors ruled for a time in old (Rome) and New Rome (Constantinople). In 476, the last Roman Emperor in the west was deposed. This had to do with the old Rome. The east Roman emperors retained their court at Constantinople. The government of the empire from Constantinople kept the centre of gravity in church matters that swung to the east; the main stream of Christian history then continued eastern rather than western." 18

We are concerned with the eastern side of the Christendom. Between 451 and 590 Christianity was the official religion of the emperors. The easterm churches held the Balkam, Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. But western Christianity was mainly a mediteranian religion.

We confine the spread of early Christianity in India and in Tamil Nadu particularly to the sixth century A.D. According to Thurston's catalogue, the gold coins found at Puddukkottai (probably about 1898) has the following data:

During the reign of	Augustus	51	coins
" "	Tiberius	193	coins
" "	Gaius	5	coins
" "	Cladius	126	coins
" "	Nero	123	coins
" "	Vespasian	3	coins
" "	Total no.	501	coins.

The export of Roman coins commenced on a large scale either in the reign of Augustus or Tiberius. The gold and silver coins poured into the chief marts of the west coast of India during Nero's time." [20]

These coins in the soil of Tamilnadu are evidences to prove that the gospel was freely preached in the country through commerce and other means by interested persons of the first century.

Now the question arises as to when and by whom did the gospel come to India and Tamil Nadu. Ka. Naa. Su. after an appreciable analysis of the data has obtained and given the following information for the question:

"A.D. 49 or thereabouts was the date of the arrival of St. Thomas in North India. A.D. 52 —arrival of St. Thomas in Malabar. A.D. 62 the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew. A.D. 72 the martyrdom of St. Thomas in Mylapore." [21]

It seems, from the information that we have seen already, that Christian gospel was brought to India and Tamil Nadu much earlier than the dates mentioned above.

Among the nations that represented the Penecostal festival in Jerusalam during the establishment of God's Kingdom, the Church in A.D. 33, Parthians find the first place. (Act. 2 : 1-47). At that time India was a part of the Parthian Kingdom known as Indo Parthian. Those Parthian Jews (from India) were well to do to travel upto Jerusalem for the festival. Some of them should have been

among the 3000 that formed the first church. And hence, it can easily said that they brought the gospel first to India.

Because of the persecution that was triggered by Paul's persecution, the disciples were scattered abroad (Acts. 8:4). Those who were thus scattered, shared the gospel wherever they went. These are not mere conjectures, but observed through the historical material that has been presented.

St. Thomas' Foot Prints

In South India, the Jews had seven or eight important settlements. History tells us that there were Jewish colonies in Carmagnore, Parur, Palayur, Quilon, Muttom, Chenot and other places. Is it a strange coincidence that the seven churches founded by St. Thomas in South India are situated in or near these Jewish colonies? [22]

The Pentecostal day's miraculous apostolic gifts of St. Thomas undoubtedly helped him both to present the gospel and establish churches. Therefore it was not difficult for him to fulfill the great commission in India and specially in Tamil Nadu.

The first six centuries of Christianity in Tamil Nadu seems to be the golden age of Christianity. Dr. John Samuel observes that the 1500 years of A.D. is the golden period of Christianity in India and that it could be restructured if we are prepared to work hard in this direction. [23]

To put it in a nutshell, the changes that had taken place in the early Christian era on religions: Jainism, Buddhism and the birth of the Bakthi movement specially in the name of the Saiva and Vaishna religion are ample evidence for early Christian influence in Tamil Nadu. These matters need more investigation and the honest restructuring of the Tamil religion and culture for a proper appreciation of reality and national integration, respecting one another and giving credit to the reading of the Truth.

It seems very obvious that the gospel proclaimed in the first century and the following centuries till the 6th century A.D. transformed the then existing

religions into a highly civilized Tamil religion and culture. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan termed it as Dravidian civilization which according to him transformed the Aryan religion and culture.

Painful Neglect: But Survived

Writers who wrote the history of Tamil religion and culture have as a matter of fact totally neglected this reality and thus the influence of the Christian gospel was packed in darkness. But as Benjamin Walker has said truely:

"..... the cumulative proof as it has been adduced by the experts in their respective field, leaves little room for doubt that Christian influence on Hinduism during the early and medieval period was both deep and widespread. The parallels between certain aspects of the two religions, so close and exact at times, cannot he dismissed as coincidence. Christian influence during the latter medieval period is considerably observed for a number of reasons, but the leaven that had been bountifully added by Christian activity in the early period continued to lighten the heavy dough of Hindu thought for centuries after Christian theology coloured the teachings of Hindu bhagats .... And generally shaped the work of South Indian poets and mystics as seen in the masterpiece of Tiruvalluvar" [24]

The school of 18 Tamil siddhars is another example for the Christian influence of early period.

The Institute of Asian Studies under the direction of Dr. John Samuel had published several volumes to highlight the history of the Tamils. Books under the title. "The count down from Solomon" "The Tamils down the ages" in 4 volumes in about 2000 pages by way of comparative literature authored by Prof. Epsiba Jesudosan is a matchless contribution.

Conclusion

The early Christianity in Tamil Nadu took different shapes and thereby left its stamp in them. However as Siddhar Agasthyar had stated Tamil Christian

literature were destroyed by nature's calamities. Now the time has come for discovery of the early Christianity in Tamil Nadu.

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE IMPLIED SIMILES OF THE CAṄKAM POETS
- A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

P. Thiagarajan

As the title indicates, the aim of this research paper is to study carefully and analyse minutely the *Parables of Jesus Christ and the Implied Similes of Caṅkam Poets* on a comparative basis to bring out their close resemblances and distinct peculiarities, and thereby evaluate their literary significance.

A note on the definition of Parables

The very word parable is of Greek origin, and its original meaning is 'side -throwing': Greek rhetoricians used the word parable to denote a literary illustration by comparison. *Dictionary of the Bible* defines the parable as "A method of speech in which moral or religious truth is illustrated from the analogy of common experience. The comparison may be expressed, as by the word like, or be implied"[1]. But so far as the *New Testament* is concerned, it signifies a short fictitious narrative - designed to illustrate a spiritual or moral truth by using everyday type of experience or situation by comparison with suggestive significance.[2]

Jesus - the Master of Parables

In the *Old Testament* king David's sin of murdering Uriah and stealing of Uriah's wife Bathsheba was skillfully illustrated by Prophet Nathan in the *parable of rich man's flocks and the poor man's one loved lamb*.[3] The comparison of Israel with vineyard planted by God is also a notable example in the *Old Testament* [4]. Though the parables had their origin in the *Old Testament* itself, nobody else had presented the bare religious and moral truths, the delicate feeling like the love of God and the love of fellow citizens so poetically and skillfully as Jesus Christ did when he told his immortal parables. 'Never a man spake like this man [5]- This is what the temple police are said to have reported to

the chief priest and the pharisees about Jesus Christ. This statement bears testimony to the parables of Jesus Christ.

It may be true that many other religious teachers or the prophets would have told the parables, but Jesus has created life into it. For example, the parable relating *to the shepherd going after lost sheep, the parable of good Samaritan, the parable of the prodigal son etc* are more alive to the modern context than to the circumstances prevailed in Jesus's time.

Jesus Christ is a master of parables and his immortal parables are matchless in the history of world literature. He uses parables at every point of his public ministry. As Mathew observes in his synoptic Gospel, "Jesus used parables to tell all things to the crowd, he would not say anything to them without parables". (Mathew -13: 34).

The most beautiful Creations

The earliest and the most beautiful creations of Caṅkam poets, especially the love lyrics (*Akam poems*), are noted for their implied similes. The subtle sense of suggestive significance on which these implied smiles are based, intensifies the literary beauty of love lyrics. The ingenuity of thought of the Caṅkam poets, their newness and originality of expression and their keen sense of observing the natural scenery found clear expression mainly through their implied similes. Though the implied similes are applicable both for *Akam poetry* (love Poems) and *puṟam poetry* (other than love Poems), Caṅkam poets adopted the implied similes predominantly only in love lyrics. As has been observed by one of the most brilliant translators of the love lyrics, the literary convention of the age holds the key for understanding the suggestive significance of the implied similes[6]. As per the literary conventions of ancient love lyrics, the pre-marital love is associated with mountain slopes. The aspect of love associated with forest region is the waiting for the arrival of the hero and that of low land region is that of love quarrels. Seashore is considered to be a natural setting for extreme sadness and that of barren wasteland is for separation or elopement.

A note on the implied similes

Tolkappiyar the great grammarian and rhetorician of Tamil language, has classified simile into two major heads (1) Implied simile (*ullurai uvamam*) and (2) *enai uvamam* (explicit simile); In the explicit smile (*enai uvamam*) nothing is hidden or implied; the particular truth illustrated by comparison is explicit, whereas the implied (*ullurai uvamam*) is a subtle mode of expression with deep sense of suggestive significance, the focus of which is on the main concept of a poem. In the case of *Akam poetry* (love poem), the suggestive sense is brought out effectively through the utterances of the characters on the basis of description pertaining to the distinctive features of the five divisions of land, excluding deities, as prescribed by the literary conventions of the ancient Tamils[7].

Tolkappiyar in *Uvamaviyal* - the Chapter on the Modes of Comparison, further sub- divided the implied simile into five categories based on the five factors l. Deed 2.Effect 3.Form 4.Complexion and 5.Origin[8].

The Focal point - Deserves careful consideration

Both in Jesus' parables and the implied similes of Caṅkam poets, the focus is on one central concept and all other details are connected with this. It may be a particular moral or religious truth or it may denote a delicate feeling like love, kindness, forgiveness, repentance etc. This focal point deserves careful consideration of the researchers. According to George Hubbard "The parable is like a lense which gathers many of the sun's rays and brings them to focus on a single point"[9].

Jesus' parables and Focal points

In the *parable of the good Samaritan*[10] for example, the focus is on the question who is the real neighbour? The neighbour is not necessarily the man who lives next door, nor the man supposed to belong to the same race or religion, but the man whose heart is so large enough to make him go to help another individual who is in need of immediate and timely help. It is to say that the neighborliness is essentially and finally based on our kindness and understanding in helping our fellow citizens. The other details of description of the parable of

Good Samaritan are subservient to the main focal point. But they are closely connected with the main focal point of this parable.

The *parable of Rich Fool* (Luke 19. 13-21) clearly demonstrates that those who file up riches for themselves are not really rich in God's sight. All other details of description in this parable are subordinate to this main focal point.

God's love for repentant sinners and the virtue of forgiveness are the basis on which *the parable of prodigal son* rests (Luke 15 (11-32), Sincerity of faith and repentance will pay in the long run. This is the focal point of *the parable of two sons* (Mathew 21.28-31).

The parable of unjust steward teaches a very good lesson to us that we cannot serve both God and money as no servant can serve under two masters. *The parable of wedding feast* (Mathew 22. (2-14) confirms the spiritual truth that many are invited but a few are chosen. In the parable of the pearl Jesus emphasises the preciousness of the kingdom of heaven: Just like a merchant seeks beautiful and valuable pearl one needs to find the kingdom of heaven (Mathew 13: 45-46).

The parable of ten virgins (Mathew 25: 1-3) teaches a spiritual lesson that we must be on guard, because we don't know the day or hour when the call will come to us for the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, the spiritual preparedness and carefulness are of utmost necessity for the security of eternal life. This is the focal point of the *parable of ten virgins.*

The parable of Richman and Lazarus (Luke 15 (19-31) revolves round the focal point that there is hopeless future for unfaithfulness. *The parable of Weeds* (Mathew 13:24-30) rests on the reality that there are good and evil in life, but there is judgement. *The parable of Unforgiving Servant* (Mathew, 18 (23-35) is based on the injunction of forgiveness. If you can forgive your brother from you heart, the Father in the heaven will also do the same in the eternal life.

Interpreter's view and insight

The Focal point depends upon the interpreter's view and insight. The astonishing interpretation of the *parable of good Samaritan* by Augustine on

theological angle may be noted here. According to him Samaritan is Christ himself; The binding up of the wounds signifies the restraint of sin; Oil is like the comfort of hope; wine stands for new spirit; The inn keeper is like St. Paul; and the two pence given to the inn keeper are like two commandments.[11] This theological interpretation of Augustine shows the deep sense of suggestion in Jesus' parable. It depends upon the interpreter's view and insight. Terrulian interprets the *parable of prodigal son,* he compares the father to God; in his view, the eldest son is representing the knowledge of God for which the man has the birthright.[12] According to a modern interpreter, the three measures of meal in *the parable of the leaven* refer to the body, mind and spirit.[13] The interpretation of *the parable of the weeds.*[14] and *the parable of the sower.*[15] has been made by Christ himself in a wonderful manner.

Focal point and the implied similes

The implied similes of the love lyrics of the Caṅkam age have close resemblances with Jesus' parables in so far as they are revolving round on one central concept.

Regarding the focal point and interpretation of the implied similes of Caṅkam poets, relevant examples may be cited from *kuṟuntokai* and *Naṟṟiṇai* the two famous Caṅkam anthologies of love lyrics, included in the *eight anthologies* (*Eṭṭutokai*)

In response to the strong criticism leveled against him, a hero in *Kuṟuntokai* speaks like this.

According to him, a deaf-mute without hands, having only eyes can see the butter laid on the sun, it is impossible for him to guard the melting butter that spreads over the hot rocks or to call out for help. Just like this, the love - stricken hero lost his control over his emotional upheaval. In this implied simile, the sun stands for love-sickness; the heat is like the heart of the hero; the deaf-mute refers to hero himself; the body of the hero may be compared to the melting butter; The focal point is that the concerned hero is incapable of controlling his intense emotion due to love-sickness. Here in this *Kuṟuntokai* poem, the poet pictures the emotional upheaval of a love stricken hero with subtle sense of suggestion.[16]

Another example from *Naṟṟiṇai* may also be cited. The friend of the girl speaks to the hero in *Naṟṟiṇai* like this:-

In the fields of the slope, where millet crop grows, a ferocious elephant attempts to enter the fields. Noting the elephants, some hunters with shooting arrows, some with beating drums, some other with slings-filled stones, all of them shouting together, attacked, the elephant. Such was the surroundings of the mountain hamlet of the young hero.[17]

In this description of the hero's mountain hamlet and its backdrops, the fields of the millet crop stand for the heroine; Elephant attempts to enter the millet crop refers to the hero's attempt to embrace the girl; Kuṟavar's shouting together signifies the spreading of love affair everywhere in the hamlet. The focal point in this love lyric of *Naṟṟiṇai* is that the young man should not further delay the engagement and he should see that the marriage is fixed immediately. All other details of description are subordinate and they are closely connected with the concept of the main theme. The keen insight of the old commentators in interpreting the implied similes in Caṅkam love lyrics is indeed very astonishing and it helps to understand the real significance of the love lyrics.

