SAINT THOMAS IN INDIA

(A Critical View)



Dr. M. Immanuel

SAINT THOMAS IN INDIA

(*A Critical View*)

Dr. M. Immanuel

Historical Research & Publications Trust
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Nagercoil - 629 004, Tamilnadu, India
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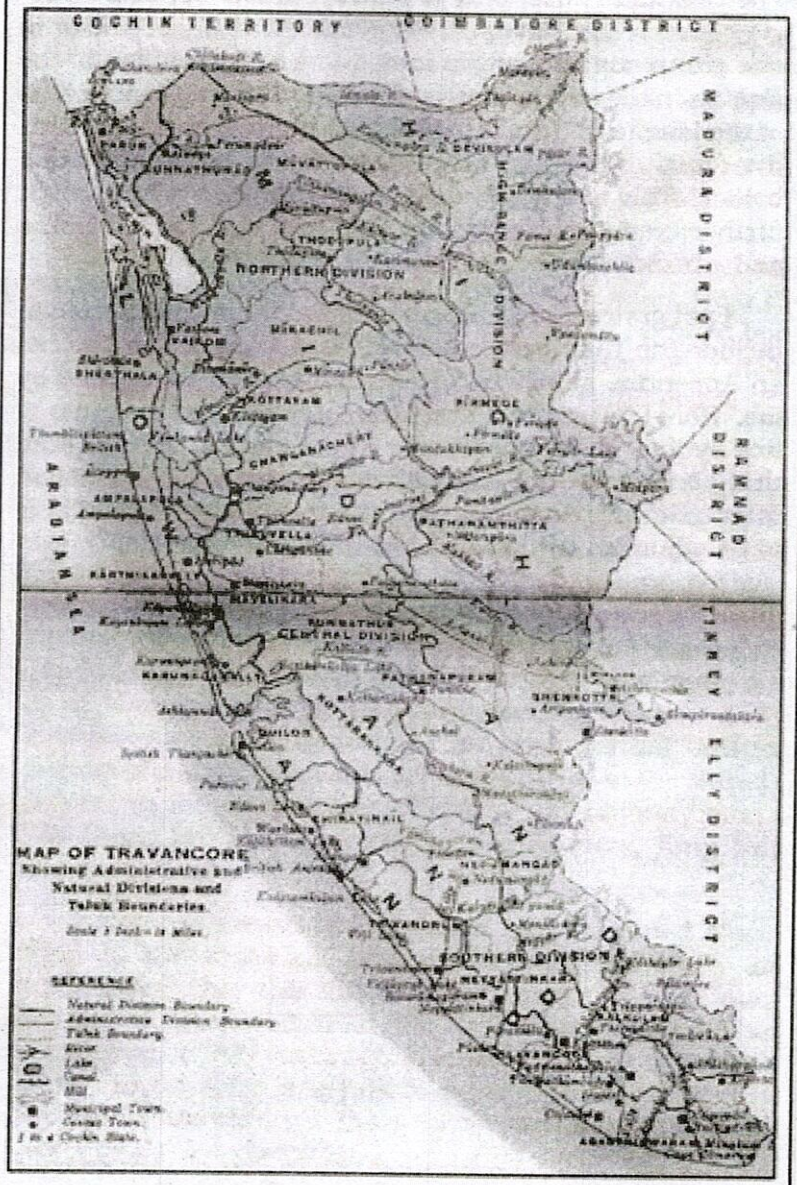
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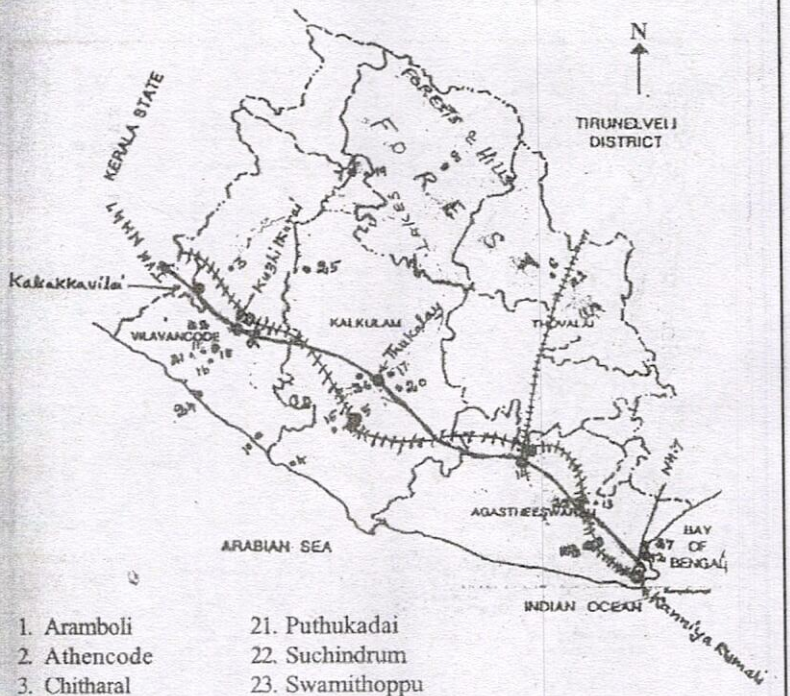
Travancore Map



Courtesy : State Manual of Travancore

Map of Kanyakumari District

Socio-Political Map of Kanniyakumari District



1. Aramboli
2. Athencode
3. Chitharal
4. Colachel
5. Eraniel
6. Kaathadimalai
7. Kodayar
8. Maaraamalai
9. Marthandam
10. Midalam
11. Munchirai
12. Muttapathi
13. Mylaudy
14. Nagercoil (Kottar)
15. Neyyoor
16. Othachikottai
17. Padmanabapuram
18. Parthipapuram
19. Pechiparai
20. Puliyoorkurichi
21. Puthukadai
22. Suchindrum
23. Swamithoppu
24. Thengapattanam
25. Thiruvattar
26. Thiruvithamcode
27. Vattakottai

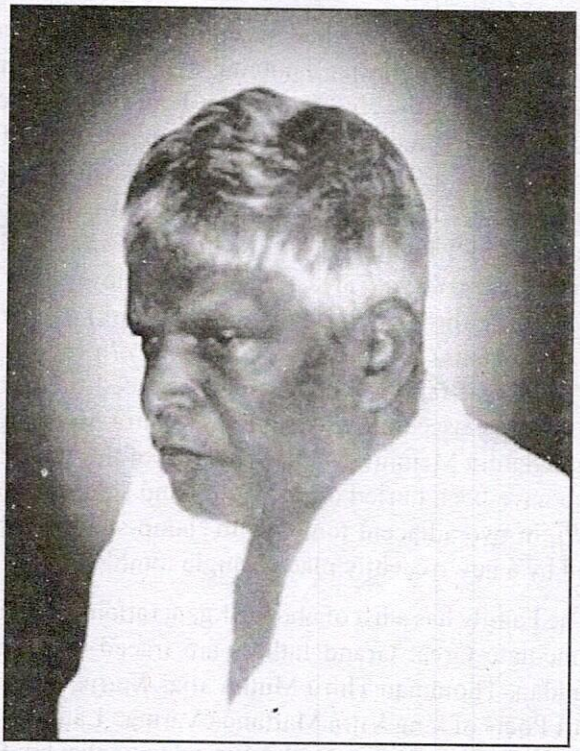
Legend :

1. Rail
2. Road

H.R.P.T. - in co-ordination with Dr. N. Sam Raj Reader in History, Scott Christian College, (Autonomous), Nagercoil.

DEDICATED TO

The Family of Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi Descendant of Santra Iravi Kottravan



Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi ('Amman') of Manali, author of many books, including *Yesu Dharmathil Chera Ara Kulam*, is known to be a Family-descendant of 'Santra Iravi Kottravan Asan & Santra Vadugan Asan' recipients of the famous *Viira Raghava Pattayam*, issued by the King, Mantharan Cheral alias Velkezhu Kuttuvan, on his 36th year of reign. This is acknowledged in the book, "*Ara-Palli*" released by *St. Thomas Orthodox*





Church, Thiruvithamcodu, 2008, p, 6, with the names pronounced as "Iravi Kottran Asan and Kottra Vadugan Asan"; and Amman for *Annavi* which term, historically means, *Anchuvannam* or tradesmen. This book also mentions that *Ara-Palli,* in Tamil, means: 'Church of the King' (p, 5, *Preface* to the book, by Dr.Gabriel Maar Grigoriyos Metropolitan. This sounds more logical, than saying 'Half Church'.

The Amalagiri Family had several thousands of acres of land under the name: "Thomayaar Thottam" (Garden of Thomas), from Manali extending to the *Ara-Palli.* The Family being scattered, at present the Garden is reduced to almost 300 acres, divided among the heirs. There is a *Tomayar Kurusadi* in the Garden. The *Anjuvannam-street* is still located on the eastern side of *Ara-Palli*, now inhabited by Muslims. Next to the *Anjuvannam* Street starts the original *Therressa Palli* area of many acres, now called "*Therressa Nilam*", running through *Periyakulam* (big tank) of Kerala puram, located at the centre of Thackaley and *Ara-Palli* (about 1.5 k.m, to each). The usual family-rivalries have reduced their strength, yet once a year they assemble to celebrate. Santra Menmiiga Kassissa Yacob and Santra Menmiiga Andreyus, two of the early converts are known to have been buried on the right hand side to the entrance of *Ara-Palli*, in two adjacent tombs with 'lamp-stones', which is now occupied by a new, recently placed single tomb.

The Family has a list of about 61 generations of their ancestors. The immediate Great Grand fathers are traced from Santra Thiru Karaikandan, Thomman Thiru Muthu alias *Kutty Pulavar*, a poet in the Court Poets of king Viira Martanda Varma. Later he has courted arrest and persecution along with Martyr Devasahayam Pillai for the cause of Christian faith. He is followed by, Thiruppappu Annavi, Thiruthoma, Mariya Mallan Annavi, Innassiyar Annavi, Amalagiri Thiruppappu Annavi, Paakkiyanathan Annavi, Amalagiri Puthelis, Amalagiri Anthoni Muthu. Amalagiri was born on 9.4.1933, died on 26.9.2004. He married from the family of Sri Gregory Nadar of Kaarankadu. Annavi has five children namely Xavier Chandra Bose, Amalorpava Raja Bose, Antony Ezhilarasu Bose, Puthelis Amuthalal Bose and Carmel Elango Bose. Ancestors of this family are among the early converts and it is known that the Family has retained the history with lots of hardships and sacrifices in times of trials.

SAINT THOMAS IN INDIA

(A Critical View)

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Tracing The Missing Links And Shattering The Mysteries

Where other historians, or to be more precise social historians, do not dare to enter or dread the very idea of treading on an extremely slippery domain, Dr.Immanuel travels or dares to travel with ease and confidence and reaches the shore unscathed for the very simple reason that his analysis is well focused, his interpretation well documented and his inference well substantiated, whether or not the reader or the student of history dares to take him at his word.

Maybe that it all sounds exotic, at times too far-fetched, and sometimes encompasses within itself the fancies of a fantasy, yet nevertheless it reads like sound history by a very a sound historian, who despite all odds he encounters in the labyrinth of deliberately muddled facts, still dares to march forward with a killer-instinct, all because he knows full well where he is heading towards, and what his destination is and ought to be. Well, it is an unending journey towards a probable reconstruction of history, perhaps more correct to say a recovery of the 'lost threads' and the 'buried skeletons', a crudely mischievous exercise by a self-styled hierarchy of 'Upper Caste' to "facelessly" distort the sacred pages of history only to further its "hidden agenda".

That the evolution of history is very much tainted and tarnished, evidently resulting in "missing links" is also well attested by other historians as well.

> It is difficult to find out what happened in the 7th and 8th century AD, in Kerala. A big group of Brahmins entered into Kerala, through *Tulunadu*, for propagating their ideologies and methods of administration here. They, along with the Hindus, were engaged in exterminating the remaining Buddhists and Jains throughout India, during this period. It was, in fact, a 'live or die battle' between these two groups. They were very learned *Pandits*. We understand from the Tamil literature of those periods that even by the end of the 6th century AD, these new entrants had started to persecute the followers of Buddhism and Jainism, by plucking out the teeth of the heroes who were

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• (p.41), Quoting Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla

reluctant to accept the newly imposed *Chathurvarna* system (system of four castes). They also destroyed the Buddha, Jaina *Viharas*, and the Idols installed therein in the *Viharas*. It can be inferred that by the 8th century AD, they were successful in destroying the Buddhists from the land.