Pictorial presentation of visual image

The things seen, enjoyed and experienced by a particular person are ever green in his or her memory. The parables of Jesus Christ and the implied similes of Caṅkam poets are based on the things seen. It is mainly through the pictorial presentation of visual image either by simile or by metaphors, Jesus and Caṅkam poets make the readers or hearers understand the unfamiliar feeling and hidden thoughts. The extraordinary beauty of evoking immediate and vivid images arrest the attention of the readers and hearers and arouse something deep within them.

Visual images in Jesus parables

The parable of the house of a rich man[18] is noted for its vivid visual images. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, and the wind below hard against. But it did not fall because the house was built on the rock.

Jesus speaks like this, "But anyone who hears the words of mine and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sands. The rain will be poured down, the rivers overflowed, and the wind blew hard against the house, and it fell and what a terrible fall that was." The description of the above parable evokes image after image on the basis of things seen in our daily life. Jesus thought that the people must be on guard against false prophets.

The parable of a lamp under a bowl[19] is also to be noted for natural and beautiful visual images. When Jesus says that "No one lights a lamp and covers it with a bowl or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on the lamp stand so that people will see the light as they come out". Jesus continued to extend the simile further with a deep sense of suggestion of his own 'whatever is hidden away will be brought out into open, and whatever is covered up will be found and brought to light'. We are reminded here of the famous statement in *the Gospel of John.* When John the Baptist spoke about Jesus he said 'Jesus himself was the light -he came to tell about the light; this was the real light that came into the world and shines on all mankind'[20].

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples requested him to teach to pray just as John taught his disciples. Christ taught his disciple and explained the meaning of the prayer[21]

"Would anyone of you as father give your son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or would you give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? Bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more then, will the Father in heaven give the holy spirit to those who ask him?"

Jesus Christ clothed the mysteries of the hidden moral and religious truths in familiar visual images in order to make them very comprehensible to the common people who were very anxious to hear him. He used the parables and proverbs-like utterances that appealed directly to everyday experience and understanding of his hearers.

Visual Images of the implied similes

Regarding the vivid visual mages evoked by the implied similes of Caṅkam poets, two examples, one from *kuṟuntokai* and other from *Naṟṟiṇai*, may be cited.

The friend of the girl speaks to the hero who comes by night for meeting his beloved in the courtship. She speaks as follows:

O! Chief of the slopping hills, be kind to my friend. In your hillside, a huge and sweetest jackfruit is hanging on a tiny stem. Who knows when the fruit will fall and smash on the ground? At any time, the full-ripened jackfruit may come down from the force of weight and break violently into pieces destroying the very stem in which it is hanging. Her life is so frail and love is so great.

In this natural description, the great Caṅkam poet Kapilar, compares the huge jackfruit to heroine's love; The hillside symbolizes the family of the girl; Tiny stem stands for the heart of the girl; The overripe of the jackfruit may be like love in ripeness. If it is not plucked and protected in time, the jackfruit along with the tiny stem will be destroyed. The focus is on the immediate steps to be taken for protecting the love and fixing the wedding at the earliest.

In Naṟṟiṇai,[23] the lover speaks to the girl. In the hilly hamlet where the Nagalinga trees (cannonball tree) tensely grow, the small-eyed and ferocious forest pig is plouging the mud and the pig comes with dust-coated back and falls into a lift where the hunters have fixed a snare with ropes. The hunting dogs pounce on the pig and kill it with fegs. The hunter rushes to the spot and chases away the dogs and takes the flesh of the pig to their hamlet.

In this description, the nature of the hills are pictured on the basis of vivid and natural images with deep sense of suggestion. The pig is a symbolic representation of the girl in the courtship and she is intensely in love with the hero. The hunting dogs stand for the *pasalai* -pale yellow spots supposed to appear on the body of the girl due to love-sickness as per the poetic conventions of the ancient Tamils. The poet Ammaḷḷaṉār beautifully illustrates the delicate suggestion through the medium of natural and vivid visual images.

Other characteristics

In the case of epic poetry, there is usually a complicated plot with a large number of characters and variety of scenes. It is too complicated for common readers to follow both, in Jesus' parables and Caṅkam implied similes. We notice straight forward plots in the Caṅkam classics, especially in *akam poetry* at a time. The concise and precise way of narrating the events in both cases remain a challenge to interpreters. If the interpretation is rightly made, it is at once seen that both Jesus parables and Caṅkam poets' implied similes of universal application suited for all nations and races, and for all succeeding time.

The story element is also direct and simple and as such the interest of the reader is caught immediately. All the incidents of the plot are closely connected with one central point just like in a short story. The similes or metaphors are used in both cases not as mere tools for illustrating a particular truth or a delicate feeling but as an important method clearly illuminating the suggested thoughts or feelings inherent in their works but the main difference in Jesus Christ's approach is based on the spiritual foundation, whereas the Caṅkam poet's approach is mainly grounded on the worldly life, though there exists a marked deviation in the later part of the Caṅkam period. There is a literary beauty *par excellence* both in Jesus' parables and Caṅkam poet's implied similes which the time and distance cannot dilute or destroy.

End notes

1. *Dictionary of the Bible* P. 568.
2. "Thus the parable uses a familiar or everyday type of experience or situation as an application to or compassion with some phase of spiritual life. The parable of Jesus Christ in the New Testament are examples. He used them to teach lessons of various kinds" *New Stand Encyclopedia* Volume 11. P.81.
3. *The Old Testament -Nathan* 25 12 (1-12)
4. *The Old Testament Isaiah* 5:(1-7)
5. *The New Testament, Gospel of John* 7: 46
6. "Caṅkam love lyrics depend a great deal on suggestion and symbolism, the process comprehending their purport is rendered easier and more pleasant

for the modern reader if he gets familiar with literary convention of the age which offer holds the key to the suggestive significance" Narrinai (an anthology of Armour) Translated by A.V. Subramaniam, Department of Tamil Development Culture, Govt of Tamilnadu, First Edition, January 1989. P. iii

7. Tol, To.995, 996, 997 & 998
8. Tol, Tol.1242

   "தவவருஞ் சிறப்பின் இத்தன்மை நாடின்
   வினையினும் பயத்தினும் உறுப்பினும் உருவினும்
   பிறப்பினும் வரூஉம் திறத்த என்ப"

9. "But as George Henry Hubbard says, the typical parable of Jesus is the embodiment of one central throught to which details are subordinate. It is not a sting of pearls, or a connected series of truths. It is a single germ with such setting or background as shall display it to the best advantage. The parable is like lense, which gathers many of the sun's rays and brings them to focus upon a single point. It is like a circle with many radii of detail meeting at the center and this centre it is which the expositor is concerned to find" *The Teachings of Jesus in parables.* Boston: The pilgrim press, 1907, P. XVI - Quoted in the *Interpreter's Bible* - the Teachings of Jesus, III, *'The parables'* Walter Russell Bowie. P.174.
10. Ibid P174
11. Ibid P174.
12. Ibid P174.
13. Ibid P174.
14. *Gospel – Mark* 13 : 24 - 30
15. *Gospel* – Mathew 13:3 - 23 Mark 4:2-20 – Luke 7:4-15
16. *Kurun.* 58.
17. *Nar.* 108
18. *Gospel – Mathew* 7:24-27 – Luke. 6:47-49.
19. *Gospel – Mathew* 5:14-16. – Mark 4:21-22.
20. Gospel – John 1:1-19

21. Gospel – Luke 11:5-13.
22. *Kuṟun.* 18
23. *Naṟ.* 82

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3. Fung & Wagnalls, *New Encyclopedia* Vol 18.
4. *Dictionary of the Bible* – edited by James Hastings, 5 Volumes, New York & Edinburch, 1903 – 1904.
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6. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (ed;), Georage Arthur Buttrich, New York and Mashbile, 1962.
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9. *Good News Bible with Deuterocanomical Books / apocrypha,* Today's English Version.
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Appendix – 1

The Parables of Jesus Christ
I. Recorded in one Gospel

1. *The parable of the weeds* – Mathew. 13:24 – 30.
2. *The parable of the hidden treasure* – Mathew 13: 44.
3. *The parable of the pearl* – Methew 13:45-46
4. *The parable of the net* – Methew 13:47-50
5. *The parable of the unforgiving servant* – Mathew 18:23-35
6. *The parable of the laborers in vineyard* – Mathew 18:13-35.
7. *The parable of the two sons* – Mathew 21:28-32
8. *The parable of the wedding feast* – Mathew 22:2 - 14.
9. *The parable of the ten girls (virgins)* – Mathew 25:1 - 13
10. *The parable of the three servants* – Mathew 25:14 - 38
11. *The parable of the growing seed* – Mark 25:14 - 38
12. *The parable of the absent – house holder* – Mark 13:32-39
13. *The parable of the debtors* – Luke 7: 40 - 43.
14. *The parable of the good Samaritan* – Luke 10:30-37

15. *The parable of the teaching on prayer* – Luke 11:5 - 13.
16. *The parable of the rich fool* – Luke 12 : 13 - 21
17. *The parable of the faithful servant* – Luke 12:41-48.
18. *The parable of the unfruitful fig tree* – Luke 13:6 - 9.
19. *The parable of the great feast* – Luke 14 : 16 – 19.
20. *The parable of the building of tower* – Luke 14:25 – 35.
21. *The parable of the lost coin* – Luke 15:13 – 32
22. *The parable of the prodigal son* – Luke 15:13 – 32.
23. *The parable of the unjust steward* – Luke 16 : 1 – 13.
24. *The parable of the rich man and Lazarus* – Luke 1:19 – 31
25. *The parable of the unprofitable servant* – Luke 17:7 – 10.
26. *The parable of the unrighteous judge* – Luke 18:1 – 8.
27. *The parable of the unrighteous judge* – Luke 18: 9 – 14.
28. *The parable of the golden coin* – Luke 19:11 – 12.
29. *The parable of the good shepherd*: John 10:1 – 16.

Note

The *Gospel of John* is noted for its metaphorical statements & explanations
'I am the door' (John 10: 7)
'I am the living bread' (John 6:5)
'I am the way' (John 14:6)

'He himself was the light; he came to tell about the light
This was the real light that comes to the world and shines on all mankind"
"Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring which provide him with life – giving water and give him eternal life" (John 4:13).

II Recorded in two Gospels

30. *The parable of the house of rich man* – Mathew 7:24 – 27
31. *The parable of the yeast Mathew.* 13:33 – Luke 13:20 – 21.

II Recorded in three Gospels

32. *The parable of the lost – sheep Mathew* 18:12 – 14, Luke 15:1 – 17
33. *The parable of the candle (lamp) - Mathew* 5:14 – 16. Mark. 4:21 – 22. *Under bushel* Luke 8:16 – 8.

34. *The parable of the new cloth of old gramets*

Mathew	Mark	Luke
9:16	2:21	5:36

35. *The parable of the new wine in the old bottle*

Mathew	Mark	Luke
9:17	2:22	5:37 – 38

36. *The parable of the sower*

Mathew	Mark	Luke
13:3-23	4:2-20.	8:4-15

37. *The parable of the mustur seed*

Mathew	Mark	Luke
13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19

38. *The parable of the wicked husband man*

Mathew	Mark	Luke
21:34-35	12:1-12	20:9-19

39. *The parable of the fig tree*

Mathew	Mark	Luke
24:32-32	13:28-32	21:29

Appendix – II
Selected Akam Poems (Love Poems)
Noted for the implied similes

I. அகநானூறு

2, 30, 40, 52, 102, 112, 119, 132, 146, 155, 156, 160, 170, 173, 176, 178, 188, 210, 266, 268, 316, 332, 252, 386.

II. நற்றிணை

1, 22, 27, 31, 36, 51, 59, 65, 82, 85, 71, 107, 108, 168, 217, 232, 237, 239, 260, 273, 275, 326, 330, 331.

III. குறுந்தொகை

3, 8, 18, 29, 36, 38, 51, 58, 65, 78, 82, 85, 208, 242, 288, 298, 364, 373.

IV. ஐங்குறுநூறு

51, 65, 70, 87, 96, 151, 161, 162, 166, 192, 193.

PŪRVA MĪMĀMSA, UTARA MĪMĀMSA AND CHRISTIANITY

J.D. Baskaradoss

Mīmāmsa

Jaimini is the exponent of *Mīmāmsa Sutras*. It is popularly known as *Purva Mīmāmsa*. Mohanlal Sandal explains the meaning of the term 'mīmāmsa' etymologically.

"The word '*mīmāmsa*' is derived from 'mam' meaning 'determination', 'measure' by, adding 'sa' as an affix in the 'sad' form of the verb. It therefore means determination".[1]

K. Lakshmanan in his Tamil Book writes,

'The direct meaning of *mīmāmsa* is a systematic enquiry or examination."[2]

He further writes that 'it is not an analysis into the veracity of the contents of *Vedas* whether they are true or false but it is an investigation into the interpretation what we give to the rules of the *Vedas* are correct or not.'[3] It is in fact the rules pertaining to the sacrificial rites.

Mīmāmsa and Sacrifice

According to Mīmāmsakās, *Vedas* are 'apourseya', which means eternal sacrificial rituals are always associates with theistic worship. But Jaimini mentions nothing about god in his *sutras*.'[4]

People offer sacrifice either to the supreme God or to the minor gods. But the atheists never offer sacrifices in their worship. Buddhists and Jains offer no sacrifices as they are atheists. In the *Old Testament* period, the Israelites were worshipping 'YHWH' always by offering sacrifices. But *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* is a system which seems to be an atheistic system and yet it insists on the sacrificial rites to be performed according to the specified rules laid down by Jaimini.[5]

The Christian theology do accept the doctrine of sacrifice with very high esteem but it does not permit sacrifice being offered in their worship. The supreme God descended in this world as an incarnation (Jesus) and he offered himself as the supreme sacrifice, an expiation for the sins of the world and hence a new doctrine emerged – the 'fulfillment of sacrifice'.

Atheistic Sacrificial System

But *Mīmāmsa Sūtrās* neither accepts God nor accepts the fulfillment of Sacrifice and hence this system contradicts the basic tenets and therefore *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* is to be regarded as an 'Atheistic Sacrificial System'.[6]

Jaimini's *Mīmāmsa Sūtrās* explains vividly and widely about the ritualist portion of sacrifice and, so it is *'Karma Mīmāmsa'* or *'Karma Kanda'*. S.N.Dasgupta explains this in his book as follows:

"Discussions and doubts become more common about the many intricacies of the sacrificial rituals, and regular enquiries into them were begun in different circles by different scholars and priests. These represent the beginning of *Mīmāmsa* (lit. attempts at rational enquiry) and it is probable that there were different schools of this thought"[7]

A few scholars have expressed that *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* cannot be taken to be included into the ambit of philosophical system. H.T. Colebrooke writes:

"It is not directly a system of philosophy, nor chiefly so. But in course of delivering canons of scriptural interpretations, it incidentally touches upon philosophical topics."[8]

In this system, gods are considered secondary – in *Vedas* and *Brahmanas* sacrifices were instituted for the sake of gods – but in *Mīmāmsa* gods are there for the sake of sacrifices.[9]

In the opinion of S.N. Dasgupta, *Mīmāmsa* is atheistic, it doesn't believe in God, nor does it believe that this neither was created nor was destroyed by him.

He writes:

"Moreover he would himself require a creator to create him. So there is no God, no Creator, no creation, no dissolution or *pralaya.* The world has ever been running the same, without any new creation or dissolution, srsti or pralaya"[10]

"*Mīmāmsa* further holds that gods are empowered with godliness only with the help of sacrifices. These empowerments are bestowed upon gods so as to safeguard the system and functioning of the world".

Therefore mīmāmsa invariably attaches much importance to the one who performs the act of sacrifice – it is the priest who is all important because, *Mīmāmsa* declares, 'he knows everything', 'he knows the world' – these verses which occur in the *Vedas* refer only the officiating person of the sacrifice and not the supreme Person.[12] A Brahmin alone is entitled to officiate the sacrificial rites. He is termed as Rtvik. Mohanlal Sandal explains this aspect in the following lines:

"The next question for determination is who is entitled to officiate as Rtvik? The author's reply is that a *Brahmana* alone is entitled to act as a Rtvik for the following reasons. (1) He alone is entitled to drink 'soma' while others are not entitled to it, but to 'phalachamasa' drink, only a Rtvik has to drink 'soma', so a non-Brahmin cannot officiate as such. (2) Sannaya cannot be drunk by a non-Brahmana. It is only a Soma drinker who is entitled to do it. (3) It is only a Brahmana, who is entitled to the remnants of the food in the full-moon and new-moon sacrifices, the non-Brahmana are expressly prohibited to partake of them. (4) The Anvaharya fee which consists of boiled rice is given to a Brahmana alone. For the above reasons the author arrives at the conclusion that a Brahman alone is entitled to officiate as Rtvik."[13]

The above rules have been laid down in *Mīmāmsa Sūtrās*, Chapter 12, Pada IV. But the system propounded by Badarayana is diametrically opposite to the system of Jaimini.

Brahma Sutras

The chief exponent of *Vedanta Philosophy* is Badayana or Veda Vyasa. Though it is regarded by great many a scholar as a treatise of philosophy, it is a spiritual exposition of Indian theology and should have been composed in the 4th or 5thc. A.D. Brahma *Sūtrās* or *Sariraka Mīmāmsa* is widely known as *Uttara Mīmāmsa*. Sankara, Ramamuja and Madhava have rendered scholarly commentaries for Brahma Sutras. *Brahma Sutras* precisely but elaborately deals with the ways and means to achieve the knowledge of Brahma or *Brahma – Vidhya* and hence the name *Brahma Sutras*. It is considered to be the essence of the *Upanisads*.

In the words of Ramanuja, 'the words of Badarayana is the elixir churned out from the ocean of milk.'

"*Paaraasarya – vachasudhaam*
Upanishaddhugdhaabdhi – madhyoddhritam"[14]

Brahma Sutras is considered to be an attempt to systematize the teachings of the *Upanisads* and therefore the scholars consider that the system of its thought is *Vedanta*. *Brahma Sutras* and *Mīmāmsa Sutras* are commonly expressed as *Uttara Mīmāmsa* and *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* respectively.

Uttara Mīmāmsa and *Purva Mīmāmsa*:

G. Devaneyan gives an etymological explanation to the word 'Uttara' – meaning later or high, Uttara – northern because the northern part of India is high.[15] Jaimini's *Mīmāmsa* deals with the Vedic sacrificial aspects of an age old practice of worship and hence the name *Pūrva Mīmāmsa*. But *Brahma Sutras* of Badarayana deals with a new doctrine of fulfillment of sacrifice which is opposed to Vedic sacrificial worship. Consequently Badarayana's System is termed as *Uttara Mīmāmsa*.

Since Jaimini's name is mentioned in *Brahma Sutras* and Badarayana's name is mentioned in *Mīmāmsa Sutras*, many scholars opine that both must be contemporaries. The available scanty references about Jaimini give us no

conclusive evidence as such to show whether he was a real person or imaginary. Fredrick L. Kumar makes a reference about Jaimini who was said to be an opponent of this system and he opines that a forerunner of *Mīmāmsa* by name Jaimini should have lived and must have had a different outlook about ritualistic sacrifice.[16]

Vedanta means a new doctrine which puts an end to the sacrificial worship or doctrine. Vedanta is opposed to the Vedic sacrifices and it initiates the new theistic approach of investigating into the systematic analysis of *Brahman*, the despondency of the fallen soul (bondage), the descension of the supreme God as an avatar and His intervention into the individual soul so as to be released from the clutches of death, salvation and mukti or eternal life. These revolutionary aspects make the *Brahma Mīmāmsa* superior over the *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* which did not warranty the emancipation of the individual.

Mīmāmsa Sūtrās codify the '*Karma'* doctrines and the supremacy of the Brahmins and this is the only so called system in the pantheon of '*Six Darsanas*' which summarily negates the equality of the human beings through '*Varnashrama Dharma'* and since this does not deal with the any of the aspects enumerated above, *Mīmāmsa Sūtrās* of Jaimini cannot be justifiable to be included in the *Six Darsanas*. *Purva Mīmāmsa* therefore tries to propound the Vedic Principles with a view to shattering *Uttara Mīmāmsa* doctrines.

The *Uttara Mīmāmsa* opens with the following verse:

'Athado Brahma Jignasa' meaning,

'Now therefore the enquiry of Brahman'. But the Jaimini's Sutras begin with the following verse:

'Athado dharma jignasa' [18] which means,

'Now therefore the enquiry of dharma'. Ganata's *Vaisesika Sutras* also being with the same version – the enquiry of dharma but Jaimini's enquiry of dharma does not refer to the universally understood meaning – here dharma is 'karma', the rituals. Mohanlal precisely translates the opening verse of *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* as,

"Now is the enquiry of duty"[19]

It is evident from the above facts that *Uttara Mīmāmsa* and *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* are basically different in their entities.

Sankara in his commentary to the opening verse of *Brahma Sutras* writes:

"Now, (after the attainment of the requisite spiritual qualities) therefore (as the results obtained by sacrifices etc. are ephemeral, whereas the result of the knowledge of *Brahman* is eternal) Ramanuja also renders his commentary in the same line:

"then (after a knowledge of the work – portion of the *Vedas* and the ephemeral nature of results of mere work has been gained by the study of *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* therefore as a result obtained by mere work, sacrifice etc. are ephemeral and limited, whereas the results of knowledge of *Brahman* is eternal and infinite) the enquiry (into the real nature) of *Brahman* (should be taken up).[21]

Pūrva Mīmāmsa and *Old Testament*

In the *Old Testament* of the Bible, the doctrinal aspects of the worship of Judaism pivot around the offering of sacrifices. The Jewish scripture consists of Torah, Nabim and Kethubim. The Pentateuch viz. *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy* are included in Torah where the Statutes and commandments have be written and given to the people of Israel some important sacrifices are noteworthy to be stated here:

1. Burnt Offering[22]
2. Sin Offering[23]
3. Trespass Offering[24]
4. Meat Offering[25]
5. Drink Offering[26]
6. Peace Offering[27]
7. Sacrifice of Thanksgiving[28]
8. Sacrifice of the Feast of Passover[29]

Apart from these sacrifices other offerings were also prescribed to be given to God daily in the morning and evenings, and during the days of festivals like Festival of Unleavened Bread, Festival of Tabernacle etc.

Animals, birds, fruits, cereals, flour, oil, wine etc. were offered to God. A person who could not afford a lamb or goat were allowed to bring doves or

pigeons as sin offering – however he was exempted to bring the doves or pigeons if he could not afford and instead he could bring a tenth of an epah[30] of fine flour.[31]

Offering for Priests and Levites

The persons who could officiate as priests were only the levites – indeed the whole tribe of Levi.[32] Levi was one of the sons of Israel (Jacob) and the descendants of Levi were the Levites who had no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They were chosen by God to stand and minister in the Lord's name always. Therefore an ordinance was given to the Israelites, to give the descendants of tribe of Levi the shoulder, the bowels the inner parts of the sacrificed bull or sheep, the first fruits of their grain, the new wine and oil and the first wool from the shearing of their sheep etc. and they were to live on the offerings made to the Lord.[33]

Sacrifice in *Pūrva Mīmāmsa*

Animal sacrifice was common in *Purva Mīmāmsa*. The flesh of the sacrificed animal was eaten by the officiating priests and the worshippers. Three types of sacrificial animals were mentioned in the *Mīmāmsa Sūtrās*,

a) Agniyomiya
b) Savamiva and
c) Jotistoma

The sacrificial animal shall be brought and tied to a peg and shall be asphyxiated to death and then shall be cut into pieces.[35] Unlike *the Old Testament* sacrificial Ordinance there is no shedding of blood in the *Pūrva Mīmāmsa*. According to 'Pacuvidhi' the Agniyomiya animal shall be killed on a day prior to the day of extracting 'soma' juice.

The tools of sacrifice are also enumerated in the *Mīmāmsa Sūtrās* in the III Chapter.36

"Ten sacrificial weapons are mentioned. They are (1) wooden spade sword (2) potsherd (3) sacrificial dish (4) winnowing basket (5) black antelope's skin (6) cudgel or pin (7) mortar (8) pestle (9) stone slab or lower part of the grinding stone (10) muller or upper part of the grinding stone".[36]
Sacrifical portion to the officiating priests:

The sacrificed animals were divided among the '*prohits*'. According to the modified 'Vajapeya' sacrifice, seventeen animals were sacrificed. The flesh of these sacrificed shall be offered to the deities and afterwards it shall be distributed to the 'svistakrit', i.e. to the prohits who bring forth 'mangala' and the remaining portions shall be given to the other prohits according to the rules of '*Patharthanugrama*'. The sacrificial portions of animal flesh given to the prohits are known as '*Avadana*'. Beef was freely consumed by the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Animals were sacrificed everyday.

Sacrifice and Fire

Fire plays an important role in the Brahminical worship. The Aryan *prohits* made it mandatory to have fire in their sacrifices. Fire god is considered to be the one which shall take the sacrificial products offered in fire to the respective gods for whom they are offered. The *Vedas* describe fire as a '*guru*', a divinely messenger, an element that destroys and a basic deity that elicits light throughout the universe.[39] It is described as indestructible with everlasting youthfulness and it travels on a chariot drawn by red horses.[40] The sacrificial fire is compared to a maid living in a house. It helps to safeguard the world like a sun.[41]

Noah is described as the first human who offered animal sacrifice after the great deluge. It is termed as the 'burnt offering'.[42] Burnt offering was codified as an ordinance of sacrifices of the Israelites.'[43] S.N. Dasgupta remarks that it is difficult to ascertain how the sacrificial fire worship came into being in the Brahmanas in India. This at a later period was developed into inter-related rituals.[44] but the Israelite's worship might have given rise to the Aryan sacrificial worship associated with fire.

Narrow motives in Vedic Sacrifices

The Vedic sacrifice was regarded as a basic duty. Therefore it was called as '*karma'* or '*kriya'* in Sanskrit. It was performed either to yield good or bad results. Some rituals were performed in order to rise to a higher level or to amass wealth or to bring about destruction amongst the enemies.

S.N. Dasgupta writes

Sacrifice was regarded as almost the only kind of duty, and it was also called *Karma* or *Kriya* (action) and the unalterable law was, that these mystical ceremonies for good or bad, moral or immoral (for there were many kinds of sacrifices which were performed for injuring one's enemies or gaining worldly prosperity or supremacy at the cost of others) were destined to produce their efforts".[45]

So many alterations were incorporated in the Brahmanas and mantras.[46] Sukumari Bhattacharji writes:[47]

It was thus natural for royal priests to invent rituals for the increase of revenue, replenishment of royal coffers and general prosperity of their patron kings. One of the latest rites was *Vasodhara* (literally, shower of wealth with uninterrupted series of 401 libations...."[48]

Satapata Brahmana says that the Brahmins have half the sovereign power of a king and they are gods among the human beings.[49] The Brahmins alone are entitled to eat the sacrificial offerings and Kshatriyas, Vais'yas and Sudras are not fit to eat them.[50] A Vedic sacrifice is regarded as complete when a Brahmin is satisfied.

Suffice it is to say that the Vedic sacrifices were man-made and the ritualistic codes were written by the Brahmins to uphold the supremacy of the prohits or the Brahmins. The *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* should have been written by Jaimini or in his name to philosophize the 'Varnasrama Dharma' with an ulterior motive to enslave the native Indians and to serve the so called three castes in the hierarchy of castes. Among the systems of Indian Philosophy, or *Six Dharsanas*,

Pūrva Mīmāmsa is the only system which uses the name Brahmin and Brahmin supremacy and it is untenable to include it as a system of philosophy.

Fountainhead of Caste Discrimination

Varnasrama is alien in origin and we have no historical evidences till the period of Sankara to show that Indian community or culture had survived social discrimination based on one's birth. It was conceived by the Aryans and was thrust upon the native Dravidians in the garb of religious philosophy.

Mīmāmsa Sūtrās imposed stringent restrictions on the Sudras (Indians) in performing the religious sacrificial rites. *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* codifies that a Sudra is barred from wearing the 'sacred thread' and therefore a Sudra is unqualified to kindle the sacrificial fire and consequently he cannot learn the *Vedas*.[51] Accordingly to *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* a Sudra is prohibited from getting educational rights.[52] It further elaborates that 'none of the teachers shall impart education to a Sudra; neither shall a teacher accept the request of a Sudra student and therefore a Sudra can never perform sacrificial rites. There is nothing to be learnt from a Sudra'.[53]

That the Hindu law had been enacted by blending the religious philosophy codified in the *Mīmāmsa Sutras* during the British region is worthy to be noted.

"As to the *Mīmāmsa* philosophy of Jaimini Mr. Colebrooke said, 'The disquisitions of the *Mīmāmsa* bear, therefore a certain resemblance to judicial questions, and infact the Hindu law being blended with the religion of the people of the same modes of reasoning are applicable, and are applied to the one as to the other. The logic of *Mīmāmsa* is the logic of the law, the rule of the interpolation of civil and religious ordnances. Each case is examined and determined upon general principles, and form the cases decided the principles may be collected. A well ordered agreement of them would constitute the philosophy of law; and this is, in truth, what has been attempted in the *Mīmāmsa*.[54]

The *Pūrva Mīmāmsa* neither examines the tenets of social philosophy nor spiritual philosophy and therefore it is not tenable to be included as a philosophy of *Darsana*.[55]

Whereas the facts remain, the *Uttara Mīmāmsa* do not impose social barriers as to such as acquire *Brahma Vidhya*. It says:

"*Hridhyapekshaya tu manusyadhikaratvat*".