The duty and responsibility of an honest historian is, therefore, to critically investigate and convincingly establish the "missing links", as Charles Darwin did in biological science, so that continuity could be traced in 'the process of evolution' of human history, polluted by the so-called pure *Putras of Bharat Mata,* who in fact were Aryan migrant-invaders, like all other invaders, from outside the Indian sub-Continent.

Saint Thomas in India is a search for identity, a quest for roots. It attempts to place an indigenous community of a people, with a glorious past, in the proper perspective. It shatters the myths and mysteries that were paraded as history. And it offers the refreshing light of facts and truth to be judged by a dispassionate posterity. In all fairness to the author, therefore, one must admit that Dr.M.Immanuel, to a large extent, has succeeded in dispelling the man-made darkness that has so far shrouded the visit of St. Thomas, one of the direct disciples of Jesus Christ sent to India to share the 'Good News' and his immortal ministry. And, as a by-product, this book also endeavours to discover/ rediscover the missing link or the connectivity, not with a nomadic destructive invader with a misanthropic ideology that has become an eternal shame on India or a disgrace to humankind, but with a peace-loving, indigenous, ruling clan whose sole pride of place in human history is that it has always stood for justice, integrity, character and values for the progress and welfare of the entire humanity.

Dr. E. James R. Daniel
Hon. Visiting Fellow,
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.
(Retd. Principal, Scott Christian College [Autonomous])

Nagarkoil
5.5.2009

From Jainism to Christian '*Palligal*'

A good research work is one that: pieces of information are collected, compared and arranged to fit exactly to the specific topic selected for. These days, research works are being done with the aim to fetch a doctoral degree. Soon the degree is awarded, people forget all about their 'research programmes'. Seldom those researchers continue their work on the line that has been chosen by them. Kanyakumari is blessed with doctoral personalities in every nook and corner of the district in great abundance. But it is rarely seen that they continue to be in the field of research fit enough for their doctoral degree. Commonly, it seems that, they do not come forward or show interest to undertake such research works on topics what the society needs. This attitude of 'isolation' or negligence has already cost the very 'identity and history' of the district and its people. May be, 'personal gains' have become their prime motives. In such a circumstances, there are very rare persons, in the district, who continue to do such valid works, even after their retired life. Dr.M.Immanuel is one among such rare personalities.

Dr.M.Immanuel's research work, *Saint Thomas in India –A Critical View* has brought out many new information, so far untold, through his arduous work from deep study, many interviews, site exploration and comparative analysis. I am sure that this book will be very much useful for the students who want to enter into research work on the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas, in future. I congratulate the author for his hard work. There are lots of information around the places like 'Thiru-vaazhumcode, Muttom, Chinna Muttom', etc., to be collected about St. Thomas. It is noteworthy that the people around Thiru-vaazhumcode had called St. Thomas by the name "*Muthu; Mutthaiyya; Muthappar*" etc. The special thing to be noted here is that these names are still found in use, in being given to their children by the local people connected with St. Thomas. The local people have even maintained a Drama entitled "*Muthappar*" to commemorate the life history of St. Thomas. Further, there were many Dramas like "*Moovarasar Nadagam*" (Three Seers or Three-Kings who went to see the infant Jesus); "*Alasiyar Nadagam*", etc., very

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⊕ This information was given by late, A.Gabriel, an ex-member of Travancore Assembly.

prominent in the locality. The negligence of the local historians has contributed to bury down the valuable facts of local history of this place to the world. The *Devamaatha Koil* built by St. Thomas at Thiruvithamcode is a significant history of the place. Today it is being called by the name *Ara Palli* (Half-Church), being one among the total seven and half Churches constructed by St. Thomas in ancient Kerala.

In ancient times, the people of these places were great Jains and Buddhists. Because these places were big educational centers, those were known by the name "*Palli*" in the traditional Buddhist character. Same tradition is continued here for religious and educational centers of this place, still being called "*Palli* or *Palli Koodam*". The tradition is followed even today for the St. Thomas Churches. It was the early Jains of the place who had accepted Christianity from St. Thomas. The term "*Ezharai Palli*" itself is indicative of this. There cannot be any doubt to say that the local 'Muslims' around this area also have come from the ancient Jainism.

Apart from constructing Seven and half Churches, St. Thomas had built up many smaller shrines called *Kurusadis* around the places. In and around Thiruvithamcode, there are several *Kurusadis* with 'Cross Bars'. This particular type is termed as "a Cross under a Bar". The St. Thomas Crosses are of "*Erattai-kurusugal*" (Double Cross) type. Some of the local families here still follow the system. Till recent times, the names of the local people had such names as "Kurusu Muthu"; "Kurusu Appan", "Muthu Aiyyan" "Muthu Appar" etc., reminding the names applied to St. Thomas. This allows us to think that how close the locals were with St. Thomas' name and his tradition.

The local people from and around Thiruvithamcode used to visit, in large numbers, the 'Malayattoor Church' of St. Thomas, in the present Ernakulam district. This custom had prevailed even up to 1960. After the A.V.M Canal was streamlined, people used to go by small ships to visit Malayattoor Church. Before that, the people used to follow the route of 'thick forests' calling repeatedly, "Malayattoor Muthappa", carrying bundles, over their head, as people go these days to the 'Ayyappan temple'. Believers used to grow beard and hair and keep "*Nompu*" (penance-fasting) for 41 days before visiting Malayattoor, to prepare and purify them. By doing so, they believed that their sins, sickness and poverty could vanish.

In Thiruvithamcode, St. Thomas had many disciples and one 'Paranjothiyar' was his prime assistant. This disciple from the royal *Santors* was in-charge of the construction work of the *Ara-Palli* at Thiruvithamcode. He was the first Catechist appointed by St. Thomas[A] and he was one of the early converts of St. Thomas Christians. I congratulate M.Immanuel, the author of *St. Thomas in India*, for bringing up many exciting facts for the benefit of the society and also for the future students of local history. Such works are the inevitable need of the time, in the present Kanyakumari district.

Thackaley M.Benny
(Socio-Historical Researcher)
Founder:
Venattar Panpaattu Aaivu Maiyam.
Kumari District.

Thackaley
27.4.2009

The Kuki-Mizos of India and the 'Lost –Sheep'

I am very happy to go through the book, *St.Thomas in India – A Critical View*, authored by Dr.M.Immanuel. I appreciate his efforts of visiting places, collecting data, meeting people, and making interviews, etc., to gather hidden information. The book contains lot of rare and exciting, novel viewpoints about different communities of India and abroad. The origin of man, according to Bible is:

> "God created man (male and female) blessed them and said to them 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it"

The entire humanity was thus originated from the first man whom God had created. Therefore every man has equal standing before God. But the principle devised by the 'self-centred' man has been 'Survival of the Fittest' by which the stronger, not only the individual, but also, the Stronger society, subdues the weaker society and this applies to the Nations and Kingdoms in which we find that the 'one time ruler' becomes the slave of another time and vise versa. But, unless history is written truly as it had occurred, it becomes difficult to know the facts by mankind. Dr. Immanuel has tried to straighten history from some of its zigzag gimmicks. He tries to connect the missing links left out by historians in connecting tribes like the *Santors* and other Jewish tribes now living in India. This is well attested by demonstrating the presence of Kuki-Mizos of Northeastern India who had attempted to make an exodus to the new Nation of Israel when history has awakened them with typical explanation of tradition and heritage proved by true historians and unbiased learned men of International society.

The author's logic that the Apostle Thomas' coming to India was primarily in search of the 'Lost Sheep' of Israel, in response to the Commission of Jesus Christ, is clear and understandable. The research study further emphasizes the evidences of other communities like the "Menmasseh" tribes of 'Kuki-Mizos' and also the possibilities of many other hidden communities, in India and other parts of the world, to be brought to the book of new history. The route followed by the Kuki-Mizos to come to India is a real 'eye-opener' for historians to trace out the possible routes followed by St. Thomas. The logic put forward by Dr.Immanuel in this respect can also receive attention in the future research and studies.

The question raised by Immanuel to the existence of any Brahmin community in Kerala, as early as 52nd AD is really a valid one to be properly explored and explained by historians to contradict the opinions of authorities in ancient history, like Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, who emphasizes the period of arrival of the Brahmin community in Kerala, from Tulunadu, was around the 11th century AD. The confusion created by the Aryan invaders to Indian history makes it further perplexed and complicated about the fate of *Nambutiris* and *Santors* who had, either mingled up together or had competed to supercede one over the other at certain level of historical period is not known for sure. But it becomes certain in history that, in the later years, the *Nambutiris* have strongly projected their identity whereas the *Santors*, it seems, to have almost lost theirs. In such a circumstances it becomes difficult to find out who is who and who is not. Only critical researches of this type can clarify such confusions and lead history to the true Indian spirit. The author has brought up new questions to the world-historians to be answered upon. Until proper answers are given to these questions, the riddles are destined to remain baffling many of the thinkers of the modern world. Anyway, it is sure that such works of research materials can alone make thinkers, especially, the students of history, to work harder to find out the desired answers and the whole truth.

Dr.M.Arthur John B.V.Sc &A.H
Ex-Chairman
Blessing Youth Mission,
Vellore, India

Camp: Nagercoil
14.5.2009

Foreword

History is a subject that makes a people known to the world. History is a subject that introduces the culture and character of the people of a country to the Nations. It leaves behind its impact of faith, tradition and cultural changes over a period of time. History informs and educates the future generations of the past civilizations. But, observation in history shows us that it has never gone straight, but had acquired a path of zigzag going. Many have attempted, especially, in this 21st century, to straighten the path of history. Dr.M.Immanuel can be said as one of those who have ventured to make history straight as far as possible, through comparative studies of tradition, language, literature, archaeology, micro-history supported by valid Oral Traditions. He has already authored three important books on Social history, namely, *The Dravidian Lineages, Anatomy of a Folklore,* and *Kanniyakumari – Aspects and Architects.* This is the fourth book of Dr.Immanuel, which, it is learnt, was originally presented as a Paper in the 'First International Conference on the History of Early Christianity in India' held at New York, in the United States of America, in the year, 2005.

This book, *St. Thomas In India –A Critical View*, is a small and simple one. But its contents can, perhaps, revolutionize the existing thought process on the 'Early Christians of Kerala or India'. The important question posed is that whether it was the *Nambutiris* or the *Nadalwars*. Those who have already read the earlier three books of Dr.Immanuel can very well understand that Immanuel has got the capacity to substantiate his arguments. His arguments are supported not only by the Oral Traditions, but also are duly adjudged and compared with literary and even archaeological data or various inscriptions and Copper Plates. Immanuel has gone even to the extent of criticizing interpretations given in the famous copper plate, *Viira Raghava Pattayam* and the *Paaliyam Ssassanam*. He interprets the contents of the plate at par with the linguistic flow of the local tradition of the country. His interpretations to words like "*Polippon = poli + pon; 'Madil Nayan'; 'Poli'; 'Tiyam Aluvan'; 'Maha-Nattar'; 'Talaikkanam'; 'Enikkanam'; 'Menippon'; Santan Maattu Polippon'; Kaanam*", etc., are really interesting. These words take us to the linguistic culture of the South Travancore regions several centuries ago running through and touching even the present days.

Immanuel has taken us to travel through the book in twelve small chapters, followed by, comparatively, a long conclusion. First he starts with "the great controversy". Then he goes to the "Foot-Prints" on site exploration of the places where St. Thomas was

known to have lived. The "Chinna Muttom" offers him lot of information through the elders of the area, with whom he makes elaborate inter-view to know the geography and culture of the place. He travels to the "Karingachira Palli" which has a historical tradition of 1283 years based on St.Thomas history. He reveals to us the inter-link between "Malayattoor & Tiruvithamcode" and the great Jain culture during the visit of St.Thomas's period. Next, the "Ramban Paattu" traditions of Kerala Christians are discussed with its varieties, exploring the minds of the villagers of early times, expressed through their folk songs. "Jainism in Thiruvithamcore" is explained vividly for the readers to know the real cultural tradition of ancient country of Kerala, inclusive of the Kanyakumari regions, where once thrived an ancient small kingdom called "Maana Viira Valanadu", extending even up to the plains of Valliyoor and Tirunelvelly. Here St. Thomas is understood to have healed the queen and her daughter.

Then the famous "Viira Raghava Pattayam & Tharrissa Palli Ssassanam" are critically discussed.Links with the Jewish communities of the past is established. The most important 'life-line' of the book is given in the 10th chapter, raising the question, who were the people ruling the country during the period of 52nd AD, and who were the first converts in the land - "The Period –52-57 AD & and the People"-*Nambutiris* or *Nadalwars*? After giving a long list of the later converts from the "Warrior Class (Asans)" he gives us a lengthy conclusion to suit the total thesis of a rather 'unpopular *Nambutiri* class as back as 52nd AD, in Kerala, contradictory to the 'strong' presence of a "*Panayan*" (King-Priests) category of people who had even ancestral links with the Jewish community, supported by their emblem of 'Seven branched lamp, attached by the Palmyra-flower stock–the lulab (*Aluvachi)* studded with the Pandya symbol of Fish'. This is a startling point.