"But with reference to (the space in) the heat (the highest Brahman is said to be of the size of a thumb); (and because of this a) man is entitled (to the study of the Vedas).[56] Further it says that any person is entitled to acquire *Barahma Vidhya* and therefore he can learn the Vedas.[57] *The Brahma Sutras* very clearly shows that there is no partiality in God and the scriptures exemplify Brahman to be unbiased.[58] But as we read on *Brahma. Sutras*, we come across a portion, termed as '*Apa sudra diparakarana'*, by the commentators like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhava, which denies to sudras by caste, the right to Brahma Vidhya.

That portion in Sutra in *Brahma Sutras*, 1.3.34, which runs is as follows:

"Suhasya thathananathara sravanatha thathravanatha suchyate hi"[59]
Sankara writes his commentary in the following manner:

"The Sudra has no competence, since he cannot study the *Vedas*, for one becomes competent for things spoken of in the *Vedas*, after one has studied the *Vedas* and known these things from them. But there can be no reading of the *Vedas* by a Sudra, for Vedic study presupposes the investiture with the sacred thread, which ceremony in confirmed to the three castes. As for aspiration, it cannot qualify anyone unless one has the ability. Mere ability in the ordinary sense also cannot qualify anyone because scriptural ability is needed in a scriptural matter. But this scriptural ability is denied by the prohibition of the right to study. As for the text, "The Sudra is unfit for performing a sacrifice" (Tai. S. VII.ii.1-6)[60]

The *'Apa Sudradiprakarna'* portion doesn't fit into the ideology of *Uttara Mīmāmsa* because its entire tenents systametise the supreme nature of *Brahman* and in the very beinging of the treatise it is described that *Brahman* is 'Janmadi', the source of all creations which goes without explanation that every human being is a child of God and no nature of discrimination could be attributed to Him. We have also seen in the previous paragraphs that *Brahma Sutras* envisages the human beings the right to acquire *Brahma Vidhya* and no prejudice may be attributed to him. But the so called 'Apa Sudrathiparakarana' is illogical and does not have any sequential correlation either with the previous or with the next sutras and hence this portion should be an interpolation. George Victor in his Social Philosophy of Vedanta expresses the same view.[61] This portion should have been interpolated, may be by Sankara, with a view to subjugating the Dravidians at large in the garb of Vedantic Philosophy or sastra.[62]

The discrimination in the name of caste is not to be seen in the four *Vedas*. But the Vedic darsana (Purva Mimamsa) had been composed mainly to uphold Varnasrama dharma. Vedic Worship, Stricitly speaking, is the worship of the benevolent forces of nature, the forefathers, spirits, demons etc. and it knew no monotheistic worship.

Vedas do not speak about temple worship, neither has it explained about heaven or hell, nor had it contributed towards the development of the theology or philosophy. Therefore Vedicism can be considered only as worship and not as a religion.[63]

Fulfillment of Sacrifice

The *Upanishads* profess the unique philosophy of the fulfillment of sacrifice. As had been pointed out, Vedanta philosophy is the one which puts an end to the bloody sacrifices. In this line, the *Vedanta Sutras* also vehemently puts an end to the shedding of blood through sacrificial rites and initiates a new ideology of the fulfillment of sacrifice.

Purusa Sukta explains about the self sacrifice of Purusa at the time of the creation of the work.[64] *Chandogya Upanisad* says,

"*Purus's vas yajna*" which is translated as 'Man is truly the sacrifice'[66], *Satapata Brahmana* says,

"Prajapati Yajna:"[67]

The Sanskrit term Prajapati may be translated as king. Here the equivalent Greek name for king is Christos or Christ. In Christian doctrine, *Old Testament* doctrine of sacrifice gets fulfilled in the supreme sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

The *Aitreya Upanisad* raises a pertinent question as to why a person should read the Vedas and why should he offer sacrifices when God Himself has sacrificed.[68]

So the '*Brahma Sutras* describes sacrifice as a 'manasa sacrifice or ritual'[69]. Ramanuja in his *Sri Bhasya* very critically puts forth, that the fire kindled in the alter made of bricks is transformed into the fire kindled in the mind.[70]

"The external sacrificial rituals of the *Purva Mīmāmsa* is changed in the *Uttara Mīmāmsa* into 'dhyana' or medidation pertaining to an internal aspect. In Vedanta it is stopped. The bloody sacrifices of the *Vedas* are once for all stopped in *Vedanta*. Sacrificial rituals cannot be performed unless a 'prohit' is present whereas in Vedanta a mediator or a prohit has no place because meditation requires no such mediator. Anyone can perform '*manasa sacrifice*'. In fact Varnasrama dharma was exalted and established through the concept of sacrificial rituals. Whereas Vedanta puts an end to the sacrifice, the mediator and the caste system".[71]

The Vedic sacrificial worship gets refined in the *Purva Mīmāmsa* as a system of sacrifice and not as a system of philosophy. According to *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*,

"Brahmanas desire to know him by the study of Veda, by sacrifice, by gifts".[72]

It is therefore, quite apparent that sacrifice and rituals play a vital role in the Purva *Mīmāmsa* System which practically has in significant role for the Brahma Vidhya. Whereas the *Uttara Mīmāmsa*, as a system of Vedantic doctrines, opens up with the verse,

Atato Brahmajignasa"[73] which means, 'Therefore the study of Brahman'.

Thus the very first verse puts an end of the study of *Vedas* and the sacrificial worship.

In this line *Bhagavad Gita* also emphasizes that God is accessible through bhakti and he is not accessible through the methods of Vedas, penance and gifts.

"Not by *Vedas*, nor by austerity, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifice can I be seen in this form as thou has seen Me.

But by undistracted devotion can I, of this Form, be known and seen in reality, and entered into, O harasser of thy foes."[74]

Though the Vedic sacrificial concept was progressively emphasized during the period of the Brahmanas the ritualistic aspects of sacrifices and Vedic Dharma began to slide down in the regressive path. The *Upanishads* vehemently criticized the Vedic prohits to the watch-dogs and the chanting of the Vedic mantras during the offering of the sacrifices to the barking of the dogs.[76]

Brahma Sūtrās systematically examines the qualities of *Brahman* and it exemplifies the corporeality of *Brahman* – thereby the avatar doctrine is professed in the Vedanta. This 'Avatara Brahman' is referred to as 'satya' by *Brahma sutras*. In Vedanta literature it is described as 'Satya Brahman" and Sankara, while writing this commentary mentions two names for *Brahman*, 'Ahar' and 'Aham', Monier Williams mentions that 'Ahar' is connected with sacrifice. Hence this would aptly fit in with Jesus Christ who had offered himself as the sacrifice.[78]

The X Mandala of *Rg Veda* is glorified as *Purusa Sukata* which amplify the sacrifice of Purusa and the creation of the universe. The very mention of the

sacrifice of Purusa is regarded as the 'Self sacrifice' of God Himself and Swamy Vivekananda writes that 'the Virat Purusa had offered himself as sacrifice so as to create this world'[79]

The self sacrifice of Purusa Prajapati is conveyed in the self sacrifice of Christ which is the supreme sacrifice - because Christ volunteered himself as a sacrifice so that the whole world may be redeemed through his act of submission to be 'killed' as sacrifice on the cross, thus salvation was made perfect through sufferings.[80] The power of death, otherwise known as devil, was conquered by the power of resurrection of the incarnate God.[81]

Had he not clothed with flesh like the human beings their salvation also would not have been accomplished. This practice of sacrificial worship of the *Old Testament* or Vedas get fulfilled in the *New Testament* or *Vedanta*. Therefore, Jaimini's proposition of Vedic rites which aims at the supremacy of Brahmins and the hierarchy of caste system delimits the sovereignty of Brahman, the supreme Creator and hence the *Brahman Sutras* of Badarayana unchains the bondage of the souls not only in the spiritual sense but it breaks the barriers of humanity at large in the name of caste etc. leading them to the eternal bliss.

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72. *Brchadaranyaka Upanisad,* 4.4.32
73. *Brahma Sutras*, 1.1.1.
74. *Bhagavad Gita*, xi. 53-54
75. *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, 4.4.22
76. *Chandogya Upanishad*, 4.7.9-10
77. *Brahma Sutras*, 3.3.38
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80. *Hebrews* 2:10
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CHRISTIANITY AND GREEK THOUGHT

Samuel Yrjola

1. Introduction

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think, about such things". Letter of St. Paul to the Christians of Phillippi (65 CE).[1]

In the comparative study of different religions it is important to avoid unjust value judgements. But retain an honest and positive empathy towards the subject under study. Here it is necessary for the researcher to determine what is the primary object of his study - is it the religious belief system or is it the people who believe in the religious belief system? In fact both have to be considered, since a religious belief system always affects people either positively or negatively. It is also important to attempt, as far as possible, not to misrepresent the objects of the study. Every religion ought to be understood from its own standpoint, for that is how it is understood by its adherents. This is an almost impossible task. However a genuine love for people will help all who study this subject to keep a proper perspective.

Truth as a determining principle relates knowledge to reality and so truth needs to be defined. Can truth be defined by separating science from spirituality? Are the two mutually exclusive? This was a major question in the search for knowledge among the Greek thinkers. Rational scientific philosophy arose in the Greek world because the philosophers were of the opinion that religion was seriously corrupted. The same question continues to be relevant in the modern world. The present tendency, especially in the Western world to emphasise science and marginalise spirituality has risen because religion has been corrupted within the religious hierarchy.

Jesus told the Roman procurator Pilate: "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?"

Pilate asked. Pilate had from personal observations, had probably become cynical.[2]

To be credible, religion and philosophy which exist to serve humanity requires truth. Without truth human existence drifts. This can be observed in the religious pilgrimages of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, where there is an intense inner search for personal equilibrium. However this is also a characteristic in modern Christianity, where the focus of faith has drifted from Christ, who said that He is Truth personified, to various experiences and manifestations that often are not divinely activated. The lack of genuine truth creates an inner need which activates pilgrimages. Actually truth cannot be the only subject for philosophical speculation. Within the Christian context, truth is personified in Christ.

Religion and philosophy

Christianity is considered to be a religion, while Greek thought is considered to be a collection of different philosophies. Religion and philosophy are not mutually exclusive since a person is one complete unit. Some consider a person as being bipartite - body and soul. The Bible presents a human as tripartite - body spirit and soul.[3]

According to *the Bible* the body is temporal while the spirit and soul are eternal. A philosopher can either be an atheist or religious; it is merely a matter of personal choice. However he cannot be a credible seeker of truth if he does not retain an open mind towards the subject he is studying. Sound research is impaired when there is a strong bias. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) wrote: "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's mind to religion" (Essays 1625).

Knowledge is constantly expanding. Completely new areas of knowledge are coming into the human experience at an increasing momentum. The collective capacity of the human mind, which is the faculty of knowing, seems to be limitless. The objects of what is known (or can be known) cover everything from the visible to the invisible and from the past to the present. The human capacity

to know the future is, even at its best, merely calculated guessing based on past experiences. Divinely inspired prophetic knowledge is another matter.

There has been the search for knowledge on two distinct levels: 1. Secular (non-spiritual) and 2. Spiritual. These two levels of knowledge - secular and spiritual - are intertwined, so that to be able to understand and experience one, one needs to have the knowledge of the other. God created man as a rational and spiritual entity.

When seeking secular (non-spiritual) knowledge, rational (scientific) methods are required to determine what issues are valid to the subject under consideration. When seeking spiritual knowledge, a reliable source for spiritual knowledge is required. This presents an impossible challenge to anyone who denies the existence of God, since spiritual knowledge is transcendent. Apostle Paul writes. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Cor, 1:20-25).

Dictionary definition of religion and knowledge

The definition of religion varies very widely from one dictionary or website to another, depending on the preferences or biases of the person / persons defining it. According to the World Christian Database 2006, (http://worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/) there are 10,900 distinct organised religions in the world. The figure was 1,000 distinct religions in the year 1900 CE. There are a variety of reasons for this vast statistical increase. Two important reasons are: 1. Information about existing religions has improved during the last century. 2, Religious freedom laws have simplified the legitimate formation of new religious bodies.

Definition from Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, (1989 edition, Random House)

Religion: Concern over what exists beyond the visible world, differentiated from philosophy in that it operates through faith or intuition rather than reason, and generally including the idea of a transcendent spiritual entity that has created the world, that governs it, 'that controls its destinies, or that intervenes occasionally in the natural course of its history, as well as the idea that ritual, prayer, spiritual exercises, certain principles of everyday conduct, etc., are expedient, due or spiritually rewarding, or arise naturally out of an inner need as a human response to the belief of such a being, principle, etc.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the 58 Member States of the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France defines freedom of religion and belief as follows:

Article 18.Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The Universal Declaration of Human rights is an idealistic document with several serious impediments: 1. Ethical principles cannot be implemented without a dramatic change in the human personality. 2. The declaration is built on the assumption that Western democratic principles are universally understood and accepted. 3. The creators - mainly colonialists and neo-colonialists – of the document did not live by its principles.

The definition of philosophy also has many variables and with the increase of individualism, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine acceptable boundaries for philosophy as a rational system. This however is not a new development. The philosophers of Greece were often more interested in creating personal philosophical concepts than in searching for applicable truth.

Hermeneutics

When striving to understand ancient texts, it is important to remember certain basic hermeneutic principles which apply equally to all literature from any nation, culture or time. Since the subject of this paper is on Greek thought and Christianity, it is important that the same hermeneutical principles are applied when striving to interpret the relevant texts.

1. The primary meaning of a text must be the same as the writer intended it to be, and the same as the original readers understood it to be. This requires an understanding of the historical and geographical context in which the text was written. An understanding of the meaning of words and knowledge of the social and religious culture in the original historical context is also important.
2. The literature genre must be respected when interpreting the text. All nations have more or less similar ways of expressing ideas. The most common genre types in literature are (in alphabetical order):

    1. Apocalyptic - the foretelling of future events
    2. Didactic - teaching in every sphere of education
    3. Letters - public, official, private
    4. Poetry - religious, historical, profane
    5. Parables - brief stories that illustrate a religious or ethical point
    6. Proverbs - wise sayings or admonitions providing guidance
    7. Stories - short stories or novels on an unlimited number of subjects, either historically true or fictitious
    8. Mythology - stories that a particular culture believes to be true and that use supernatural events or characters to explain the nature of the universe and humanity

Using hermeneutical principles in the study of ancient literature, we need to realise, that words, which are the basis of communication, have increased dramatically during the past century. For this reason we should avoid using our vast accumulation of new words to smother the original meaning of the ancient writer. The Hebrew Old Testament had 8674 different words and the Greek New Testament had 5624 words. (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible 1890)

The most extensive English language dictionaries have over 400,000 words. Totally new words to express new scientific, philosophical, social, anthropological and religious concepts are created every day. The same trend is seen in all the major languages of the world.

Where there are a limited number of words with which to express ideas, whether real or imaginary, poetry, parables and allegory are used to illustrate or "fill in the blank spaces" for concepts for which there are no words. The first Greek writers Homer and Hesiod used poetry to express ideas. In poetry, picturesque language, hyperbole and understatement are part of the method.

There is a wide spectrum of opinions as to the actual intended meaning of these two ancient Greek writers. One line of demarcation appears to go according to the critic's position on the spirit world. Those who believe in the existence of a spirit world see religious content in early Greek mythology. Those who reject the idea of a spirit world, interpret the texts from a rational humanist perspective without any religious connotations. The same division is visible in the modern interpretation of the Holy Bible.

To arrive at a proper exegesis, we must consider the value and effect of religion - whenever applicable - in the lives of the writers and the society in which they wrote. Ancient Greek philosophy was moulded by the religion in which the philosopher lived. Often the philosophy was a protest against the prevailing corrupted religion. This is an universal trend throughout all human history; a rational protest is always created when the premise of a religion and its value systems are corrupted.

Gautama Buddha was more of a philosopher and reformer of religion, than the founder of a religion. Buddhism does not have a God or a Supreme Being. In recent years students of religion have argued on the need of God in religion. But religion requires God and the lack of God in religious thinking and experience is equal to a vacuum where there is no possibility of experiential spiritual life, which is another requirement for a relevant religion.

The different approaches to understanding religion and philosophy

Christianity as a religion and a way of life, and Greek thought as a religion influenced philosophy do have important common factors, but basically they are very different in their approach to understanding.

Did man have all possible knowledge at creation, or did he have the potential for accumulating an unlimited amount of knowledge? Here Christianity and Greek thought seem to agree: the potential has always existed, and because of this, knowledge has increased progressively. Although Greek philosophers did not always admit dependence on their previous compatriots, there is a clear line of progression in Greek philosophical thought. The rejection of a mystical religious system appears to be one of the contributors to the foundation of Greek Philosophy. From that point there is a progression in understanding, where some of the wrong philosophic and/or scientific deductions of Thales (c. 600 BC), Anaximander (c. 611-547 BC) and others, prompted their successors to rethink the issues and seek for better rational answers.

In conservative Christian theology it is generally understood that the knowledge of God has been progressive from Adam to Christ. While Jesus Christ is not the ultimate source of all knowledge, he is the ultimate revelation of God. The revelation brought by Christ to mankind concerns divine and human relationships and concentrates on spiritual and ethical values that either create or destroy relationships. The duty of the Christian Church is not to develop or seek for new spiritual or ethical revelation, rather it has to be obedient to and live according to the received revelation through Jesus Christ. While the knowledge of God is no longer progressive, the practical daily application of this knowledge fluctuates very dramatically in modern Christianity.[4]

The Christian approach to understanding religion and philosophy is God taking the initiative to reveal Himself and his ethical values (Law) to mankind through natural and supernatural processes. Man responds to God's revelation through an independent free choice. Religion and philosophy are not separate entities in Christianity; they form a single mutually supportive unit. In the

Christian understanding the primary source of all knowledge is God. This is the emphasis of the whole Bible and is unique in all historical literature.[5]

The Greek approach to understanding religion and philosophy is very different, since religion and philosophy are two separate and often conflicting entities. While some of the philosophers admitted the existence of gods, goddesses and other supernatural beings of a lesser status, these were marginal in their search for understanding.

The Greek approach to understanding religion is in essence similar to the Christian. However the source of spiritual knowledge is not God, but a totally different spiritual entity with totally different values. The Bible calls this spiritual entity "The devil... the rulers... the authorities... the powers of this dark world... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:11, 12). Since the revelation given by this spiritual entity is confusing and inadequate, man creates his own concept about what god could or should be, and in the process is compelled to divide god into numerous parts, where each part fulfils a particular need in human experience.

In the Greek approach to understanding philosophy, man seeks to discover and understand the origin and existence of the visible and invisible through different rational processes. However it is hardly possible that the Greek philosophers reached their conclusions independently.

The universal search for knowledge

The desire of man to understand himself and the world around him has been an integral part of human existence from the beginning of human history. This desire to understand ("understand" in the limitless sense; containing both non-spiritual and spiritual understanding) is the driving force behind the insatiable human need to find, develop or create knowledge. Since the mass of knowledge is increasing in every sector of human existence, truth continues to be the most important factor when assessing the value of knowledge.

However it is not right to think that the world has been divided into strictly delineated islands of knowledge, with each separate island creating its

own research programs. There has always been a continuous interaction of knowledge between the peoples of Asia, Africa and Europe. The ancient trade routes between the extremes of the continents were also routes along which information on culture, philosophy and religion moved freely. Using modem terminology, the world has always been interactive.

A Biblical (Jewish and Christian) explanation for this insatiable need for knowledge is found in the Book of Genesis, where God gave man the responsibility to "subdue and rule the earth". Knowledge is essential for the proper fulfilling of given responsibility.[6]

Primary sources

Our knowledge of the past is based on archaeological findings, oral traditions and written texts. The primary source of knowledge for this paper on issues relating to Christianity is *the Holy Bible*. Even though the 66 (73 including *Deutero canonical* books generally used by Catholics) books in the Holy Bible have been written over a period of about 15 centuries, there is a consistent line of thought that does not contain internal contradictions. The God described in the first book (written c. 15th century BCE) is the same God that is presented in the last book (written at the end of the 1st century CE).

The earliest known writing of the Hebrew people dates from the 15th century BCE. The script was derived from the Phoenician script. The earliest existent writings of the Greeks date to the 8th century BCE. Greek texts disappeared during the dark ages (1200-800 BCE), to reappear again when the Greek script found its new form. The script used by the first Greek writers of existent literature was also a development from the Phoenician script. This interesting detail shows that cross-cultural communication has existed from earliest tunes.

The origins of the Greek religion can be traced, along with other Indo-European religions to the Post-Flood era. The records of the Flood in the oral traditions of different cultures indicate that there was an universal catastrophe sometime during the 3rd millennium BCE. The Greek mythologies recorded by Homer and Hesiod are part of the religious belief system of the peoples who lived

before the Greek dark ages (1200-800 BCE). The Greek belief system did not disappear during the dark ages, it continued to exist through oral tradition.

Greek philosophical thought started developing during the 7th century BCE. An important detail hi the Greek society was that religion and philosophy did not mix spontaneously. The major Greek philosophers were unable to relate their rational thinking to the mythology based religious practises of the common people. For this reason the two subjects must be studied separately.

The common issues in Christian and Greek thought:

1. The origin of the whole creation, both visible and invisible
2. The existence of God, either as the Creator, Yahweh, Triune God (Jew/Christian) or The One, The Boundless, the Eternal Idea (Greek and other existent religions).
3. The origin and nature of man
4. The purpose of life

It is only natural that the important questions concerning human existence and the world around us are common to Christian and Greek thought. Christians and Greeks have the same origin. However the approach to understanding these common factors is different. We do not normally speak of Christian thought or philosophy, we speak of Christian theology, the basis of which is: "God loves the world that He has created" (John 3:16).

The basis of Greek philosophy is human "Love of wisdom". These are two different approaches, which cannot be synchronized into a single unit of understanding.

However it is inevitable that the Greek philosophers were influenced by the prevalent religions, since everybody is influenced by their environment. So, in their case "love of wisdom" was reacticnary - it was caused by a disillusion towards religion.

Greek mythology and religion

The Greek poet and writer of rhapsodies Hesiod (Hesiodos) is perhaps the best source of knowledge on the early religious beliefs of the Greeks. He

presumably lived around 700 BCE. Hesiod is also a major source for knowledge of Greek fanning techniques, archaic Greek astronomy and ancient time keeping, Historians have debated the priority of Hesiod or of Homer.

The first gnomic poem, "Works and days" of some 800 verses revolves around two truths: 1. labour is the universal lot of Man, but he who is willing to work will get by. It attacks idleness and unjust judges as well as the practice of usury. 2. It describes immortals who roam the earth watching over justice and injustice. The poem regards labour as the source of all good, in that both gods and men hate the idle. These ideas are common to several other writers of that period. King Solomon (c. 900 CE) wrote on the same subject in his meditative book "*Ecclesiastes*". The Jewish collection of *Proverbs*, mainly attributed to King Solomon, often mention the same truths.

Hesiod is also the immediate parent of verse with short pithy sayings or maxims expressing general truths, in which he speculated on the mysteries of human life. Hesiod claims that the Muses gave him the gift of poetic inspiration one day while he tended sheep.

Tradition attributes the "Theogony", a poem which uses the same epic verse form as the "Works and Day's to Hesiod. The Theogony, which in its surviving form has over 1000 verses, resembles "Works and Days" very closely in style and substance considering the different subject matter.

The Theogony concerns the origins of the world (cosmogony) and of the gods (theogony), ' beginning with Gaia, Nyx and Eros, and shows a special interest in the genealogy of the gods. The structure of the Theogony is built on the five ages of mankind. Embedded in Greek myth there remain fragments of quite variant tales, hinting at the rich variety of myth that once existed in the different Greek cities; but Hesiod's retelling of the old stories became, according to the 5th century historian Herodotos, the accepted version that linked all Hellenes.

Mythology of the Greeks

When Hesiod writes that the Muses residing on Mount Helicon gave him the poetic inspiration, we are faced with a question: Who were the Muses?

According to Hesiod they are the daughters of Mother Earth - Gaia and the male god Sky - Uranus.

To understand what Hesiod meant by the Muses we must know something about Greek mythology.

The word mythology (Greek: mythos, a story or legend, and logos, an account or speech) literally means the (oral) retelling of myths - stories that a particular culture believes to be true and that use supernatural events or characters to explain the nature of the universe and humanity.

In modern usage, mythology is either the body of myths from a particular culture or religion (as in Greek mythology, Egyptian mythology or Norse mythology) or the branch of knowledge dealing with the collection, study and interpretation of myths. In common usage, myth means a falsehood - a story which many believe to be based on fact but which is not true.

The field of mythology does not use this definition. The students and researchers of mythology see myths as narratives about divine or heroic beings, arranged in a coherent system, passed down traditionally, and linked to the spiritual or religious life of a community, usually endorsed by rulers or priests. They are often intended to explain the universal and local beginnings ("creation myths" and "founding myths"), natural phenomena, inexplicable cultural conventions, and anything else for which no simple explanation presents itself.

The so-called primitive people (intelligent, but without modem knowledge) expressed their concepts through mythology. According to F. W. J. Schelling in Introduction to Philosophy and Mythology, "Mythological representations have been neither invented nor freely accepted. The products of a process independent of thought and will, they were, for the consciousness which underwent them, of an irrefutable and incontestable reality. Peoples and individuals are only the instruments of this process, which goes beyond their horizon and which they serve without understanding."[7]

If the above is true, Hesiod is not the ''original writer" of the texts attributed to him, nor are the texts merely the recordings of ancient folklore.

Rather Hesiod should be described as the scribe of the spirit world giving expression to a very real but invisible existence.

Different Classifications of myths

Myths cover a vast area of ancient human beliefs such as:
Ritual myths explain
Origin myths
Cult myths
Prestige myths
Social myths and
Trickster myths

Myths may fit in more than one category. But behind all the myths are the same basic needs. Every culture on every continent has its own mythology through which people seek to understand the variants of human life. Every ancient mythology acknowledges the existence of an invisible but expertentially real spirit world. In Greek mythology the spirit world is described as being immoral, deceitful, sensual, capricious, vindictive and fearful.

To claim that the mythology of ancient Greece is merely a reflection of prevailing cultural and social values does not do justice to the experience of people living during that period. Claiming that the spirit world is only the creation of human imagination leaves many transcendental realities without a valid answer. The Bible is clear on the subject and speaks of bilateral communication between mortals and the spirit world. This means that the spirit world affects the activities of mortals either directly or indirectly.

So Hesiod's "Theogony" is to be understood as a poetic description of the activities of the spirit world and its influence on humans. It also describes human life that has either willingly submitted itself to the influence of the spirit world or has been compelled into submission. As mentioned earlier, poetry cannot be interpreted literally since the use of hyperbola, understatements and picturesque illustrations are the methods for expressing elements, ideas and beliefs for which there are no words.

Homer the poet of Greek epics

Homeric poems prior to the Greek Dark Ages (1200 - 750 BCE) deal with the nature of human civilization and human savagery. The questions in the epics deal with the value of a mortal life. Unlike Hesiod, Homer did not write what might be called "sacred poetry". He did not show much respect for the Greek gods and tended to present them in an unfavourable light. This brought him praise from some and criticism from others. On the other hand, he strived to raise the moral values of his mortal contemporaries.

The Greeks in general regard Homer's two epics - *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* - as the highest cultural achievement of their people, the defining moment in Greek culture. Throughout Greek antiquity, everything tended to be compared to these two works; events in history made sense when put in the light of the events narrated in these two works. As a result, then, these two epics are the focal points of Greek values and the Greek world view.

In his poems Homer emphasises honour and virtue or greatness. The latter term is perhaps the most reiterated cultural and moral value in Ancient Greece and means something like achieving, morally and otherwise, your greatest potential as a human being. The reward for great honour and virtue is fame, which is what guarantees meaning and value to one's life. Dying without fame is generally considered a disaster. Homer might be called one of the great humanists in a time when religious myths had a strong grip on the lives of the ordinary people.

Interpretation of ancient mythology

The correct interpretation of mythology is a very challenging task. Emeritus professor William Harris of Middlebury College has attempted to bring a new relevance to ancient Greek texts in his online book: "*Greek Mythology as Historical Tradition*". While Prof. Harris's study is interesting and gives a new approach to looking at Greek myths he seems to ignore the actual beliefs and religious practices in the lives of the people who lived 2000-3800 years ago in Greece. The Greeks had largely rejected their ancient religious traditions by the 4th century CE, while the majority of the Indians still retain their ancient beliefs.

"When one compares Greek mythology with the myth cycles of the Indian tradition, one sees immediately that there is a vast difference between the two. The Indian myths have as wide storytelling range as the Greek myths, but they have also been incorporated into, and have also been formed by strong religious tradition. They are used to develop philosophical points, to indicate moral choices, and to reinforce sincere religious views of value to the society. Part of the reason for this transparency of purpose lies in the fact that there is a continuous religious tradition which extends with many changes from Vedic to modern times, even as Hinduism became fused and amalgamated with Buddhism, to reappear later as the dominant religious system of India. Within this long living tradition the position of the myths in India is full of new developments but their use is relatively stable and clear.

We do know that the Greeks were early in contact with India by the 7th century BC, and some thoughtful Greeks absorbed some of the formats of the Indian myths while entirely missing their religious and philosophical penchant. But most of the Greek myths reach further back into the history of migrations into Europe from the Near East, and represent a different segment of historical evolution.

"The Greek myths are of two sorts. Some are what can be called the "mythic" myths, which are stories which find ways of telling important things about difficult and even ineffable matters through stories. Some of the Greek myths explore profound matters and have through the ages challenged people with examples of serious thought, these are the true and spiritual myths, which abundantly deserve religious and philosophical study, and constitute to a major section of Greek thought.