The arguments put forward by Dr.M.Immanuel may not be accepted by all, but, it is certain that it won't be easily possible to totally ignore his novel view points, especially, in these days of modern science where the contribution of archaeology, carbon dating, DNA tests, etc., are substantially made to lead the way and have the final say, rather than depending on the earlier 'Mythical type' of historiography. Dr. Immanuel's effort is, as a matter of fact, breath-taking, paving a way for a new and important history in the world of history. I congratulate him.

Dr.P. Rajendran. M.A.Ph.D
Prof. & Head: Dept. of History (Rtd)
S.T.Hindu College
Nagercoil-629002.

Nagercoil,
23.4.2009

Acknowledgement

At last, *St.Thomas In India – A Critical View* is now printed and published. Originally, it was in the year 2005 that this theme was conceived to submit a research paper to be read out in the *First International Conference on the History of Early Christianity in India*, held from 13th to 16th August, 2005, at the Concordia College, Bronxville, New York, U.S.A. The title of the paper was *St. Thomas In India – Early Christianity And Oral Traditions*. Its little 'Synopsis' was consequently published in the *Souvenir* of the Conference. But, later on, I felt the need of some of the contents of the Paper to be elaborated and made known to the International community, especially to the historiographers, so that the matter discussed might set a 'little fire' in the minds of the present day historians. So, I have made some additions and omissions to suit my viewpoint.

Some of the things that I have discussed are really not easy to 'convincingly' depict here on the presently available 'database' from the resources of ancient history. Honest historians certainly know the real problems. However, if I neglect and ignore my responsibility now, I do not think that anybody is going to do it at all. I feel it this way, because, I think that I have many 'Strongly Convincing Viewpoints' to make and record. I completely know that the efforts taken by me are inadequate. There are much more to do on this. But I am helpless because of my age and other circumstances. I am aware that this is not a job for a single person. It needs a 'collective effort' of a research team. I hope that somebody will come forward in the future to follow it up to perfection. I strongly believe that our history, especially, the ancient Social-history has to be seriously examined and re-written to know the truth. Unfortunately there is no sufficient material for the historians to follow up on this line. Whatever materials available are mythical and artificially created by vested interests. Honest workers and deep thinkers are necessary to straighten the knots of social history created in the last three or four centuries, especially, in the 18th and 19th century AD, followed by the British *Asiatic Society of Bengal.* I honestly hope that some enthusiastic team will come and take up this work forward.

Although this work was started in 2005, it has taken long four years to see its completion. The reasons are many and not necessary to be recorded here. There have been many friends to help me for

the completion of this work. Dr.James R.Daniel, Dr.P. Rajendran, Mr.Binny Masterly and Dr.M.Arthur John have been helpful to me in one-way or the other, to read, suggest and give their comments on the book. I register my sincere thanks for them. Above all, I sincerely thank my wife, Mrs. Esther Immanuel for helping me persistently in spite of her heart-problems and lot of other ailments. My thanks to her. I hope that the contents of this book will make the readers think and act to further its interests.

M.Immanuel
Chairman, CHLIRO-INDIA
(Cultural Historical Linguistic-
Indigenous Research Organization India)

Nagercoil,
10.5. 2009

1 The great Controversy

The question of Saint Thomas visiting India is contradicted in many ways by different scholars and historians. There are arguments for and against this tantalizing question. If at all the Saint had come to India, his mode of travel also is contradicted. Some are of the opinion that he had travelled on land, and others say that he sailed over the sea. His death and burial too are contradicted. There are partial evidences to prove both the arguments. Among those who believe that Christianity was brought by St Thomas to India, argue that it was not done single handed by the Saint alone, but was done together with the partnership of another man called St Bartholomew. The other strong belief holds the theory that the Christian faith, in India, was introduced not by any particular Saint, but that the Gospel had been brought here by a group of traditional merchants coming from Syria to India. The scholars of the West and the East differ in their opinion about the visit of St Thomas to India: "...some scholars do not hesitate to deny outright that St Thomas ever went to India or any countries of the East Asia"[1]. But the fact remains that the earliest records, which are available in the Syrian texts, are the bases for the establishments of the theories of the origin of the preaching of the Gospel to India by St Thomas.

It is interesting to notice that these texts, or records, are observed written in a series of historical periods, starting from about 200 AD, third century AD, 231 AD; 4th century AD, 305 AD, 340, 373, 389, 396; 5th century AD, 406, 420, 427, 431, 460; 6th century

[1] *History of Christianity in India, vol. I*, A. Mundanan Mathias, 2001, p.24.

AD, 521, 550, 594; 7th century AD, 630, 636, and then in the 12th century AD. One thing to be noted here with special care is that there has been a constant flow of literature on the subject and the theme of the Gospel, starting from the last part of 2nd century AD, or the beginning of 3rd century, running uninterrupted up to the 7th century AD and then slacken a little to raise its head again only around 12th century AD, becoming dormant again till the last part of 19th or the beginning of 20th century AD. These gaps between the 7th century AD, and 12the century AD, and from 13th century to 19th century AD are the critical dark periods in the history of India, especially of South India. If anyone could analyse and find out the proper reason for these long gaps between these critical periods, or, if anyone could find out the buried history during these periods of the said intervals, we shall be able to find out the people and connect the tribes to whom the Gospel of Christ was preached by St Thomas. This will lead us to the hidden facts of history of India and the people who accepted Christianity at the instance of St Thomas.

There are great contradictions about the routes that the Saint had followed to reach India for his Gospel works. One theory is that he went to the Sokotra Island on the Arabian Sea and from there he sailed towards India to meet his ancestors settled centuries ago around Cranganore, in Kerala and he preached the Good News to them first. There is another theory saying that the Saint had first travelled to the northern India and thus came to the Courts of the king, Gondophores as a construction expert for making buildings and palaces and from there he made his travels to the Southern India and even entered China before he was martyred at Mylapore, in the Tamil country. But the oral tradition in these parts of the country, in Kanniyakumari District, is that the Saint had followed the route on Sea for his travel. There were a number of seaports in these regions from time immemorial, like the ports of Colachel, Muttom,

Vizhinjam, Musiri, Thengapattanam, which are remote and historical, finding their places in inscriptions and other records.

There is contradiction even about the major group of his early converts to Christianity. The prominently accepted theory in this respect is that he preached about Jesus Christ to the *Nambutiris* of Kerala. But this theory is presently subjected to new challenges in the light of new findings in the history of the land, on the logical question of analysing the existence of certain racial groups at that particular period of time.

Another contradiction posed is on the theory of the origin of *The Acts of Thomas,* believed to have been written around 200 AD. The question is poised whether this was originated in Syria as it is thought today, or it had been copied or translated from any Indian editions written by one of the early converts from the Royal family of the *Cheras*, because this claim is put forth by the descendants of such a royal race.

And, it is contradicted about the royal race itself that the Saint is believed to have had converted from the dynasty of the *Chera* Kings of India. Yet another theory contradicts the very visit of the Saint to India at all. But the Oral Traditions prevailing in the land compel us to believe that St Thomas had come to India, lived here, preached the Gospel of Christ and had become a Martyr of Christian Faith.

There are contradictions even about the creation of Man in this world, as to the theory of Evolution through 'natural selection' or the theory of Creation by a supernatural power, an All Mighty Living Power, which the humans designate as 'God'. Even if we accept the theory of Creation of 'Man' on the earth by the super-natural Power known to us as God, the question remains, where was 'Man' created first on this earth. There is also contradiction that whether this first 'Man' was created on this earth or in some unknown space wherefrom he was sent or rather

driven away to this earth. These are bewildering questions. But we have to try to find out which was the 'first abode' of 'Man' before he was 'Driven out'. The Bible says:

> And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
>
> Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.
>
> So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life [2].

There are certain variations of terms in certain editions of the Bible. *The Good News Bible* gives the description as below:

> Then the Lord God said, "Now the man has become like one of us and has knowledge of what is good and what is bad". He must not be allowed to eat fruit from the tree of life, and live for ever"
>
> So the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden and made him cultivate the soil from which he had been formed.
>
> Then at the east side of the garden he put living **creatures** and a flaming sword, which turned in all directions. This was to keep anyone from coming near the tree of life[3]

The 'Cherubim's' and 'Creatures' are symbolised to represent the Power, Righteousness and Holiness of God with dazzling light, constantly praised by the four living creatures resembling Lion, Bull, Man and Eagle[4], each with six wings and watchful eyes in front

[2] *The Holy Bible, Genisis, Chapt.3, verse: 22-24.* (King James version -Oxford)
[3] *Good News Bible: Genesis, Chapt. 3, verse,22-24*
[4] *The Bible, Revelation, chapt. 4, v.6*

and back, all over, declaring the power, omnipresence and the inaccessible Holiness of Lord God the Almighty. We know that the first man, Adam was also holy and very much closer to God before he was driven out of the Eden Garden. So contradiction exists even about the location of Eden garden, as to whether it existed on the earth or in such a glorious celestial space, which is now guarded by the Cherumbims. If it was in the celestial space, then where had Adam lived after he was thrown out? There are different opinions about the earthly abode of the first couple, Adam and Eve, some pleading for a location in the mountainous part of Ceylon and some arguing for some unidentified region in the greater ancient Continent of Lamuria, yet others believing in the 'Eden' of present Arab countries.

Opinion is put forward by some thinkers that the mountain region of 'Pothiya Malai' to be the first region to become fit for human life with its water basins, in a very remote period covered by the great Lamurian Continent and that the Mount has been drifted to its present position, at the root of the river, *Thabravarni*, on the borders of Kerala and Tamilnadu, later. The hidden secrets of this Mount have attracted many scholars, including the linguist, Rev. Caldwell. It is interesting to note some of the opinions put forward by Panayan S.Johnson, the author of *Naadodi vazhvum Rajariiga Asssariya Vamsavum.* He connects the Jewish community to be one of the earliest migrants to India to accept and follow the Biblical principles and ritualistic patterns. So contradictions exist everywhere.

Yet another contradiction that existed was about the number of Churches that the Saint had established during his lifetime in India. Most of the historians hold that the number of Churches constructed by the Saint, in India, were seven. Almost all of the historians had forgotten, omitted or neglected the Church at Thiruvithamcodu, the early capital of

the *Chera* country. Some of the later Indian writers have recognised this Church as a 'Half-Church' (*Ara-Palli*). In a recently published booklet *Ara-Palli*, released by St. Mary's Orthodox Church, it is said that *Ara-Palli*, in Tamil, is equivalent to "the King's Church" because Aran or Arasan means king in the Tamil language. (Preface, Page no. 5). This is a logical and acceptable argument. But, strangely enough, it is to be noticed that this is the only Church standing unique in its structure and form, to declare the coming of St Thomas to India, declaring the good news of Gospel in itself, with its icons. But today there is contradiction about the original people connected with this Church. There are many claims for it. So, as facts are being revealed one after the other, contradictions are also increasing.

2 The Foot-Prints

There is a 'Foot-Print' believed to be that of St Thomas at *Matha Malai* in a place near Thikkanamcode in Kanniyakumari District of Tamilnadu, South India. There is a Cave called *Thomayar Kuhai* (Cave of Thomas) in the nearby *Matha Malai* (Mother's Hill), frequently visited by the Catholic believers of the place.

It was in the month of April, 2005, that our team had visited this mountain for investigation. We contacted as many people as possible to gather information on its connection with St Thomas, the Christian Saint. We spent almost a whole day on the site. The place is situated at Olavilai, near Charal Kottai (*Cheral Kottai?*), in Kappiyarai village, under Padmanabapuram Union, in Kanniyakumari District, of the erstwhile Travancore State of early times. There is a small teashop at Olavilai. We were shown a small path starting from the foothills of the small mountain called *Matha Malai.* The place is of a mixed terrain with plains, mountainous tracts, valleys and hills.

There are many tales of different nature including of different racial and religious traits connected to the place. This Mount is called by different names. Some people call it *Karungal Malai* after its nearest town on the western side. Some people call it *Yeri Yirangum Malai* (the Mountain where the gods come down and climb up). It is part of the mountainous range of the *Tipramalai.* People say that there had happened many wonders in this Mount. Till a few years ago there was a Palm-Tree (male palm, locally called *Alavu Panai* or *Aann Panai*) bearing the fruits, *'Nongu'* – Palm-fruit, which is normally – genetically, produced only by the female palm called

Penn Panai – Female Palm). During festive days, people used to cut this *Nongu* as an auspicious fruit for religious offering and for their own use. There is a fountain in such a height of the Mount that never goes dry at all.