"A second much larger group may be called the "historical" myths. These are the ones which Euhemeros identified and began to interpret, and it is these which the present study will discuss. Many of the myths, when viewed as mythology will seem confusing, self-contradictory and somewhat pointless as myths, but this is because they are historical records of social and historical events which lose their meaning when read as quasi religious mythology. And when the historical mythology loses its original social and historical factuality, it becomes inane and superficial. Over the years it has become common to tell and

retell the myths as imaginative stories, leaving historical origins aside, rather than trying to fathom an original meaning." Preface, "Greek Mythology as Historical Tradition".

Greek mythology from the Christian perspective

To be able to place Greek mythology into a Christian perspective it is important that we define the powers in action behind the Greek myths. The Bible presents a world where two opposing spiritualities are in conflicting action. These spiritualities are distinctly different in their nature and activities. The plot of the *Gospel* according to John in the *New Testament* brings the differences into stark contrast.

One part of systematic Christian theology is the study of the essence and attributes of God. (A brief summary of the subject is given in the part dealing with Christianity.) A similar study of the gods that the Greeks worshipped gives a completely different type of divinity. While the myths have changed their content over the centuries, and it is not possible to give an accurate chronology or genealogy of the Greek pantheon, the basic essence and attributes of the Greek gods and goddesses remain the same.

The essence and attributes of Greek gods and goddesses

The following is a condensed list of gods and goddesses, their essence and attributes as recorded in the *Wikipedia Free encyclopaedia*:

According to Hesiod's *Theogony* (The origin of the Gods), Chaos was the nothingness out of which the first objects of existence appeared. These first beings, described as children of Chaos alone, were Gaia (the Earth), Tartarus (the Underworld), Nyx (the darkness of the night), and Erebus (the darkness of the Underworld). Thus, at the very start of his story, Hesiod establishes that the deities are related to each element known to primitive man, beginning with the primordial elements: the Earth, the starry Sky, and the Sea.

Theogony presents two different ways for life to come into existence: division (Gaia, Nyx) and mating. After Gaia, almost all deities brought to life by

division are negative concepts (Death, Distress, Sarcasm, Deception, and so on) and for the most part are produced by the goddess Nyx. From this point on the model is set for reproduction, from the action of two entities, male and female, as it appears in the divine world in response to human society. So the first answer given by the myth to the question "What is the cause of this?" becomes "This is the father and this is the mother". Furthermore, deities created by division almost never become allies with those created by mating.

Characteristics: The original meaning of Chaos was "Space, the great outer void".

The truth value of Greek gods and goddesses

What is the "Truth value" of the Greek gods'? Even when we admit that Greek theology is expressed in very colourful poetic language, we are faced with the reality, that the Greek pantheon is weak in truth. Their ethical and moral values are actually below the values recognised by the common man. The dishonest and confused religious beliefs and practices produced a long line of philosophical thinkers, who sought truth from sources outside of religion.

The genetic factors in Greek pantheism

The above subheading may seem strange, but when we talk about the genealogy of gods, we have to include the "genetic factor" into our research. In Greek mythology there are clear indications that the essence and attributes of the parent gods and goddesses are transferred to their offspring. For this reason it could be useful, for the understanding of Greek religion, to look at the genealogy of the gods as Hesiod presents it in his Theogony.

Cronus was the youngest son of Mother Earth (Gaia) and Sky (Uranus). He married his sister Rhea and to them were bom 6 gods. Zeus, the youngest son of Cronus, overthrew his father and became the supreme ruler of the gods. He had 6 (or 7) children. Together these 12 (or 13) children formed the Greek pantheon that resided on Mount Olympus. Since the first 6 Olympiad gods and goddesses were born as a result of sexual relationships between Mother Earth and Sky, they share the same essence as their parents. The children of Zeus belong to

the same family tree and so (presumably) have the same essence as their grandparents.

Apostle Paul in his letter to Galatian church writes about the attributes visible in the Greek Pantheon and the lives of those who worship the gods and goddesses of the Pantheon: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

The effect of Greek religion on society

When the moral values of the gods worshipped are of low standard, it directly affects the lives of those who worship them. The low value of life among the gods was duplicated in Greek society where slavery and the abuse of basic human rights was common. The same tensions, jealousies and anger that existed between the gods was visible in the low status of women in Greak society. There were no free Greek women. The freest women were the hetairai courtesans and prostitutes - who were trained to entertain men.

The role of wife was mainly to give birth to healthy children. She was not expected to enjoy married life. The husband generally sought his pleasures outside home. Women and children were essentially the property of the husband and father respectively. The father was essentially in life-and-death control of his family. When a baby was born the father would inspect it. If it was deformed he would expose it to the elements and leave it to die. The wife had no political rights, could not own property, and could not divorce. (The wives in Sparta were freer, they could own property, and were never really married) Slaves were completely at the will of their masters. They mainly did the lowliest tasks, but they were also called upon to do dangerous tasks like mining apart from being induced to prostitution. Not all were treated badly because some masters understood that good treatment resulted in loyal and dedicated service.

The admirers of Greek promiscuity and its abnormal preoccupation at times with sex, including the practise of pederasty (homosexual relations between

men and boys. forget that there is a heavy price to pay). Venereal disease was rampant - affecting a large percentage of the adult population in major cities.

The Bible gives confirmation to the description of Greek gods as spiritual being. Apostle Paul, who was well versed in Greek religion and had a firsthand knowledge of the effects of the religion on common people writes:

"My dear friends, run away from statues of gods. Don't worship them. I'm talking to people who are reasonable. Judge for yourselves what I say. When we give thanks for the cup at the Lord's Supper, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ? Just as there is one loaf, so we who are many are one body. We all eat from the one loaf. Think about the people of Israel. Don't those who eat the offerings share in the altar? Do I mean that what is offered to a statue of a god is anything? No! But what is offered by those who worship statues of gods is really offered to demons. It is not offered to God. I don't want you to be sharing with demons. You can't drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too. You can't have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to make the Lord jealous? Are we stronger than he is?" 1 Cor.10:14-22

"You know that at one time you were unbelievers. You were somehow drawn away to worship statues of gods that couldn't even speak". 1 Cor. 12:2

"Finally, let the Lord make you strong. Depend on his mighty power. Put on all of God's armour. Then you can stand firm against the devil's evil plans. Our fight is not against human beings. It is against the rulers, the authorities and the powers of this dark world. It is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world. So put on all of God's armour. Evil days will come. But you will be able to stand up to anything. And after you have done everything you can, you will still be standing. So stand firm. Put the belt of truth around your waist. Put the armour of godliness on your chest. Wear on your feet what will prepare you to tell the good news of peace. Also, pick up the shield of faith. With it you can put out all of the flaming arrows of the evil one. Put on the helmet of salvation. And take the sword of the Holy Spirit. The sword is God's word". Eph. 6:10-17

"You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God. the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 6:18-23

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as 1 did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God". Gal. 5:19-21

The Greeks before the philosopher Thales (624-546 BC) explained the origin and nature of the world through myths of anthropomorphic gods and heroes. Phenomena like lightning and earthquakes were attributed to actions of gods. The view of Socrates (470-399 CE) on the gods of Athens was no very flattering: "But this is what I call the facetious riddle invented by you: the demigods or spirits are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in demigods. For if the demigods are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the nymphs or by any other mothers, of whom they are said to be the sons, what human being will ever believe that there are no gods if they are the sons of gods? By Plato the "Apology of Socrates" translated by Benjamin Jowett in *The Dialogues of Plato, Volume 2,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892).

Concluding remarks on Greek religion

Because the early Greek religion lacked the conception of sin, it did not make provision for mortals to be freed from the bondage of a guilty conscience. The mythical gods and goddesses did not possess a conscience that inhibited their

activities. Ritual sacrifices did not contain a purification of the soul nor did they provide inner tranquillity to a restless heart.

The early Greek religion had nothing like the Platonic conception of the soul; for them the spirit that left the dying human and travelled to the underworld was a pathetic creature, less than half alive. There was no heaven to which the departed spirits of the good might find admittance; after death all men, except a few privileged heroes descended from the gods, led the shadowy half-life below the earth. The basic purpose of religion in the lives of the common people was to create a fear in that would restrain them from excessive evils.

Even though there was no conception of soul in Greek religious thought, it does not mean that there was no inner yearning for a reality that was undefined in Greek religion. King Solomon wrote about "eternity in the hearts of men": "What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. 1 know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil - this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him" (Ecclesiastes 3:10-14).

Plato expressed the despondency of the Greeks: "...Our soul is immortal, and has judges, and pays the utmost penalties whenever a man is rid of the body." [Plato, 7th letter, 335a]

Going from the premise that the Greek gods are spiritual beings the Apostle James writes: "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder" (James 2:19).

The spiritual experiences of forgiveness and hope of *the Old Testament* writers were unknown in Greek religion.

King David wrote in 1004 B.C.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. Ps. 32:1,2

The ancient poet Job wrote in 650 B.C.

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job. 19:25-27

Similarities between Greek and Indian religion

There are many structural similarities in these two religions. The cosmogony is very similar as well as the theogony - the mythological development of the pantheon. Working from the biblical premise of two distinctive and opposing universal spiritualities, it would seem a natural conclusion that all polytheistic and pantheistic religions in the world have the same original source.

There are historical records of the interaction between Hellenistic Greece and Buddhism which flourished at the time when Alexander the Great conquered Asia Minor and Central Asia in 334 BCE, crossing the Indus and Jhelum rivers, and going as far as the Beas.

Alexander founded several cities in his new territories in the areas of the Oxus and Bactria, and Greek settlements further extended to the Khyber Pass, Gandhara (Taxila) and the Punjab. These regions correspond to a unique geographical passageway between the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush mountains, through which most of the interaction between India and Central Asia took place, generating intense cultural exchange and trade.

The interaction of Greek and Buddhist cultures operated over several centuries until it ended in the 5th century CE with the invasions of the White Huns, and later the expansion of Islam.

An interesting factor that needs more study is that Buddhism was a philosophical reformation movement of Indian Hinduism around the same time as there were philosophical reformation movements in China and Greece. What religious and or historical need prompted these reformation movements?

The Roman Empire swallowed Greece together with its religion and philosophy in the first century BCE. Greek gods and goddesses were given Roman names and the Greek philosophies became part of Roman thinking.

Greek philosophy

Philosophy at its best is a sincere and honest search of truth and reality. Mere sincerity and honesty however are not enough, reliable and verifiable facts are also required. All sincere and honest seekers are compelled to humbly admit, that all the relevant facts are not available. The great Israeli leader Moses (c. 1440 BCE) declared: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deut. 29:29).

The early Greek philosophers from Thales of Miletus (circa 640 - 546 B.C.) onwards were faced with the incongruity of Greek religion when compared to the reality around them. In their search for truth, they followed various and often conflicting paths. This is natural, since every human path comes to a dead-end at some stage if faith in God is ignored in the search. This continues to be true, even though we have far more information today then the thinkers before the current era (BCE). Many of the early philosophers had the same obstacles as modern seekers of the truth - they lacked true humility. King Solomon wrote: "Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honour" (Prov. 18:12).

There is no clear moral, ethical or religious line that connects the Greek philosophers together. Among the philosophers were Agnostics (Xenophanes ca.

570 B.C. - ca. 480 B.C.) and Believers in the gods (Melissus of the 5th Century BCE); Stoics (Zeno and Chrysippus 282-209 BCE) and Hedonists (Anstippus 435-356 BCE); Mystics (Pythagoras 582 - 502 BCE) and Cynics (Diogenes, the Cynic 412? - 323 BCE).

Thales 600 BCE

According to Thales the original principle of all existence is water, from which everything proceeds and into which everything is again resolved. This "water" from which all life began was to Thales' way of thinking a mobile essence, changing, flowing, without distinctive colour or shape in itself, yet presenting a cycle of existence passing from sky and air to earth, thence to plants and to the bodies of animals, and back to air and sky again. Preferring to search for natural laws instead of mindlessly accepting the mythological explanations of religion, Thales was the first Greek to have attempted to find rational, natural explanations to natural phenomena.
Water has always been associated with life.

Moses said: "The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven" CDeut. 11:11).

God asked Job: "Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it, to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? Does the rain have a father? Who fathers die drops of dew? Job 38:25-28

Thales expressed his humility by saying: "The most difficult thing in life is to know thyself." When he was asked what, then, is easy, he replied, "To give advice."

Anaximander (611-547 BCE) did not seem to believe in the generation of anything in the proper sense of the word, but supposed that the infinite units of which the primary matter is composed merely change their relative positions in

obedience to a moving power residing in the primary matter. Lacking a better word Anaximander chose the term "Infinite" as being the source and element of existing things.

By "the Infinite" Anaximander meant an endless, unlimited mass undetermined by qualities, in no way subject to age or decay, embracing all things, and giving them motion. Through this motion, the world came into being. When destroyed, all things were absorbed again into the indeterminate. From this basic principle, Anaximander conceived all opposites, such as hot and cold, dry and moist, as being the products of perpetual motion.

Infinite has no beginning or end. In the choice of the term "infinite" he sought to express an undefined impersonal "divinity" that was separate from the gods of Greece, either in the sense that it was above or that it was different from the Greek Pantheon.

Both Hesiod and Anaximander used analogy in their accounts of the formation of the world order. But Hesiod's analogy was drawn from spiritual forces at work in the universe and his explanation was completely anthropomorphic. Anaximander's cosmogony is a complete break from this mode of thinking. His analogy is purely mechanical, and the forces at work in his model are entirely impersonal. In taking this step, Anaximander crossed the line that divides Hesiod from the Greek philosophers. Anaximander was the first to develop the idea that humans evolved from a lower species of warm-blooded animals. This shift in thinking caused the foundations of Greek religion and morality to be undermined. A personal god -either good or bad - has a restricting influence on human behaviour. When the god becomes a mere impersonal force this restrictive force is removed making room for irrational and immoral behaviour.

Pythagoras (582 - 502 B.C.) was one of the most influential of the Greek philosophers and mathematicians. In his travels he became initiated into the doctrines of the Egyptian priests. He believed in the immortality and transmigration of souls, including the reincarnation of human souls into animals. Pythagoras had strong leanings toward mysticism, which influenced his concepts of truth and reality. According to him, the proportion, order, and harmony of the

Universe were all closely connected with number, which lay at the very foundation of existence.

Pythagoras maintained that "For the sake of punishment, the soul is yoked to the body and buried in it as in a tomb." In the Pythagorean view, the soul is distinct from life, and is immortal. It is not affected by the corruption which overtakes the body, but stands apart from it even in life - a detached portion of the divine in exile from its native land. Because it is in exile it yearns to return to that upper region whence it came, to be released from the prison house of the body, and to rejoin once more to the company of the gods. The effect of this new conception of the soul was to change the traditional view of man's place in the Cosmos, which was quite separate from the gods, who alone possess everlasting life, while men are but creatures of a day.

Here again we are compelled to ask, where did these ideas originate? Did Pythagoras develop a "Greek" form for a concept that was familiar to the Egyptians and the Indians?

Xenophanes (ca. 570 B.C. - ca. 480 B.C.) was a Greek poet, religious reformer, and philosopher of Colophon (in Asia Minor). He fearlessly attacked the gods, pointing out that the true origin of gods lay in the anthropomorphism of Nature (giving supernatural qualities to statues in the form of man and calling them "God"): 'The Ethiopians made their gods snub-nosed and black; the Thracians make theirs grey-eyed and red-haired ... And if oxen and horses and lions could draw with their hands and do what men can do, horses would draw the gods in the shape of horses, and oxen in the shape of oxen, each giving the gods bodies similar to their own." - Xenophanes

Xenophanes held that the cosmos exists in innumerable incarnations, but they do not overlap. The world-order must come to an end before a new one can arise. But "god" (i.e., the guiding intelligence of the cosmos, or the sum of the laws and forces of Nature) is eternal, and does not come into being or pass away. Thus "god" is not identical with the cosmos in any of its incarnations, but only with that feature which is common to them all: the presence of order in each which makes it a world-order. But where there is order, there is intelligence, for order is but intelligence made manifest; and this intelligence, conceived in

abstraction from its manifestations, is the "one god" of Xenophanes. Xenophanes' "one god" is not an entity, as it is to monotheists, but, in pantheistic fashion, is instead suffused throughout the cosmos - it is the active principle of order itself.[8]

Leucippus (flourished around 475 B.C.) was credited with having originated the theory of atomistic materialism (i.e., the philosophical precursor of atomic theory.) This important theory has had far-reaching influence in both ancient and modem times and serves as the backbone of today's science of chemistry, as well as constituting the foundation of philosophic- materialism. Leucippus held that matter was homogeneous, but existed ultimately in infinity of small panicles, which were indivisible. These panicles he called atoms, meaning "uncuttables" or "indivisibles.

Socrates (470 - 399 B.C.) accepted pleasure as good. However he understood that pleasure needs controls to prevent natural human desires from taking control of the will. In his opinion the rulers had invented gods to keep the population in a state of fear and to act as a restraining force against immorality. His question was: Is a natural ethic possible? Can philosophy or proper education develop an ethical code that will act as a restraining force to curtail the power of evil?

In his thinking Socrates argued that knowledge is the highest virtue and all vice is caused by ignorance. If men have proper knowledge, they will act properly. And so his argument was, the highest good is happiness and the highest means to achieve it is through knowledge or intelligence.

Empedocles (c. 493 - c 433 BCE) may have been the first to suggest that light takes time to pass from one point to another. He was also the first to propose the Theory of the Survival of the Fittest, thus anticipating by more than 22 centuries the Theory of Evolution now attributed to Charles Darwin.

Plato (ca. 427 - 347 BCE) was a complex person. His philosophical thoughts covered a vast range and sometimes with contradictory ideas. He was influenced by the political situation in Athens, his visits to Egypt and especially the death of his great friend and mentor Socrates. It is also very possible that

Buddhist thoughts reached Greece, since Plato maintained that after death the principle of life or the "soul" passes into other organisms, higher or lower according to the desserts it has earned in its previous incarnations. The same was the thought of the Hindu. Philosopher Buddha (c. 563-483 BCE), believed that through various existences the soul, under goes the process of purification of all wrong doing. It is finally freed from the cycles of reincarnation, and enters the paradise of everlasting happiness that is non-existence. Plato further maintained that the principle of life or "soul" has three levels or parts: desire, will, and thought. Each of these parts or divisions has its own virtue: moderation, courage, and wisdom, respectively. Plato defined justice as the cooperation of the parts in a whole, each performing its fittest function properly.

His philosophy of "Good" is the mingling of reason and pleasure in correct proportion so that this is not controlled by pleasure, but by reason. He also sought the "Supreme Good" through "pure knowledge" of eternal forms and laws. To find the "Supreme Good one must love the truth and do all things for the sake of truth. - Plato, Republic (Book VI).

Plato's theory was very noble, but he failed to define absolute truth and so was unable to find Supreme Good.

Diogenes, the Cynic (412? - 323 B.C.) Today a cynic is popularly defined as "one who sarcastically doubts human sincerity and merit". But in ancient Greece Cynic refers to "a member of a sect of Greek philosophers who held virtue to be the only good, who stressed independence from worldly needs and pleasures, and who were critical of society's compulsive materialism." The Cynics provided a colourful chapter in the history of ancient Greek philosophy, and their godless and shameless doctrine which exalts the poor and the downtrodden through the rejection of materialism.

"Nothing could be clearer than Cynic philosophy. It dallied with logic only long enough to dismiss as moonshine that theory of Ideas with which Plato was bewildering the intellectuals of Athens. Metaphysics, too, seemed to the Cynics a vain game; we should study nature not in order to explain the world, which is impossible, but that we may learn wisdom of nature as a guide to life. The only real philosophy is ethics. The aim of life is happiness; but this is to be

found not in the pursuit of pleasure but in a simple and natural life, as independent as possible of all external aids. For though pleasure is legitimate if it results from one's own labour and effort, and is not followed by remorse, yet it so often eludes us in the chase, or disappoints us when captured, that it may more wisely be called an evil than a good.

A modest and virtuous life is the only road to abiding content; wealth destroys peace, and envious desire, like rust, eats away the soul. Slavery is unjust but unimportant; the sage will find it as easy to be happy in bondage as in freedom; only internal freedom counts. The gods, said Diogenes, gave man an easy existence, but man has complicated it by itching for luxuries. Not that the Cynics put much faith in the gods. When a priest explained to Antisthenes how many good things the virtuous will enjoy after death, he asked, "Why, then, do you not die?" Diogenes smiled at the Mysteries, and remarked of the offerings setup in Samothrace by those who had survived a shipwreck, "The offerings would have been much more numerous if those who were lost had offered them instead of those who were saved.

Everything in religion but the practice of virtue seemed to the Cynics superstition. Virtue must be accepted as its own reward and should not depend upon the existence or justice of the gods. Virtue consists in eating, possessing, and desiring as little as possible, drinking only water, and injuring no one. Asked how to defend oneself against an adversary, Diogenes answered, "By proving honourable and upright." Only sexual desire seemed reasonable to the Cynics. They avoided marriage as an external bond, but patronized prostitutes. Diogenes advocated free love and a community of wives, and Antisthenes, seeking independence in everything, complained that he could not satisfy his hunger as solitarily as he could assuage his lust. Having accepted sexual desire as normal and natural, like hunger, the Cynics professed themselves unable to understand why men should be ashamed to satisfy the one appetite, like the other, in public. Even in death a man should be independent, choosing for it his own place and time; suicide is legitimate. Diogenes, some.say, killed himself by holding his breath.

"The Cynic philosophy was part of a "back-to-nature" movement which arose in fifth century in Athens as a reaction of maladjustment to an irksomely

complex civilization. Men are not civilized by nature, and bear the restraints of ordered life only because they fear punishment and solitude. Diogenes stood to Socrates in somewhat the same relation as Rousseau to Voltaire: he thought that civilization was a mistake, and that Prometheus had deserved his crucifixion for bringing it to mankind. The cynics, like the Stoics and Rousseau, idealized "nature peoples"; Diogenes tried to eat raw meat because cooking was unnatural. The best society, he thought, would be one without artifices or laws. The Greeks smiled upon the Cynics, and tolerated them as medieval society tolerated its sainta.

After Diogenes the Cynics became a religious order without a religion; they made a rule of poverty, lived on alms, tempered their celibacy with promiscuity, and opened schools of philosophy. They had no homes, but taught and slept in the street or the temple porticoes. Through Diogenes' disciples, Stilpo and Crates, the Cynic doctrine passed down into the Hellenistic age, and formed the basis of Stoicism. The school disappeared as an entity about the end of the third century; but its influence remained strong in the Greek tradition, and perhaps reappeared in the Essenes of Judea and the monks of early Christians of Egypt. How far all these movements were influenced by, or influenced, similar sects in Wia scholarship cannot yet say. The "back-to-nature" devotees of our own day are the intellectual descendants of those men and women of Oriental or Greek antiquity who, tired of unnatural and cramping restraints, thought that they could turn and live with the animals. No full life is without a touch of this urban fantasy.[9]

Aristippus (435? - 356? BCE) was the Founder of Hedonism who held pleasure to be the highest good, and virtue to be identical with the ability to enjoy. His doctrines, comprising the first coherent exposition of hedonism, were in opposition to the Cynics, although both groups drew from aspects of Socratic philosophy; for, while the Cynics derived from Socrates his independence and his humble disregard for materialism, Aristippus adopted instead his placid acceptance of the goodness of pleasure.

Concluding remarks on Greek philosophies

Greek philosophy is not unique; rather it is a combination of many different thought patterns that filtered into the Greek speaking areas around the

Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea. Chinese, Indian, Persian, Phoenician and Egyptian religions and philosophies influenced the ancient Greek thinkers.

One major problem in the Greek philosophies was the lack of continuity - a common idea that would give the different philosophies credibility. While they worked out many important scientific theories, they did not find relevant applications for these theories. However they laid the foundation for many important scientific studies without themselves understanding their importance.

Benjamin Farrington writes in:
Greek Science, its Meaning for Us

The endeavour to explain great social movements by the psychology of individuals is one of the crippling errors of our time. No, while science as a whole became a prey to creeping paralysis, there was no lack of individual talent, no lack of individual genius, as these pages abundantly show. The failure was a social one and the remedy lay in public policies that were beyond the grasp of the age. The ancients rigorously organized the logical aspects of science, lifted them out of the body of technical activity in which they had grown or in which they should have found their application, and set them apart from the world of practice and above it. This mischievous separation of the logic from the practice of science was the result of the universal cleavage of society into freeman and slave. This was not good either for practice or for theory.

It has been naively taught, and is still sometimes naively believed, that the science of the Renaissance arose because Greek books from Constantinople arrived in western Europe. If this were the whole truth of the matter, we might well ask why the modern world was not born in Alexandria, or in Rome, or in Constantinople, where the old books survived. There is another aspect of the truth to be considered. Greco-Roman science was good seed, but it could not grow on the stony ground of ancient slave society. The technical revolution of the Middle Ages was necessary to prepare the soil of western Europe to receive the seed, and the technical device of printing was necessary to multiply and broadcast the seed before the ancient wisdom could raise a wholesome crop.[10]

The Greek philosophers did not have a concept of sin, and so morality was mainly a choice between various options ranging from ascetic to hedonist. When they lowered the restrictive value of religion they opened the door to an amoral lifestyle in the community.

The only thing that kept the Greek people from going into complete anarchy was the inbuilt fear of retribution that continued to control human behaviour.

The Apostle Paul writes about this

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares" (Romans 2:12-16).

Christian view of religion and philosophy

In the Christian understanding, religion and philosophy are not separate entities. Spirituality does not require the "switching off[1] of the intellect. Very often the Bible challenges it's readers to intellectually consider the evidence before making a spiritual, ethical or moral choice. Philosophy as the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being knowledge or conduct does not conflict with biblical principles and truths.

The Christian church has, from its conception, based its understanding of the nature of man on the existence of one God, who is the originator of the whole creation and who gives purpose to life. The basis of this knowledge is understood to be the *Holy Bible*, in which God reveals Himself. *The Bible* challenges people to see the reality of God through his creation.[11]

The *Holy Bible* is a collection of books written in two distinct but complimentary parts: the Old and the *New Testaments*. In the *Old Testament* God reveals himself through the history of His chosen people Israel. His ultimate revelation of Himself is recorded in the *New Testament* through the Person of His Son - Jesus Christ - who took the form of God-Man and lived on this earth for 33 years.

Unlike the writers of Greek religious texts, who wrote under the control of the spirits, and were unable to exercise their own intellect, the writers of *the Bible* retained their intellectual ability to rationalize. The personality - intellect, will and emotions of the writers shine through the texts of *the Bible*. This is an important feature, since, according to *the Bible* man (male and female) are created in the image of God and are the object of his love. The Bible does not teach pantheism - man is god. The anthropology of *the Bible* presents man attaining his highest realization when he is in unbroken communion with God. An unnamed poet, who belongs to the authorized family of Israeli poets, wrote: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (P.s. 42:1,2)

People in every age and every part of the world have been keenly interested in the origin and nature of man. Their observations, both oral and written, have passed from one generation to another. There are some striking similarities in the creation stories (myths) of "primitive" peoples living in every part of the world. However the Bible is the only ancient text where there is an unbroken continuity of one merciful and holy God seeking fellowship with man.[12]

The physician Luke, who was probably a Macedonian Greek, traces the human origin of Jesus, in his profound study of the life of Jesus Christ: "Adam, who was the son of God".[13] In doing so, he traces the beginning of mankind and the beginning of Christianity to the Creator God. The claim that God created man is repeated dogmatically throughout the Holy Bible.

The decedents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the people of Israel - known generally in modern society as the Jews) accepted the *Torah* - the first five books

of the *Old Testament* - as the basis for understanding the origin and nature of the world. These five books also set out the rules for religious and social ethics and the practical implications of either accepting of rejecting these rules.[14] The rest of *the Old Testament* records the history of the successes and failures of the Israelites to live within the framework of the Torah.

The authentic written texts of *the Old Testament* are not the oldest existing texts on social, cultural and religious practices. However no other writings have the same synergy in social and religious life as the texts in *the Old Testament*.

The essence and attributes of God as described in the Bible

The knowledge of man and his environment is either subjective or objective. Much of modern psychology is subjective, where man is trying to understand himself without a God. This method is frustrating and self-defeating. The biblical approach is objective, where man's ability to understand himself is directly tied to the knowledge of God. And so Christian religion and philosophy should be studied through God's revealed knowledge of himself.

The *Holy Bible* presents God as being distinctly different to all other gods known to mankind. The biblical God distances himself from all other spiritual beings, whether they are actual or imaginary.

Modern man, with all his new psychological and technological knowledge has become too self-confident and arrogant to recognize the glory and majesty of God any more. To many Christian theologians theology has become a game, where professional words are tossed around with the intention to impress the reader or listener. The personal knowledge of God, which comes through humble reverence, which is not common any more. The Apostle Paul expressed his awe and wonder in his letter to the Roman Christians:

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to

God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen".[15]

The essence of God

The essence and attributes of God refer to those qualities or properties that set him apart as God, and by which the Christian church recognizes him as such. Theologians have tended to distinguish his essence and attributes in terms of those that he alone possesses and those which he shares in a derivative and finite sense with his creation.

God is spirit. He does not have material substance. The Bible does not say: God is a spirit -one of many similar spirits, it presents God as being above and separate from all other spiritualities. "God is spirit" infers that he is immaterial, incorporeal and invisible. He is alive and a Person, possessing all the psychological characteristics of personality.