This whole Mount belongs to some private parties. Most of them are Christians from the *Santor* tribe. There are their Hindu brethren also, mostly related to the same family-root. There are a few other tribes also. Although there are many Christian converts now, the members of the *Panacha Vila* family are known to be the earliest converts. *Pana Vilai, Panacha Vilai, Panam Kaavil Kottaram* – Palace-, etc., were the historical leads connecting to the *Chera* dynasty. There are references in history that the early *Chera* rulers of Kerala had lived in *Panam Kaavil Kottaram* (Palmyra Grooves Palace)[5]. From the South Trvancore to Quilon in the north and even beyond, they had the *Panam Kavil Kottaram* for the *Chera* kings of Kerala. This Mount is popularly called the *Matha Malai* (The Mount of the Mother).

Next to this Mount is another smaller Hill with vast plain areas, known by the name, *Pandara Malai.* This Mount is also known by the name, *Pazhanthottam* (Old Garden or Fruit-Garden). It consists of about twenty-seven acres of land. Presently this land belongs to the Government, controlled by the local *Panchayat.* There are many stories connected with the adjacent land also.

[5] A. *Kerala Charitrathile Iruladanja Edugal*, 1953, p.173, Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla.
B. *Pradhanappatta Matilakam Rekkardugal*, 1941, p.8-9 (" It is however, seen that Vira Iravi IraviVarma was the head of the Ciravay branch at that time as evidenced by a Matilakam record of that Ruler who calls himself '*Trippapur Kiizhperruur Sri Viira Iravi Iravi Cirava Mootha Thiruvadi*' in *Miinam* 624 M.E / 1449. He had control over the affairs of the temple from 1416 to 1459. Perhaps, Udayamartanda Varma was co-regent in 1439. In 1450, apparently on the demise of Iravi Varma, he assumed the headship of this temple while residing at the **Panamkaavil Palace** at Quilon. He thereafter wore the Crown of the *Cheras* (*Cheramaan Mudi*), renovated the temple of Sri Padmanabha and installed the *Ottakkalmandapam* in front of the inner shrine. ... In the temple *Grandhavari* he is described as Cera Udaya Martanda Varma. In Matilakam record dated 1459, he calls himself **Kulasekhara Perumal** .

K. Joseph, aged about 60 years, a local man staying at Olavilai, says:

> This Mount was called the *Sivan Malai* after the Hindu god, Siva. Some call it *Pancha Pandavar Malai* and claim that there was a large playground consisting of about three acres of land where the *Pancha Pandavas* of the great epic, *Mahabharata* lived here. This place is a sacred one, and has got many miraculous powers. People who were not virtuous were punished immediately and hence the locals did not venture to take the land on lease from the Government. One day an angel from heaven, or a person from the next realms, came to me in a dream and had told me to take the land on lease. And I had taken the whole land of twenty-seven acres of land on lease, just for eight hundred rupees, from the Government *Panchayat* and I maintained it for twelve long years under me, for my family, and have become prosperous. I have sons and daughters in my family as engineers and officers. Yet, even today, I work making baskets, using Palmyra Leaves for my livelihood, there is peace here[6]

Joseph continued:

> There was a *Pancha Pandava* Family at Kunnampara, west of the *Vaal Vacha Koshtam* temple and they had connection with this land in olden times. My ancestors were polytheists. My father was Kumaran Nadar, S/o Subramanian, S/o Nilakantan. In the records I am known as Kumaran Joseph. My ancestors were big magicians who could burn lamps using raw-water, in lieu of oil. Now we are Christians (interview: Joseph).

Johnson, an ex-B.D.O., of Agasteswaram Taluk is a local man of Olavilai, near Charal Kottai (Gravel Fort or *Cheral Kottai* ?). He said:

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[6] Inter-view with 60 year old , K.Joseph, S/o Kumaran Nadar, Kappiyarai Panchayat member, on 24.04.2005

The local legend is that St Thomas used to rest in this Mount when he was constructing the Mary's Church at Thiruvithamcodu, which was a capital of the early *Chera* kings. That Church is presently called the *Ara Palli* (Half Church) apart from the other seven Churches that he had constructed in the northern parts of Kerala. St Thomas used to travel on horseback. He used to rest in the Mountain Cave. The first or early converts to accept the teachings of St Thomas were the members of the *Panacha Vilai* Royal Family. Traditions are forgotten now. They even do not know their ancestry. There is a Church called St Thomas Church, constructed mainly by the *Panachavilai* family, under the Malankara Mission of Kottayam. This family had share in the lands of *Matha* Mount. I am the son of Nadankannu, a *Vaidyar* (village physician) and an *Asan* (Master of Martial Arts) who gave free treatment to the villagers. His uncle was Perumal Nadar. The father of Nadankannu was Anandapadmanabhan, who was the S/o Kutty Nadar, S/o Pichai Nadar. They were Landlords of the area. There are Christians and Hindus in our family [7].

The members of the Thundathu Vilai Church at Karungal, the nearby town, visit this *Matha Malai* at least once every year, during the Good Friday and Easter festive days. That too was a famous family of that area. This family also had share in this *Matha Mount*-land.

From the foothills of Olavilai, you climb up to the top and find that it is surrounded by many rocks, stone-steps and a variety of plantations. Palmyra trees were once plenty. A part of the mountain, about twenty-seven acres of land belongs to one PalmyrahClimber, Antony of *Thundathuvilai*, in Karungal, on the west of

[7] Inter-view with N.Johnson, S/o Nadan kannu Anandapadmanabhan Nadar, of *Panachavilai* Family, of Ola-vilai, on 24.04.2008.

the Mount. Rev. Father Russel (David), of *Panacham vilai,* has purchased more area on the Mount. The nearby *Asan* families are known as the *Chellamkonam Asans.* Gurupadam *Asan* was a famous man, and his son was Robinson *Asan.* There were other *Asans* like Mundan *Asan,* etc.

Russel gave life to the decayed old story of St Thomas and the *Matha Malai* by trying to organize meetings and gatherings on the Mount to celebrate the age old memories. He, an unmarried priest, had dedicated his life for this purpose, and even had erected a shed for worship. But it was destroyed by the other members of his family, on account of share and ownership problems for the property. On the foothills of the Mount, on the Olavilai side, there are more than twenty five tombs of Christians. Many are known to have been destroyed under the sands of time. The early Christians known are: Anthony family, Varuval family, Samuel family and the *Panacha Vilai* family. David belongs to the *Puthu kaadu Vetti vilai,* near Panacha vilai.

It is said that there was one well in this place. It had many miraculous powers of healing and also the power to convert metal into gold. There was one Statue of St Thomas, which was broken later. From the foothills when you climb up, there are many platforms marked with different names of the stages of pilgrimage. There is a place where the statue of the *Matha* (Mary) is installed on a stone heap, made as a platform. There is a rock, which has the marking 'Way to the Thomas Cave' written in Tamil and Malayalam. There is another rock marked with the sign 'St Thomas foot-print'. There is a Cross carved in the same style as it has been found on the Tiruvithamcodu Church founded by St Thomas. There is a big banyan tree, which is called the *Kallan Potty Aalu Guha* (The Banyan-tree Cave which serves the Dacoits).

On climbing down we gathered some leaflet containing the programme of the celebration of '*Matha Malai* alias *St Thomas Paslica Devalayam* 52-72AD (St Thomas Basilica Church)'. It contained a sketch showing the different locations on the Mount for the pilgrims to visit the Mount. It requires only about an hour to climb up the Mount, and about five or six hours to visit all the location conveniently. It works under the TMJAT - *Mathamalai Trust* (*Travancore Malankara Jew-Ariyan Traditionals Mathamalai Trust*). This Trust is only of a very recent formation, of around the late nineties. However a recent visit to Matha Malai in June 3rd of 2009, many changes are observed on the mount with Rubber Plantations etc.

3 Chinna Muttom and St. Thomas

Chinna-Muttom is a place about two kilometres north-east of Kanniyakumari, on the coastal line. Looking on the south-west, there you see the Vivekananda *Mandir*, Thiruvalluvar Statue, etc. It is said that the landscape was spread up extending to the far-south in earlier times, into the seas, as part of the earliest Lemurian Continent. At present the Vivekananda *Mandir* is like an island of rock in the midst of the seas, totally detached from the lands. Eighty-five year old S. Antony (Lala), S/o Susai Alankaram, says that the area northwest of Chinna-Muttom was a very cultivable land even one hundred years ago. He has heard that the *Nadans* of the area used to cultivate the fields there and now the major portion is engulfed under the seas. His daughter Francisca is also a witness to it.

There were so many rocks and shady places fit for meditation and rest in those days. About one thousand meters towards the south from the place of Chinna-Muttom stands a *Kurusadi* hailing the memory of St Thomas. There is a flat rock which holds a beautiful fountain yielding fresh water, at the verge of the seas. Francisca, a knowledgeable lady holding Master's degree in Sociology and Public Administration, says:

> This beautiful spot was supposed to have been selected by St Thomas for meditation during his stay in these parts of the country. The rock (presently called *Velliyan Para* or *Vellai Para* – White Rock) shows impressions of marks giving clues of human race of Iron Age, which is marked by sedimental impressions of weapons

like knife, sickle, etc. The place on the western side was inhabited by the *Santors* presently known as Nadans. The *Periya Nadachi* of the locality and the members of the Antony family were in cordial terms. In my childhood I have observed many skeletal remains, with strong bones found scattered at the spots of the present inhabitation of the Nadans. These bones were sometimes covered by great sands caused by great storms, and sometimes would be uncovered by another blast of strong wind from another direction. Even today, the *Santors* have their own shrine of the *Narayana Pathy* (*Mutta-Pathy*) of their god *Maha-Vishnu*, represented by their religious *Guru*, *Vaikunta Swamigal.* The local fishermen were engaged in fishing, business, and also in pearl diving in olden days [8]

At Chinna-Muttom, on the upper land, there remains a *Kurusadi* bearing the Cross of St Thomas. People do not know when it was constructed. There are reasons to think that it was repeatedly re-constructed in the course of the past centuries. There was a small Church constructed in memory of St Thomas. According to the information available with the local people this was re-constructed thrice. This building originally had a thatched roof. In the year 1999, the public have taken steps to construct a very huge Church in memory of St Thomas who preached the Gospel of Christ for the Coastal people from Colachel (near Thiruvithamcodu) to Kanniyakumari during his visits to India.

According to Francisca, St Thomas came to India as an expert of Woodcraft who worked in the Court of the King of Travancore for building the royal constructions. There are underground passages from the royal palace of Travancore leading to the *Bhagavathy*

[8] Inter-view with Francisca, daughter of S.Anthony (popularly known as 'Lala'), S/o Soosai Alankaram, of Chinna Muttom, near Kanniyakumari, on 7.5.2005.

Temple at Kanniyakumari. She also says that St Thomas was very much familiarized with the application of herbal medicine and he used to treat the sick also.

The place has been visited by many messengers of God. Memories of the visit of St Xavier around 1544 are more vivid in the minds of the people. This is another factor to be given due thought for the visit of St Thomas. There should have been oral and traditional records to indicate the origin of the Christian folks, with their locations, on these parts of the country, which were known by God's messengers to visit them repeatedly to ensure their strong faith in the Gospel. It is said that when the people did not listen to the preaching of St Xavier, he cursed them and started preaching to the Fishes of the Oceans around.

Although the memorial Church of St Thomas is constructed, no prayer to St Thomas is offered or no memorial day is remembered here, at the *Kurusadi.* But, it is commonly believed that the *Kurusadi* is powerful and many miracles had happened on the spot for the faithful devotees.

Even sixty years ago, one boy named, Martin,S/o Swariis, was born dumb but was cured by applying the oil poured over the Cross at the *Kurusadi.* Although no special offerings are made to the Cross at the *Kurusadi,* devotees offer garlands, and sometimes lit candles at its side. For safe-delivery of pregnant women this *Kurusadi* was the prime abode of the locals before the arrivals of medicines and hospitals in the area.