When studying God's revelation of himself systematically, it is absolutely essential that we constantly keep in mind the trinity of God. The essence and attributes of God are equal and similar in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is no internal conflict or disagreement in the Godhead.

Referring to the Trinity H.C. Thiessen wrote: "We must, however, distinguish between the personality of the essence and that of the several distinctions that make the essence. Clearly, the essence cannot be at the same time three persons and one person, if the term "person" is used in the same sense both times; but it can be at once three persons and one personal Being. The existence of three distinct persons in the Godhead results in the self-consciousness and self-determination of the essence; but there is also the self-consciousness and self-determination of each of the three persons.[16]

Jesus told an unnamed Samaritan woman: "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."[17] The fact that this truth was told to a Samaritan woman indicates the value God gives to all individuals regardless of sex, social status or nationality. All people have the same value as God's creation since he has caused his Spirit to dwell in us.

Apostle James writes: You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?[18]

The attributes of God

The most popular division among Reformed theologians is: "Incommunicable and Communicable" attributes. Generally listed in the incommunicable list are: Self-existence, immutability, infinity, and unity. Attributes listed under the heading of communicable include: spirituality, intellectual, and moral attributes, as well as attributes of sovereignty and power.

The Absolute and Incommunicable Attributes of God

The triune God is self existent

God does not have a beginning. The Bible does not try to prove the existence of God; it is God's revelation of himself. This is expressed in his revelation to Moses."[19]

The triune God is self-sufficient

God does not need anything and is not dependant on anyone."[20]

The triune God is eternal

God has always existed and will continue to exist for all eternity. God is not tied to time - he lives in the eternal present. He does not have a past that can be measured, nor a future in some distant time. The eternity of God is a basic truth of the Bible.[21]

The Triune God is infinite

God is everywhere present. We cannot say that God is not here or He is not there.[22]

The Triune God is immutable

By the immutability of God we mean that in essence, attributes, consciousness, and will God is unchangeable. His power, word, plans, principles, promises, judgements, love, mercy etc, never change.[23]

The attributes of God that are communicated to man in a limited measure at creation.

The Triune God is omniscient and wise

By the omniscience of God we mean that he knows Himself and all other things, whether they be actual or merely possible, whether they be past, present or future, and that he knows them perfectly and from all eternity. He knows things immediately, simultaneously, exhaustively and truly. God has not learned anything new; he has always known everything that can be known."[24]

There is a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge for practical and beneficial purposes.[25]

The Triune God is omnipotent

This is some times misunderstood. There are things that God cannot do. He cannot lie, be unrighteous or unjust, in other words he is limited by his holiness, righteousness and love to do that which is absolutely good morally, ethically and spiritually. God cannot cease to exist, nor cease to be omnipresent. This is true of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[26]

The Triune God is above all creation

From the Christian ethical perspective, it is helpful to remember that God is above all plans, programs, situations, governments, whether they are national

or multinational. Something that many modern Christians, caught up in the pride of pseudo religious scholarship have almost completely forgotten. To them God is marginal, his law irrelevant and the Gospel an archaic remnant from a primitive religion.[27]

The Triune God is omnipresent

"Where is God when it hurts" is a very common question in times of sickness, suffering, persecution and other difficult situations. The only correct answer is that he is present in every situation.[28]

The Triune God is the personification of absolute truth

All the knowledge that God possesses, all his words, and all the revelations (prophecies) that he gives to men are always based on absolute truth.[29]

The Triune God is faithful

Truth and faithfulness cannot be separated, they belong together.[30]

The Triune God is good

The goodness of God is a moral and ethical concept, where goodness is an absolute quality containing absolute holiness righteousness, grace, mercy, truth, love, kindness, etc. None of these qualities can be separated from the concept of divine goodness.

The holiness of God is more than total and perfect sinlessness, it also means that no outside imperfection can affect his holiness. God is totally above his creation.

Divine righteousness means that God is always just towards his creation. Justice always demands that all evil, wickedness and sin receives just punishment. The vicarious death of Jesus met the requirement of divine righteousness.[31]

Divine grace and mercy is always tied to the holiness of God. It is impossible to separate grace and mercy from holiness. Grace and mercy become irrelevant if they are separated from holiness.[32]

The Triune God is love

Divine love is not merely an emotional feeling, it is based on the wisdom and free choice of the eternal Creator and is bound to his absolute holiness and truthfulness.[33]

The essence and attributes of man

The Bible represents man's original condition by the phrase: "in the image and likeness of God" This does not refer to man's physical image, rather it refers to man's intellect and spirituality

The godlike attributes recognizable in man

1. Wisdom and knowledge - while man is not omniscient he has a still unfathomed capacity to know and use knowledge.
2. Power and authority over nature
3. Presence in relationships
4. Truth - the instinctive ability to distinguish true from false
5. Faithfulness (truth and faithfulness are inseparable)
6. Goodness in the ethical and moral sense
7. Holiness/a yearning for inner purity and communion with God
8. Righteousness - the instinctive to distinguish between justice and injustice
9. Graciousness and mercy - the ability to forgive and be forgiven
10. Love - the ability to act sacrificially; also the ability to express deep emotions and attachment towards others.

The basic differences between the communicable attributes in the Trinity and the same attributes in created humanity:

1. These attributes are total and absolute in the Trinity, but they are relative and limited in humanity
2. The relative and limited attributes have been damaged and corrupted by sin

Example 1: God is love; man loves (occasionally and imperfectly)
Example 2: God is holy; Christ has become our holiness (we are holy through faith in Christ). (I Cor: 1: 30)

There are differences of opinion in the understanding of the "total depravation" of man through the Fall. The general understanding in evangelical circles is that sin has not totally destroyed the godlike attributes in the human personality; however man is totally incapable of approaching God by his own volition. God has taken the initiative to redeem man through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Interaction between Christians and Greeks

There was some cross-cultural interaction between the Jews and the Greeks in the Roman Empire, but it was restricted to secular transactions. The Torah (Law of the Jews) forbade all religious interaction with Gentiles. For this reason the vast majority of the Jews living outside Palestine lived in their own "colonies" separated from both religious and social interaction with non-Jews. The Gospels make very brief mention of Greek interaction between Jesus and the Greeks. Jesus avoided contact with Greeks and Romans living in Palestine. The Gospels mention Greeks only three times.[34]

Apostle Peter was the first Jew to communicate the Gospel to the Gentiles to a Roman officer together with his relatives and close friends. However Peter's Jewish religious convictions were so strong, that Jesus had to persuade him to go to the Gentiles through three visions.[35] The New Testament does not record that any of the twelve apostles selected by Jesus went as pioneers to preach the gospel to the Greek population. This is an important point, since the Palestinian Jewish Christians were bound too strongly by their traditions and therefore were incapable of communicating the gospel without their religious and cultural biases and emphases. Many years later apostles Peter and John travelled to Greek cities where the Gospel had already been preached by Apostle Paul.

The first permanent contact between the Greeks and Christians took place in the Syrian city Antioch in AD 41. Luke records this in the book of Acts of the

Apostles. It was in this city that the followers believes Jesus were first called "Christians".[36]

The Gentile (non-Jew) church of Antioch was chosen by the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas as the first messengers of the gospel to the Gentiles. The first two men chosen by the Holy Spirit to take the gospel message to the Greeks were Diaspora Jews who had grown up within the Greek society. They lacked the arrogant resentment towards gentiles that was so common to Palestine born Jews. From the Greek - Christian perspective this is an important point. Christian missionaries were not propagating Judaism in any form.

Paul grew up in the Syrian city of Tarsus. According to the account of Luke in the book of Acts and the personal letters of Paul to different churches, Paul was a well educated cosmopolitan man. Before his conversion to Christianity he was a very zealous member of the Jewish fundamentalist Pharisee sect. His primary aim at that not directed against gentiles. Rather he wanted to eradicate faith in Jesus among the Jews. After Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, he rejected his former bias towards Christians and became a humble servant of Jesus Christ. Luke records the conversion of Paul in three different times in his second treatise to Theophilus - the book of Acts in the New Testament. In each record there is the emphasis that Saul Paul was to preach Christ to the Gentiles.

Barnabas was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He was a native of Cyprus, where he had a possession of land When Paul returned to Jerusalem after his conversion on the road to Damascus, Barnabas took him and introduced him to the apostles.[37]

Apostle Paul is the most important person in the early Christian church when we consider Christian - Greek relations in the 1st century CE. He had a good knowledge of Greek culture, religion and philosophy, and so it is important that we should consider what lie speaks and writes on these subjects.

The Jews on the other hand considered Paul to be an apostate and the enemy of their faith because of his close association with the Gentiles. Even Jewish Christians from Jerusalem sought to undermine the work of Paul in many

ways. I mention this, because Christianity is not a Jewish cult, nor is it a continuation of Judaism. God communicates to the whole world through Christ. Paul was deeply concerned that the essential message of the gospel of Christ was being distorted by unscrupulous men who wanted to make Christianity into a part of the Jewish faith.[38]

Christian value of the individual

In Christianity the value God places on man is very different to Greek value standards. God evaluates man through deep personal love. Greek thinkers evaluated man through moral standards and the communal contributions or advantages a man could give to the society. Greek religion saw the value of man merely as objects that the gods and goddesses could use for their profit or pleasure.

In the eyes of God man has infinite value. Jesus said: What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?[39]

Jesus also said: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.[40]

Christian value of community

Christian concept of community is expressed in the terms: "Body of Christ", "Fellowship of believers" and other similar terms which picture the unity of the church with divinity. Here the term "in Christ" is used repeatedly to

express the value God gives to fellowship with man whom he has redeemed from the bondage of sin.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.[41]

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.[42]

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.[43]

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.[44]

The truth value of Christianity

In spite of the fact that man has tried to corrupt the message of Christ during the past 2000 years, the simple Gospel message has not changed. It is still affecting the lives of people in a positive way. The truth value of religion cannot be measured by statistics; it must be measured by experience. The true value of a spiritual experience is measured by permanent inner tranquillity.

Concluding this study of Christianity and Greek: it is worth quoting the words of Jesus, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light,"[45]

The effects of Christianity in the Roman Empire

A very small group of people (120 on the day of Pentecost) received the indwelling of the Spirit of God into their lives in the year 29 CE. This was the beginning of a major change in the religious life of many nations. Although the Roman emperors tried in many ways to stop the spread of Christianity for 3 centuries it continued to spread without any central organization, without an army or powerful leaders. Lives were dramatically changed through the preaching of a simple message. The Greek/Roman ethical and moral lifestyles were rejected and this had a major positive effect on family life. The New Testament and Church History record the demise of Greek religion. The valuable contributions of the Greek philosophers continue to live in modern society.

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End Notes

1. *Philippians* 4 : 8
2. *John* 18 : 37 – 38.
3. "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:23).
   "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:12,13).
4. In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Heb. 1:1-3
5. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb. 11:1-3).
6. "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over ali the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, ;' Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and

subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed: it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, / have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (Gen. 1:26-31).

7. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) is, along with, T.G. Fichte and G.W.F. Hegel, one of the three most influential thinkers in the tradition of 'German Idealism'. Although he is often regarded as a philosophical Proteus who changed his conception so radically and so often that it is hard to attribute a clear philosophy to him, Schelling was in fact often an impressively rigorous logical thinker. In the era during which Schelling was writing, so much was changing in philosophy that a stable, fixed point of view was as likely to lead to a failure to grasp important new developments as it was to lead to a defensible philosophical system
8. The Jewish prophet Isaiah (748 - 681 BCE) wrote about the gods in a different but also very critical vein: "Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. But you are less Than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable. (Isaiah 41:21-24)
"Gather together and come: assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. Declare what is to be. present it - let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago. who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart . from me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none but me. Isaiah 45:20,21
9. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilzation, Part II, The Life of Greece*
10. Benjamin Farrington, *Greek Science: Its Meaning for Us (Thales to Aristotle)* First Edition; Publisher: Pelican, Harmondsworth; 1944

11. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by-their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to thenl. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him". Rom.l: 18-21
"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." Heb. 11:1-3
12. (The word primitive in the anthropological sense means people living in a preliterate or non-industrial social system. It does not mean that the people are less intelligent or intellectually restricted - merely that they possess knowledge of a different type.)
13. Luke 3:38.
14. Deut. 28:1-68
15. Rom. 11:33-36
16. *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology,* Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1949
17. John 4 : 24
18. James 4 : 4, 5 (Amp. Bible)
19. God said to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you" Exodus 3:14.
20. Jesus said: "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man" John 5:26.
21. The prayer of Moses starts with the words: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Ps.90:l,2. (cf. Ps. 102:25-27; Isa. 57:15; 1 Tim. 6:13-16)
22. "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I

say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day. for darkness is as light to you. Ps. 139:7-12 (cf. Isa. 66:1,2)

23. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows". James 1:17. (Heb. 1:2)
24. "Who lias measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counsellor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding? Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Isa. 40:12-15
25. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." 1 Cor l : 21-25. (cf. Col 2:2,3)
26. "Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father- to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Rev l:4b-8

27. "For this is what the high and lofty One says - he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'". Isa. 57:15
28. 'Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not 1 fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. Jer. 23:23.24
Paul writes: "In the same way. the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Rom. 8:26-28
29. "Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: 'So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge." Rom. 3:4 (cf: Ps. 36:6; Toll. 17:3; Joh. 3:33; Jer. 10:10; Rev. 6:10)
30. "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God: he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations pf those who love him and keep his commands. Deut. 7:9
"He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." 1 Cor. 1:8,9
31. "Remember these things, 0 Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you. you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you. I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist.. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." Isa. 44:21,22.
32. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - he did it to demonstrate

his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Rom. 3:21-26

33. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been bom of God and knows God- Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us. because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God." yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." 1 John 4:7-21
34. Matt. 7:24-30; John 7: 37,36; John 12:20-33
35. Acts 10:1-48
36. Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antijcli and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of ihe Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for

Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:19-30

37. Acts 9:27
38. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other .than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now 1 say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Gal. 1:6-10

    Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2 Cor. 4:1,2
39. Mark 8:36,37
40. John 3:16-21
41. Rom. 8:1,2
42. Rom 8:38,38
43. Rom 12:4,5
44. Gal. 3:26-28
45. Matthew 11:28-30

A System of Transliteration of Tamil

VOWELS

Short		Long		Dipthong	
அ	a	ஆ	a	ஐ	ai
இ	i	ஈ	i	ஔ	au
உ	u	ஊ	u		
எ	e	ஏ	e	AYTAM	
ஒ	o	ஓ	o	∴	k

CONSONANTS

Hard		Soft		Medial	
க்	k	ங்	n	ய்	y
ச்	c	ஞ்	ñ	ர்	r
ட்	t	ண்	n	ல்	l
த்	t	ந்	n	வ்	v
ப்	p	ம்	m	ழ்	l
ற்	r	ன்	n	ள்	!
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