There was a well near the *Kurusadi* which was called the *Thommai kinaru-* 'Thoma–Well'. It is said that when St Thomas came to the place and asked for water, the people had told him (by gesture of hands) that the water was unfit for drinking and they could not offer it to him. Hence St Thomas extended his hands and purified the water which became sweet water for drinking, since then. After the construction of the

> huge Church, this well is buried in. It is reported that while digging out foundation for the new Church, they came across many remains of early structures of houses and villages, flanked with huge polished cut-stones, pots, skeletons and many remains of early settlements, like *Ammikkal* (kitchen-grinder, *ural*, Iron weapons, etc. [9]

St Thomas has preached the Gospel of Christ in all these places. He visited the nearby villages at Manappadu also. Before reaching the *Parangi Malai* (Mylapore) at Chennai where he had met with his fatal death, he visited Manappadu and then Chinnamalai, said the village head, Thomai Swouriis. This is endorsed by eighty-five years old S. Anthony and his daughter, Francisca. The local Parish Priest Rev. C. Raj is a witness for this information gathered on 7.4.2005, at the site of Chinna-Muttom. The Parish priest has given me a souvenir published on St Thomas Church, Chinna-Muttom in connection with the nine-day festival of the Church. This contains an article written by A. M. Cyril, *Ungalodu Chinna Muttathaipatti* (With you, About Chinna-Muttom). He mentions:

> In the olden days, Chinna-Muttom was known by the name, *Kumari-Muttom.* From Kodungalloor St Thomas came through the Sea-shores by land, and preached the message of Jesus to the locals; he also purified the water in the well at Chinna-Muttom. In the olden days, pilgrims from Kodungalloor visited this *Thommayar Kurusadi* at Kumari Muttom (Chinna Muttom)[10].

There seems to have been a Jewish colony in and around Muttom in those early days. Dr.C.V.Cheriyan is of the opinion that: 'Marco Polo who visited Kerala in the 13th century AD tells us that

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[9] Interview with T.Thommai Swouriis S/o Thommai Sebastian, the Village Head, a black complexioned man, with well-built body, square face and bright eyes, of Chinna Muttom, on 7.5.2005.

[10] Interview with A.M.Cyril, at Chinna Muttom.

there were Jews at Quilon. Thus history tells us there were Jewish Colonies in Cranganore, Parur, Palayur, Quilon, **Muttom,** Chenot, etc., and the seven Churches believed to have been founded by St Thomas except that of Chayal are situated in or near the above mentioned Jewish colonies'.

4 The Karingachira Palli

In the year 1999, on my quest to collect historical information of general nature, I happened to come across a Church in Kerala, which was supposed to have completed an existence of 1275 years in 1997. The Church was having the symbolic *Kunan Kurisu*, (the type of St Thomas Cross). The construction of the Church was of a peculiar type. It remains open all the time. There is the smell of burnt candles and *samprani* (incense). Anybody can approach its interior with a prayer or with an offering of a candle for his or her vows or for sacred meditation. On the back wall of the Church there is an inscription written in Malayalam:

> 'On the 13th day of the month, *Magaram*, of the 722nd year of the Lord, this Church of the Disciple was renovated on the 21st of the month, *Karkkidagam,* of the year 812 AD. This is translated from the original language of *Naanam Monam* - C.E.Iype, Kottayam' [11].

The Vicar of the Church, Rev. Fr. Bennyamin Jacob explained to me that the original inscription was in the *Naanam Monam* language, and it was removed during renovation of the Church, and the version was translated into Malayalam, in the later years.

But the question raised here is whether the language Malayalam had developed a script of this modern type as far back as 812 AD or not. Surely it was

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[11] Note: The translated version of the original inscription in *Naanam Monam* language, now found on the wall of the Karingachira Church in Kerala, observed during a personal visit to the Church, in the year,1999.

not possible. Hence we can assume that this inscription was put there in a much latter stage on the strength of the other records available with them. This clear script of Malayalam has become prominent only after the 15th or 16th century AD. A note in an article clarifies that this Malayalam translation of the old inscription was done on K.V.1098 = 1923 AD [12].

However, the people of Karingachira, like the people of Thiruvithamcodu, respectfully address St Thomas as *Muthappan*, more specifically, like, *Karingachira Muthappan*. For example M.G.Dason writes:

> The sacred name of *Karingachira Muthappan* is chanted daily by thousands of the people of Kanayanur Taluk, irrespective of caste or religion, and *Karingachira Muthappan* saves them...The Blessings that we receive from this *Kaaval pithavu* (Protective Father) who is also known by a strange name, *Karingachira Muthappan*, may continue to shower his blessings on you as he has bestowed upon you for the past so many centuries [13]

In the 'Karingachira' Church of Kerala, which has a tradition of 1283 years, a list of authorities in charge of the Church, for a continuous period of 110 years, ending 2004 is given. The type of Cross, introduced by St Thomas is the double bar Cross. Locally it is known by the name, *Coonan Curisu*. A few of this type of cross are still available in some parts of southern Kanniyakumari district, in the Tiruvithamcodu area.

A strange affinity marked among the 25 responsible Officials (*Kaikaranmar*) of the Karingachira Church and

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[12] An article entitled *Karingachira Palli Noottandukalilude*, written by a group of editors, published in the Souvenir *St. George Yacobaya Suriyani Palli-Karingachira*, released in the year 1997, (p.3), presented to me by Rev. Fr. Bennyamin Jacob, on Appril, 1999.

[13] *Karingachira Muthappan*, an article by M.G.Dason, published in the Souvenir, *St. George Yacobaya Suriyani Palli* –Karingachira, 1997, p.45.

the tradition of the Thiruvithamcodu *Santors* is that among the twenty- five *Kaikaranmar,* the first four of them are entrusted with the priesthood, and the rest are given responsibility for agriculture and cultivation[14]. This is a strange thing marked with the *Santors* among whom is found a group for priesthood called the *Gurukkal.* Another strange affinity noticed is in the place names, which are connected to the family names of these twenty- five *Kaikaranmar.* Out of twenty-five, at least five family names are attached to the name, 'Thiruvaankulam' having affinity with the place, Thiruvithamcodu, and many others, 'Nadakkavunkal'. Nadakkavu is a place in Kanniyakumari District, connected with early Buddhist tradition.

Whether these families have once migrated from these parts of the country to Karingachira? The physical features of the Karngachira people and the *Santors* of Thiruvithamcodu are strikingly similar. When we think of the real antiquity of the early capital, Thiruvithamcodu of *Malainadu,* this is more probable. Further, the word *Kaikaranmar* reminds us of the title, *Valamkaiyar,* attributed to the tribes of *Santors,* during the period of the early part of Christian era. In an article entitled *Kochi Raja Kudumbavum Karingachira Palliyum* (The Cochin Royal Family and the Karingachira Church), by M.Raman Namputiri, an archaeologist, it is said:

> In the absence of any clear-cut records, we are unable to state, for sure, about the origin of the Kingdom of Cochin. It is inferred that the rulers of the second empire of the *Cheras*, the great *Kulasekharas,* had ruled up to the early part of the 12th century AD. We may think that the origin of the Cochin Kingdom may be from the beginning of the early 12th century AD. There is no detailed information about the Cochin Kings before the Portuguese. Their Kingdom is connected to the

[14] Editorial, p,5 of the above mentioned Souvenir

Perumpadappu Swarupam...The Cochin Royal Family encamped around 'Vanneri' of Ponnani Taluk, at Mahodayapuram (Kodungallur), Cochin, Kurikkadu, Kaniyannur, etc., in the early times, and had shifted to Trippunitura around the 18th century AD. The King had recognised the Priest of *Karingachira Palli* as the whole representative of the total Christian population. The Royal Family used to supply twelve *Yochanas* (measure of *Idangazhi)* of oil for the festivals at this *Karingachira* Church. The first measure, from the yields obtained from the fields belonging to the *Sripurnatraissa Temple* was offered to this Church. The Cochin King who has ruled between 1914 and 1920 had witnessed the Holy Communion conducted in the Church [15]

This shows how intimately the Cochin Royal Family was connected to the Church. Moreover, there is a scroll of Bible, preserved by this Royal Family for many centuries, which is presently found displayed in the Royal Museum at Trippunitura. This surely emphasises the remote connection of the Royal Family with Christian Faith. Raman Namputiri continues:

> There has been no tribe in Kerala like the Syrian Christians that had lived in close relation with the Hindu tradition of Kerala. This had prompted Rev. James Hough to comment that 'they are strong built, good looking, smart; they won't sit before their elders without prior permission...Men used to wear long and sharp swords at their waist. The Syrians begin their martial training at the age of eight and complete by the age of twenty-five; a few of them carry guns with them[16]

This is another factor for the close affinity with the *Santors* of Thiruvithamcodu of early times.

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[15] *Kochi Raja Kudumbavum Karingachira Palliyum* , by M.Raman Nambutiri, p 53-54, in the above said Souvenir.

[16] M.Raman Nambutiri, as above, p.53-54.

T.K.Velu Pillai writes:

> The Nadars are a class inhabiting the southern *taluks* of Travancore. Their mother tongue is Tamil, though some of them speak Malayalam...The fact of their having been an important community in the past is borne out not only by such expressions as Nadar and *Nadalvar* found in some old stone inscriptions of Travancore, but also by numerous customs which are peculiar to them. They were good fighters, hardy and brave...When a boy attains the sixteenth year, his beginning to use the head-cloth, *Urumalkettu*, and to carry a knife as a weapon of self defence is an important ceremony...The Nadars are governed by the *Mithakshara* system of Hindu Law, the form of succession being strictly *makkathayam*[17]

About the *Karingachira Palli*, the editorial Board of the 1275th year *Memorial Souvenir*-1997 writes:

> The world knows about the arrival of St Thomas to Kerala in 52 AD. It is also a fact that all the Syrian Churches are the offshoots of the early seven Churches established by St Thomas. The early rulers of the country looked to the Christians with love and respects. This has helped the Christians to progress in their trade and good living.
>
> The *Karingachira Palli* is about one and half kilometres away, towards the east, of the capital of the kings of Cochin, at Trippunitura. It is an offshoot of the early Church established at *Kottaikavu* (Paravur) from which the Edappalli Church had come up. A section of the people branched out from this Edappalli Church were responsible to construct this *Karingachira Palli.*
>
> The Syrian Christians are of Noble origin, good fighters, willing to sacrifice their life for the sake

[17] *State Manual of Travancore* 1940, T.K.Velu Pillai,p,856.

of the king and the country. The well-known two families, who lived here around the 8th century AD, were the *Maaliyam Veedan* and *Paalathinkal.* It was a dispute on account of the permission to bury one of the members of the *Maaliyam Veedan* which had resulted in the establishment of a new Church at *Karingachira* in 722 AD, and consequently ascertained the name, *Karingachira Palli.* The Church has met with repeated renovation and the last of which was in the year, 1923 AD[18].

Here it is said that the Syrian Christians were of "Noble Origin". For 'nobles' the word generally applied in those days was *Chantor* or *Santavar* (*Santor).* This is a Tamil word. As a matter of fact, Tamil was the language in force in Kerala in those days of St. Thomas. The *Chantor* or *Santavar* were a group of people, who, in the course of later Malayalisation, had been termed as *Channar* and they had many affinities with their brother community, the ancient Christian converts and the *Ezhavas*, a branch of them too were termed as *Channar.* Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla, who had specialized in the early history of Kerala is of the opinion that these communities of *Chantors* were considered as 'Nobles' because of their professions of 'ruling the country, priesthood and even toddy tapping. Elamkulam refers to many incidents when Palm-juice (the product of toddy tapping), was used to be offered to gods in Hindu temples of those days, especially to gods and goddesses connected with war or Martial arts (*Kalari*). Elamkulam has gone to that extent to explain the word *Chantanmai* (Nobility) to, or, as an epithet of 'Toddy Tapping'.[19]

Almost the same opinion is found in the studies enhanced by the *International Centre for Kerala Studies*, Trivandrum, in the book, *Elamkulam Kunjanpillayude Thirenjedutha Krithigal*, published by the University of

[18] M.Raman Nambutiri, as above, p.1-9

[19] *Keralam Anchum Aarum Noottandukalil,* Elamkulam, 1961, p.220

Kerala (2005). It says: 'The king had the right to sell off the persons who had committed crimes, as 'slaves'. Many types of taxes, business taxes, land-tax, sales tax, etc were in force in those days. All the inhabitants of the country were not having the right to wear ornaments. Only the *Chantors* (Nobles) had the right to wear such ornaments in the country. The *Chantors* paid a different tax called *Meniponnu* for that purpose'.[20]

New theories, as a result of new researches, are coming up these days. Such theories connect the Priests (King-priests -*Paarpan*) with the *Chantors*, linking them with the *Panayan* (Nobles, priest or King-priest) attributing them the same 'Nobility' given to the *Nadalwars* (the ruling class). There are some inscriptions too to prove this argument. For example, the *Thanchai Peru Udayar Kalvettugal*, of Tanjore temple mentions the following terms equivalent to *'Panayan'*, applied to their other multiple epithets for their related kinsmen as ***"Pappan Panchavan, Idayan Pappan 'Panayan' Kundan Pattan, his brother, Kundan Devan, Idayan Pattan; Ayipadi Pattan, Paraman, Idayan Pattan Devan..."***[21] **etc.**

To quote M.Immanuel:

> The relation of the word *Panayan* is linked with *Bhadra* or Bhadraka, ("Odraka-Andraka"), Kaali, Vidyadhara, and to the Nadars. The Inscriptional references to the *Yaudheya* or *Ayudhajivis* such as *'Lakvira, Madhovira* and *Admvira*, etc., have been discussed earlier...The equivalent word in south Indian Inscriptions is "*Amudan (Amuthan)* as in *Amudan Vidyadharan* or *Amudan* ***Panayan***...They had many names and epithets like, *Vidyadhara,*

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[20] *Elamkulam Kunjanpillayude Thirenjedutha Krithigal*, Part-I, Dr.N. Sam, p.727.

[21] Quoted in *The Dravidian Lineages-the Nadars Through the Ages*, M.Immanuel, 2002, p.176, taken from: *Thanjai Peruvudayar Kalvettugal*, 1969, published by the Archaeological Dept, Tamilnadu, edited by E.R.Nagasamy.

[22] *The Dravidian Lineages –Nadars Through the Ages*, M.Immanuel, p.167, 168.

*Ayis, Chchatrapa, Kchetriya, Villava, Ananta, Hida, Idaya, Yadava, Yaudheya, Malla, Mana, Maran, Uran, Suran, Madhuvar, etc...*This *Madhuvar* tribe is expressed mostly as *Amudan* or *Amuther* in Tamil [22].

The explanation given in the encyclopaedia (Sanskrit) for the word *'Panayan Chandan'* or *Talaka* or *Chanda* (*Canda –Candasya*) is as follows:

> Fierce Fighter, Chanda-Asoka, Son of Kaali, Santor, Talanka, Balabhadra, Sri Rama, Bhishma, Kaalika, Nada, Naishadha, Nahusha, Mahapatra[23]...etc.

These are not the mere and lone opinions. A researcher and thinker of modern times, who has successfully authored more than seven important books also has given his opinion on the importance of the application of the word *Panayan* and a set of people who were under that priestly culture in early Kerala and even on the northern parts of India. Sharing the opinion of Panayan S.Johnson, it says:

> The priestly practices of the ritualistic pattern of Vedic sacrifices have continued even up to the last *Sangam* period. The performers of such rituals, the ***Panayans*** (the *Anthanar-Parpanar*-King-priests, *Vediyar, priests)*, had good reputation among the royal fold. This reverence was given to them because the *Panayans* were the priests and king-priests of Levites from the same Clan of royal root. The kings conducted great Sacrificial *Vezhvis*. They worshipped gods like *Murugan, Thirmal, Sivan* and goddesses like *Kottravai.* They also worshipped gods like Siva and Thirumal and Mahavishnu who were compared with the Palm-tree and also with the clear Palm-Juice. They

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[23] *Sanskrit- English Dictionary (Etymologically and Philologically arranged, with Special reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages* by Sir Monier Monier-Williams, etc.

[24] Obstract from the book, *Naadodi Vaazhvum Rajariiga Aassariya Vamsamum, S.Johnson*, p,132.

> all were the members of the *Panayan* root of *Chandravamsa*...Their inter-relations are explained in the south Indian Inscriptions and also on the inscription depicted on the Thenkkassi Viswanathar temple [24].

The following passages further prove who these Panayans are and the purpose of God to disperse them through out the corners of the earth in order to fulfil the will of God.

> It was the great Will and Purpose of God the almighty that all the people of the earth must be blessed through the descendants of Abraham. It was the promise that God has given to the Israelites. In order to fulfil His great plan, so that all races of the world shall be brought to God through Jesus Christ, in the last days, He (God) has scattered the Priestly class, Levites to all the corners of the earth. This has occurred around 1000 B.C. This is ascertained from certain inscriptions and copper plates maintained for records. This theory is reliably proved from the symbols used by the Jews for more than 3000 years from now. This symbol of Jews consist of the 'Seven branched lamp, studded with the lalub of male Palm-tree (*aluvachi*), indicating the authority of priesthood (*Panayan)*, and 'Fish' symbolising the great Salvation of Christ to the whole world[25].

The matters pictured above should demonstrate the value of the word **"Panayan"** and its link with the priestly class connecting Kerala, India, and much beyond the borders of India extending to the borders of early Jewish territories. In the present social context, the word 'Panayan' or Palm-tree may create a derogatory view on the minds of ignorant people whereas the original sense and value is lying hidden only for the learned to

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[25] Extract from *Naadodi Vaazhvum Rajariiga Aassariya Vamsamum*, p.99, 100.

be realised. As a matter of fact, a deeper study is necessary for analysing the present social ranks to connect to the ancient times of origin of Christianity in India. Once Christianity has come to Kerala, there have been different stages of growth, disputes, contradictions and divisions, even among the Syrian Christians.

There are evidences to infer that the Church had always been haunted either by personal prides of certain families, or by the repeated religio-political forces like the Antioch (325 AD) Turks (1453), the Portuguese (16th, 17th century), the British (18th, 19th centuries), etc. There had been tough fight between the Syrians and the Roman Catholics to engulf the Christian population within each one's grips. The major trouble, it seems to have started, was with the support given to the Roman Catholics by the *Maliyam Veedan* family groups. This has resulted in many arrests and killings, and finally culminating in the famous *Kunan Kurisu Oath*, taken on 3rd *Magaram*, 1653 at Mattancheri by which the majority of the members had vowed to retain their affiliation towards Antioch and remain honest to the Syrian traditions. This vow is again reviewed on February 2 of the year 1687.

What could be inferred from all these facts are that there had been times of disunity, individual or family feuds, efforts of political enslavements, etc, repeatedly happening there. The word, *Maaliyam Veedan*, seems to be originally a Tamil word, meaning a man, an important man who had the privilege of constructing *'Maligai'* houses (palace or multi-story mansions). It should be remembered that certain classes (the *Sudras*) were not permitted to construct multi-story houses even up to the 18th century AD. This was a privilege given to be enjoyed by the ruling class, the *Kshatriyas*. Probably, these families had migrated from their Tamil roots of Thiruvithamcodu towards the borthern parts of Kerala.

Another important matter to be taken notice of is that almost all the historians tell us that the number of Churches constructed by St Thomas were only

'Seven'. It was only very lately that the issue of *Ara-Palli* (Half-Church) at Thiruvithamcodu was raised. What could be the reasons? Perhaps the *Kshatriya* groups of northern Kerala around Kottayam region, and the same group of *Kshatriya* Nadalvars of southern region around Thiruvithamcode, once living together, were divided on matters of principles of religion, or on out-growing novel politics of the times. Unlike today, both were originally Tamils. This is very much evident in the language used by the Syrian Christians or the so called *Maappilas*, even today, with the language used by the *Nadalwars*, especially from the region of Thiruvithamcode or specifically, of the Villavancode - Nadans. The following words prove this:

Enntha uwe	What is it, hi
Kochu,	Small
Kocchaappi	A name, meaning, 'little one'
Podiyan	Same meaning as above, 'little man'
Podi-kutty	Small boy
Ennaathina	For what? (originates from Tamil-*Enna*)
Mindu, Mindaattam	To talk
Polivu	Tax or gift
Kathanaar	Priest or Bell-master
Immini	Lilttle/or ' too much'
Kochan	A name, small boy
Kompan	The proud, cheat
Ammachan	Paternal uncle
Machunan	Brother in-law
Marumon	Son in-law
Appan	Father

The list goes on like this. In addition to many of the cultural and characteristic habits of honesty, cunningness, and daringness, there are so many other factors too among these groups. These days, lots of migrations from northern Kerala to the Kanyakumari regions have occurred, perhaps even without knowing the earlier links, with an intention to 'dominate' aboriginal Tamils, with the new style of their linguistic culture of Malayalam. We need to do a real 'Root Study' for better social harmony.

5 The Malayattur Palli and Thiruvithamcodu

At Malayattur, near Ernakulam of Kerala, there is, still, a Church called St Thomas Church of old heritage, to which the local people of Thiruvithamcodu used to go on pilgrimage till the recent days. It was here in Thiruvithamcodu, in the present Kanniyakumari district (a part of ancient Kerala), that St Thomas had erected his first Church by rock-cut beams, in the Greek pattern. This is the only Church still prevailing in India, in its original form, constructed by the Apostle, St Thomas. It still stands there with its new addition of wooden structures, added to it lately, by the Malankara Syrians of Kerala.

A.M.Mundanan writes:

> 'Malayattur' an important place today where there is a shrine dedicated to St Thomas and which attracts many pilgrims especially during the week after Easter. A few popular pieces of information about this place and shrine will be found in *St Thomas 19th Centenary Souvenir, Malayattur 1972* (in Malayalam, 1972)... This place, Malayattur, is marked by Barbosa, as 'Maleas' [26]

This tradition still remains alive in the oral history around Kanniyakumari District. Benny Masterly explains:

> During the auspicious days, the Catholic Christians from these parts of the country, Thiruvithamcodu and the suburbs, used to visit the Malayattur Church constructed by St Thomas.

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[26] *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I. Mundanan Mathias, 31:*note-36*, p, 227.

Whenever some misfortune happened in the family or with any members of the family, the head of the family, sometimes in the company of the other members too, used to visit the Malayattur Church as a vow to please God. The way in which the vow was accomplished is very interesting. The pilgrim used to carry a double bundle containing *Varutha Maavu* (*fried* powder of rice mixed with coconut chips), beaten rice, water, etc., over his head, chanting the special word '*Malayattur Muthappa, Malayattur Muthappa*' addressing St Thomas as an 'Elder-Father'. Even today there are few families who remember this tradition [27].

Benny Masterly well remembers his father, *Thiru* Masterly, along with his friends and relatives visiting this Malayattur Church in this fashion, even fifty years ago. The family members of Masterly were connected with the royal family of Attingal. They had their share of properties, at Thackaley, connected with the King, *Moolam Tirunal*. The Family was engaged in *Kalari*, trade, and also had worked as the 'Official Palace Contractors' for maintainence, building and contructions. They were also experts in their traditional masterpiece of *Varma* and treatment of the wounded soldiers (*Varma Vaidyam*). They are believed to be one of the few early Converts in Travancore. The Converts, had the addendum of the title, "*Muthu*, *Muthaiah* (*Muthu* +*Aiya*) or *Muthappar*" in general, with their names, in those early days. The feature is still continued among the names of the *Nadalwars*. (Interview with *Thiru* Benny Masterly, 11/66, Benny Cottage, Thackaley-629175, Kanniyakumari Dist, Tamilnadu). The name of the first Catychist who had followed St. Thomas during his visit to Travancore was "Paranjothiyar", a Tamil *Santor* from Thiruvithamcode area[28]

[27] Inter-view with Benny Masterly on 20.4.2005.

[28] Information from the Diary of Thiru Binny Masterly, on the basis of an Interview conducted by him in 1974, with Sri A.Gabriel, Ex-M.L.A, Travancore State, of 1937.

This family of the Masterly is situated just about four kilometres away from the early capital city of Travancore, Thiruvithamcodu. They are said to be one of the early converts at the instance of St Thomas. They belong to a great tradition of the *Asan* families of Travancore. The famous *Asans* traced out in the family are: *Pirappancottu Asan, Chinnappar Asan, Mariyandran Asan, Vaidyanathan Asan,* who are followed by Mark Luise Masterly, Masterly Gamalin, and Masterly Benny. They belong to the *Santor* tribe of Nadar Community. Among them *Thiru* Vaidyanathan *Asan,* was the Palace-Contractor for the Travancore State. This Palace had only thatched roof, made of Palm-leaf, in the earlier days.

It was under the supervision of Vaidyanathan *Asan* that the roof was altered to the ceramic-tiles type. Chinnappar *Asan* was entrusted by the king to control the affairs of the region of Thackaley. Chinnappar *Asan* was a master in *Kalari, Indrajalam, Mahendrajalam, Jala-sthampanam* and many of such mystic occults in those days. Traditions hold that the famous Perumpazhanji Aiyar, a Brahmin, had learnt these occults and many other ancient sciences from this Chinnappar *Asan.* This family gave more than five acres of land, free of cost, to construct the local Catholic Church at Thackaley, besides five acres of land for a nominal price, of just one rupee, to construct the Convent connected to the Church at Thackaley.

The king, Moolam Tirunal had presented a diamond ring to Vaidyanathan *Asan* and[29] he was permitted to go to the king without removing his head-turban (a symbol of family pride of the *Santors* which they begin to wear from the age of sixteen). Tradition holds that the *Maha-Rani* of Attingal belonged to this family. After being married to the Attingal royal family, the *Rani* had entrusted the ten and half acres of property of *Parappancottu Ela* (Paddy field), consisting

[29] From the *Ayakettu* of the family properties on land-records of Benny Masterly.

of the Parappancottu *Periya Kulam*, *Konathattu kulam*, *Pottakulam*, etc, to this family. It was first given on lease for 3000 *panams* and finally the *Rani* had handed over her total rights in favour of Vaidyanathan family for 40,000 *panams*. The family had huge quantities of other properties also. They are one of the earliest converts of St Thomas. Remarkably, the types of Cross called St Thomas Cross or *Kunan Kurisu* of the double-cross type found in this town of Thackaley town bear witness to such early conversion. Out of fifteen of such *Kurusadis* (Cross bearing Points), thirteen are still retained in this location alone. About this the local history says:

> It is known that during the times of St Thomas, certain *Thiddles* (platforms) were raised and a particular type of Cross was installed over there for worship. Such places which were installed with Crosses were known by the name, *Kurusadis*. In the early days, you could see Crosses, only of the 'Double Cross' type. The local tradition holds that St Thomas resided in these places around Thackaley for a long time and then went to Mylapore through Madurai. It is not known for sure that which are the *Kurusadis* established by the Saint. But, followed by him, many of the Christian preachers came to these parts, from 14th century AD, one after the other. This Thackely region can be proud to have the maximum number of *Kurusadis*, of which thirteen are still thriving in this area alone[30].

In the same souvenir, F. Patrose writes:

> *Punitha Paraloka Matha Kovil* was in existence many years before the construction of the Padmanabapuram Palace. The question that why this *Matha* Church was erected very near to the Palace is an important one. This should have been constructed much before the arrival of the

[30] *Antoniyar Kurusadi, 1997*, Justin Durai Raj, p.(unmarked)

> Carmel Missionaries of Belgium in 1657...The front of this Church was projected with two *Mandapas* (towers), each depicting an elephant on either side. It remained there till 1950, when it was demolished for renovation of the Church. Although there was big compound wall around the Palace, there was provision of a gate to enter his Church from the Palace premises. What could be the secret behind this? The great cot made of 64 medicinal woods, it is said, was donated by the early Catholic Priests, to the king. The Cross, which marked at the centre of the cot bears witness to this [31]

Here, although the dates mentioned are as late as the 17th century, it indicates about the connection between the Tiruvithamcodu Royal family and the Christian Churches, either in Cochin or in Travancore.

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[31] *Punitha Paralokamatha Devalayam*, padmanabapuram, F.Patrose.(Article)

6 Rambaan Paattu

In some of the Rambaan (Rabban) songs it is said that at Mailaipuram (Mylapore), St Thomas was met by some Brahmins (*Chennambranmar*), who were going to conduct sacrifice to goddess *Kaali* and the Saint met with his death at their hands because he refused to join them in their worship and even he destroyed their temple by the power of his God. This story very much destroy the theory of original Brahmin-converts by the Saint, but very much supports the *Santoric* theory, because, the worship of *Kaali* was held very close to the hearts of the *Santors*, even up to this day. As a matter of fact, *Kaali* is a goddess counted as the care-taking mother of the *Santors* [32]

The local belief of some of the people here is that among the three Seers who visited Bethlehem to pay homage to the Baby Jesus, one was a king from the *Chera* country. There was a Drama under the title *Moontru Rajakkal* (Three kings), with reference to this incident, enacted in these parts till a few years ago, which supports this phenomenon.

St. Thomas was locally called *Muthappar* (Elder Father), by the local people who had accepted the preaching of him in the early days. Among the first converts, at least fifteen families still claim the original root of the *Chera* dynasty. One of them claim that the famous Copper Plate, the *Veera Rakhava Pattayam* , was given to this family of *Chantra* Iravi Kottravan, and his brother, *Chantru* Vaduga Kottravan. There was a lyric called *Muthappar Ammanai* maintained by this family even about one century back,

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[32] *Valamkaimaalai Palm-Leaf Text).*

copy of which is claimed to have been taken by some Christian Missionary. The members of this family were intercontinental traders, with titles such as *Annavi, Chedis* and *Manigramakkar.* 'They were traders known by the name, *Nadayar*, and during the times of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara Perumal, thy have contributed 18,000 *panams* for the renovation of the famous Padmanabapuram Temple at Thiruvananthapuram' [33]

Most of the presently recorded history of St Thomas was the oral traditions, which were later written down by the Portuguese Christians. The trade links with Rome, Syria, Greek and India are well known. The trade of 'purple' to the Syrians, and chemically processed alcohol to the Egyptians, by the traders like *Palmesyar*, to the Middle-East, are mentioned by Greek historian Herodotus as early as 400 BC. St Thomas is reported to have preached to the 'Jewish settlement' in Kerala. What made the Jews to settle down in the South, rather than the more Aryan oriented Northern India, is a matter to be given due thought. The Palmyra culture found scattered through out the South East Asia is another factor to think about. Regarding the Oral Traditions Alex Cruz, M. writes:

> These are oral traditions, which are later compiled as songs by different compilers. This tells about the works of St Thomas and his preaching of Christ in India, especially Southern India. It seems that there were more than one Ramphan who had compiled these stories. The stories referred to about the conversion of Brahmins to Christian faith is said to be referred to by some second Ramphan, 'Malikkal Thomas Ramphan', probably about a second visit of the Saint to the Malabar region. It is said that the Ramphan songs are compiled only around 1601 AD, from its oral versions. It is natural that the later Ramphan songs are found slightly modified

[33] *Venadintre Parinaamam*, K. Sivasankaran Nair, 1993, 324.

> from the earliest one. Perhaps, this can also indicate that the events of St Thomas are so much scattered that all the details were not known to each of the compiler. However, the Ramphan songs refer to the *Pandya* kingdom as well as the *Chola* kingdom and each of the country had its own king and independent governing systems. It also mentions conversion of one group consisting of two thousand people and another group of Seven thousand people by the preaching of St Thomas [34]

The *Ramphan Paadalkal* (Ramphan songs) declare the events of conversion of the *Chola* and *Pandya* royal families accepting the principles preached by St Thomas. Apart from these, there are many narrations about the conversion of Nambutiri Brahmins into Christianity by the preaching of St Thomas, in the ancient *Chera* land (Kerala). These songs are known in different forms like, the *Rabban Pattu,* the *Veeradyan Pattu,* the *Margam Kali Pattu,* etc.

A.M.Mundanan writes:

> Among the important local sources are a few songs of which the *Thomas Rabban Pattu* are the best known. Many other songs associated with important Churches and often used at wedding feasts and other ceremonies are still preserved in Kerala and some of them are being rendered by Hindu singers as well, for example, the *Veeradian Pattu.* It is likely that a few of these songs were taken from manuscripts handed down from family to family[35]

It is important to notice that the Hindus handle the particular song known by the name, *Veeradian Pattu* which comes under the traditions of 'hero-worship' followed by the ancient Tamils. This also gives a hint about the people who had followed the doctrine – a

[34] *Mana Viira Valanaadu,* Alex C.Muthaiah, p, 138-139.
[35] *History of Christianity in India*, vol. I, M.Mundanan, p.29-30.

class who were not at all any fanatics of any religious ownership, but a class of people who were broad and open-minded to any of the best doctrines suitable for human benefits as the word *'Santors'* totally implies to. There are variations in the narrations of each of the songs followed by each group. One version is that after arriving at 'Maliankara' of Kerala, the Saint went to China from there, and came back to Tiruvanchikulam, baptised the king and 3000 pagans and forty Jews there. Another version of the song says that the Cross, at Niranam was brought from a place called Truckpaleswaram. The locals at Thackaley believe that the Cross was first installed at Tiruvithamcodu, only four kilometres away from Thackaley and from there it was spread to northern Kerala. There are historical evidences to show that the ruling class, the *Santors,* had close relation and contacts with places like Quilon, Chayal and Kokamangalam from the remote past.

It is said that the Saint had converted 17550 to Christian faith and among them, 6,850 were Brahmins, 2,800 were *Kshatriyas*, 3750 *Vaisyas* and 4,250 *Sudras* (Mundanan. Vol. I .31). Here, the clear caste demarcation given is subjected for question because of the fact, in the first century AD the Caste structure had not taken such a root to mark these strict demarcations in Kerala. Moreover, the question of converting such a huge number of 6,850 Brahmins would be impossible compared to the percentage of the community, if at all they were there in that early period of time. Even today, their number does not go beyond four percent on the strength of total population.

The above information indicates to us that out of the total conversion, 39 percentage populations were from Brahmin community, 15.9 % from *Kshatriyas,* 21 % *Vaisyas,* and 24 % were from the Sudra community. Taking into account of the antiquity of the period like 52nd AD, it is historically doubted to have any Brahmins at all in that period in Kerala. If at all there were any

Brahmins, it is questionable to ascertain the huge number as high as 6,850 as given in the list and it could only be ascertained that the name 'Brahmin' is given to some dominating class existing there in those days. Exposure of history reveals the fact the Brahmins were not a 'dominating' community as early as 52nd AD, in Kerala. It is only around 12th century AD that they became little dominant over the 'Sudras' who are instructed by the local kings 'not to harass' the Brahmins. Possibly, then, who could be the other 'dominating community'?

Even in a much later period as late as 1901, when the Brahmins were in their prime dominance and superior position in number as well as in authority, their population was 36925 only, all inclusive of their thirteen branches of 'Malayala Brahmin', thirteen branches of Nambutiri Brahmins, and Nineteen branches of their Tamil Brahmins. Their sub-divisions go like *Thiruvalla Desi, Otta, Ashtasahasram, Brahatcharanam, Mukkanian, Banketti, Vataman,* Vataman *Chola Desom,* and *Vataman Vata Desom*[36]

Here, it is to be noted with interest that the total population in 1901, of another community, the *Chedis,* which was a very 'Dominant community' in the earlier times of 52nd AD and even much beyond the period of Christ, is very much reduced to only around 16089, with all their new branches like the *Pulva, Chakkala, Vellala, Asaivam, Kala, Konaka, Nanchinatt, Saiva, Sripantara, etc.,* added to them. The *Chedis* (*Chetis*) themselves had 29 branches, with the additional '*Chekkala*' having 14 branches to be added with the *Chetis.*[37]. It should be remembered that the *Chedis* or the present *Chettis* were a part and parcel of the early *Nadan* or *Natan* branch of *Haihayas* or *Viirabahu*[38] of ruling class of ancient times,

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[36] *Census Report of India 1901*, quoted in *The Dravidian Lineages - The Nadars Through the Ages*, M.Immanuel, 2002, p.376.

[37] *Census Report of India*, 1901.

[38] *Appendix II Genealogical Tables* in *The History and Culture of the Indian People –Vol.I, The Vedic Age,* (p.322-23) K.M.Munshi, etc.

existing much beyond the period of St. Thomas times of 52nd AD. This period is observed to go beyond 1950 BC.

Another major community found mentioned in *Census Report of 1901* is the Nadar community who are marked as "*Channan*", with their Thirty Nine branches[39] like *Itanat, Illam, Kana, Karukkumattai, Kavara, Kiriyam, Mutta, Natan and Trippapur* (Travancore Royal Branch). Their total number in 1901 is recorded as 70,256, which is the highest among all and predominant in all the other communities in Travancore, with the royal branch of *Trippapur* included with them.

History of this major community of Nadars are tarnished in many ways by the historians as well as by the Social scientists of modern and earlier times starting from around 1600 AD. The name of the community is termed as "*Channan*" which is essentially, a corrupt form of *Chantran* or *Santan*, to mean 'Noble, Learned or a ruler'. Their branch *Itanat* is very much to do with their earlier brothers, the *Ezhavas*, and their title "*Illam*" is capsized by the Brahmins of 16th and 17th century Brahmins. "Kana" is the earliest '*Gana*' or 'Republican' brand of the Nadars applied to their ancient royal ancestors like Sri Buddha or Mahavira [40]. "*Kavara*" are their brethren in Mysore and Karnataka. "*Mutta*" is a term very much special to the Nadars respecting their 'Elder' who is to take charge of the Royal Throne. The other title or branch of the Nadars, the *Natan* is the real 'Owner of the Land' or so to say the Lord of the Soil, which term is found applied to many of the land documents and Grants observed not only in Kerala, but even in Tamilnadu and Karnataka. While *Trippapur* is the 'Ruling Dynasty' of Nadans in Travancore and Karnataka, *Karukkumattai* is a corruption wantonly created in the 20th century to ridicule the community,

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[39] Quoted in *The Dravidian Lineages- The Nadars Through the Ages*, 2002, M.Immanuel, p.376.

[40] *The Dravidian Lineages*, M.Immanuel, p.133-137.

from its original name, *Karukkupattai* (Sharp Sworded Warrior) equivalent to "*Shanror* or *Shandravar*" [41], or the *Talwars* of Northern India.

The above facts indicate that there have been lots of historical jugglery occurred or created during the course of recording the facts of history in our land and the dominance of a community in a particular period becomes questionable with respect to time in comparison to the dominance of another community at certain period. And also it should be remembered that at certain period of time, the title of certain dominant community was being stolen or misrepresented by another community as to the title of Illam of Nadars by the Brahmins and even by certain Nair community in a still later stage. This surely indicates that the question of earlier converts of Christians now believed to be the Brahmanical Nambutiri class is to be re-considered to ascertain its factual originality and authenticity. In all probability, according to the circumstantial evidences available for us, it can be ascertained that the earlier ruling class of "Natan" (lord of the Soil) have been mistook for a Brahmanical class in a very later stage of historical recording.

It is mentioned in the songs that after the release of St Thomas by 'Choran' the king of Mailapuram, he had baptised the king along with 700 non-believers. The expression 'Seven hundreds' (*Ezhunuttuvar* like *Ainuttuvar*) is meant locally, of a people of *the Santor* tribe who were rich traders and valiant fighters working all along with the king in all his missions [42]. The **'Panayan'** (King-Priest) mentioned earlier, or the Pandyans (Tamils) who had ruled the country with 'Fish' as their insignia and the Cholas who had ruled the country were said to be originated from the same root of Tamils as brothers are supposed to have evolved

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[41] *State Manual of Travancore* - Nagam Aiya, p, 392-397

[42] *Valamkaimaalai* Palm-Leaf Texts of *Santors* (Nadars)

from a common stock originated in the ancient Lamurian Continent from which a diversified migration had taken place, scores of thousands of years ago towards African countries and even towards the middle east (through Gangatic Valleys) who had, perhaps made a return journey from time to time to visit their ancestral kinsmen. This, very much explains the symbol used by the early Israelites, adding Fish as well as the stalk of Palm-flower generally used by the Chera and Pandya rulers.

But the question, whether the *Nambutiri* Brahmins were prominent in Kerala in this particular period of around 52nd AD, is to be given due thought. According to analytical study of history, the Sanskritic-Brahmin inflow to the *Chera* country is considered to be around the 6th or 7th century AD, if not still later to the 9th on 11th centuries. Evidences of language, history and copper plate analysis tell us that a group of people known as Santors, (Chantor) were the prominent groups during this period of time in the country. This Chantors were known as Panayan (Priest or King Priest), Sometimes being addressed commonly as, "Paarppan" which term, perhaps, been misused and misinterpreted to be taken as Brahmin in the later years. As a matter of fact, based on the original sense of "Parppan' (Care Taker or Attender), there is an off-shoot of the *Chantor* class, known as ***Thiru Paappu,*** in Kerala and Mysore kingdoms, who were a branch of the ruling Class of the South Indian Kings. Even the *Tharrissappalli Copper Plates* speak about the *Santor(Chantor).* This sort of historical analysis allow us to think that there have happened many historical camouflage in society, one overlapping the other to get recognition for prominence, like the *Nambutiris* replacing the *Santors* or the *Santors* adapting the new name as *Nambutiris.* It becomes very important to properly analyse this point, because, there are many stories, oral and written, connected with *Nambutiris* and St Thomas found in the history, written in later years.

7 Thiruvithamcodu – A Jain Centre

The period when St Thomas visited this land, the locals were mostly the followers of Jainism. Mahaviira, the forerunner of Jainism is known to be a 'son of a *Nata* (Nada) Chieftain [43]. The famous Tamil poet, Thirvalluvar, a Jain of the southern most part of Travancore (Kerala), and most probably, a contemporary of the Saint, was later very much influenced by the teaching of St Thomas. This becomes evident from his work, *Thirukkural*, having great affinity with the Christian principles and preaching. In history there is controversy about his place of birth and his community.

The recent thoughts are that he was born in a place called Thirunainarkuruchi of Kanniyakumari District (not yet confirmed). His community also is contradicted. Some are of the opinion that he was born among the 'Valluvar' community, which is presently considered as of lower status. But the question of Casteism was not prominent in those early days. Some are of the opinion that the term Valluvar are originated from the root of 'Vallal' to mean 'Magnanimous', 'the Great Giver', a typical character of the *Santors*. Again, along with his name is attached the title *Nayanar* which indicates that he is of the royal blood. *Nayanar* is an epithet for *Santors*. *The State Manual of Travancore* (Nagam Aiya, 1906, 392-393) reveals it. To support this argument, it is seen that he glorifies the character of the Royal *Santors* in many of his poems. *Santanmai*, the character of the *Santors* is very much highlighted by him, which in turn highlights the principles of teaching of Jesus Christ.

[43] *The Dravidian Lineages- The Nadars Through the Ages*, M.Immanuel, p,133.

But, as history has deviated in later years, modern interpreters try to generalise the term *Santor;* but there are many substantial materials within the work of Thiruvalluavar to disprove their arguments. Whatever be the case, there are proofs to substantiate the Character of *Santanmai* and the principles of the preaching of Christ in the work of the great poet, Thiruvalluvar. So it can be ascertained that the *Santors* who were Buddhists and or Jains, till then, and were in high ranks of societies, had accepted Christianity preached by St Thomas.

It is an acceptable fact that we have some history today because of the deliberation of some of the Western enthusiasts who were influenced by the British administrators to record some of them, motivated to assist their easy administration in ensuring to see a steady revenue flow for their treasury. In such efforts undertaken, we have some sort of knowledge about the people and socio-economical conditions of the people living in the land. But these writings are observed to contain all 'limitations' due to the 'lack of true knowledge' on the matters, for the Westerners, who had to depend upon some people around them, who were considered to have some hold or importance in the society, in that particular period, to give information or new interpretations. Most of our historical writings are taking shape around the period from 16th to 19th century AD. Even geographical information is based on those periods. Such a record is made and published in the year, 1863 about the socio-economical and geographical conditions of Kerala, attempted by Lieutenants Ward and Conner. Their work, *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States* is very much reflecting these factors of 'influence' of certain social groups in diversifying facts to de-shape history, dynasty and even geography. The deviations in the basic facts are observed from his following comments:

> Tiruvancode, the ancient capital, and from which the principality takes its name, Colachel, a Seaport known in the early ages of commerce; there is here a Danish factory. - Trivataur and Tirunaundykarra are celebrated for their pagodas, the former on a picturesque winding of the Tamarapoorni. - Tirparuppu has also one near a cataract on the Codayaar. –Coolathooray, a palace and large Nair Town. - Tangaputnaum, a Seaport town on the embouchure of the Tamprapoorni; - near it is Pooaur, a similar depot on the Coast; small crafts are built at both places- Neyattengerry, a large Nair town with the unusual decorations of the pagoda and kotaram. -Villenjum, a Seaport, the site of Dutch factory at this place is still pointed out[44]

Apart from the mistakes in spelling the names of places, to suit the Western accent, these narrations try to mislead us towards many social contradictions also. For example, the places "Coolathooray" (Kuzhithurai – as is normally prounced by the local Tamils), and "Neyattengerry" (Neyyattinkarai), etc., are described to have a major population of Nairs whereas the real population of that community will not go more than 10 percent of the total population of that area where the major population, of the place, will go to about 70 percentage to another community called the *Santors* (Nadars). As a matter of fact, it is on these factors of majority in population of the Nadars who are basically an ancient Tamil community that the region was annextured with the Tamil State of Madras during the State re-organisation period in 1956. Historians who do not know these facts may very well accept that the people responsible for the cultural growth or fall of the region were Nairs instead of the *Santors*. The same mistake was done to Indian history by the *Historical Society of Bengal*, founded by

[44] *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States*, vol I, Lieutenant Ward and Conner, p,10.

the East India Company –the Britishers. The same phenomenon is applicable to the times of St. Thomas too to confirm whether there were any Nambutiris at that particular period in Kerala.

Masterly Maindan writes:

> The two major communities who thrived in this southern region of India were the *Santors* (Nadans) and the *Araiyar* (Fishermen community). Even many centuries before Christ, Tamils migrated to places like Palestine, Syria, etc. They were first called Palm-Asians, which term, slowly, has been transformed as Phoenicians. The ancient place, 'Ur' was one among the many regions where they had settled in the remote past. Even today, they are found in many numbers in places like Israel, Syria, Lebanon, etc. These people take pride to accept that they had migrated from the southern parts of India. During the times of the visit of St Thomas, most of the people here at Thackaley were Jains. Many Jains had accepted Christianity. One of the prominent Jain monks who had accepted Christianity and became a priest was Paranjothiyar.
>
> There is no wonder that a good relation has been maintained among these Asian countries because, these *Chera* (Kerala) people were already there in the birthplace of Jesus Christ, which prompted them to come back to visit the early ancestral groups, later. Periyayi Soosa, a Phoenician historian wrote that one of the three kings who visited the Baby Jesus at Bethlehem was a *Chera* Perumal (king)... In the earlier times the whole Christian Dominion of the Southern India was under the control of Goa. In 1577 AD, these southern regions have come under Cochin Diocese and in 1886 AD; all the Kanniyakumari regions have come under the Quilon Diocese[45]

[45] *Thackalay Panikan Varalaaru* (an article) by Masterly Maindan written in 1997 – Church History of Thackaley.

We should not think that Kerala, culturally, was a separate country from the Tamils. The period marked had only Tamil as their language through out these Tamil or *Malaiaalam* (*Malai Naadu*) regions. Even today, the only ancient people who continue to follow these three religions (Hindu, Christian, Islam or other like Jainism, etc., are the *Santors,* an ancient tribe of the regions with its numerous branches spread over India. About them it is said that the father may conduct pooja for his family deity, the *Kaali,* in one of the family rooms, one son to light candles for his deity, the St. Mary, in another room, and in yet another room, another brother might worship Allah, or the Jain *Yekshini,* in another corner of the house. There are even Muslim colonies of these converts from *Santor* classes living in Tamilnadu and Kerala.

T.K.Velu Pillai writes:

> The propagation of faith was regarded as sacred duty by all the people who came under its sway, for, "Jesus came and spoke unto them saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all Nations baptising them in the name of the Father and His Son and of the Holy Ghost". Of these disciples of the Lord who proceeded in different directions to preach the Gospel, one, the apostle Thomas, visited Malabar and pursued his ministration. The Malabar Christians believe the visit of St. Thomas to be a historical verity, title to the undisputed ancient character of their Church [46].

Further, the same author, T.K.Velupillai, writes about the conversion of the rulers of the country of Kerala to Islamic religion as below:

> Alberni who was familiar with this part of India mentions Quilon. Mr.Logan alludes to a traditional account of the conversion the last

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[46] *State Manual of Travancore,* T.K.Velu Pillai, p, 651.

> Cheraman Perumal to Islam...He then embarked secretly in a vessel prepared for him along with the Sheik and his companions, and they proceeded to Pantalayani Kollam. From there he sailed to Sahr where he assumed the name Abdul Rehiman Samoori and stayed there for a considerable time. It is said that he projected a missionary enterprise to convert his erstwhile subjects in Malabar. But he was taken away from the field of ambition by the hand of death. However, he is said to have charged Malik Ibn Dinar, his two sons and other relations with the tasks so dear to his heart. He also gave credentials to certain princes and nobles in Malabar directing them to grant permission to the bearers to build Mosques and propagate the faith...Mosques were erected, so the account goes, at Kottunnallur, Quilon, Madai, Vakanur, Mykalath, Cassarcode, Cheruvapattanam and Pantalayini. This is said to have taken place in 843 AD [47].

Here, the period mentioned does not suit the "last Cheraman Perumal" because we have evidence in history that the dynasty of Cheraman Perumal have thrived much later to this period in the Southern parts and there are many stories, artificial and real, written about them. However, the land-records made over to this dynasty prove that their descendants like 'Kulasekhara Perumal, Ponnanintha Perumal (Karuppan), John Jagadish Aiya, etc., had existed as late as the 20th century AD [48]. The Perumals were the descendants of the early rulers of the *Santor* tribes of the Tamils. Trippapur (*Thiruppappu*) is one of the branches among them. This is classified in the All India Census Report of 1901 as belonging to the Shannar (the corrupted word for the pure Tamil word *Santor*) or 'Nata' tribe. The factors, about their

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[47] *Travancore State Manual*, T.K.Velu Pillai, p, 806-807.

[48] *Kanniyakumari - Aspects and Architects*, M.Immanuel, refer to p. 74 -90.

relationship with the Trippapur dynasty, are elaborately discussed in the book, *The Dravidian Lineages –the Nadars Through the Ages*, 2002, by M.Immanuel.

The term *Santor*, although not found abundantly in inscriptions, it is available in different forms scattered over the Tamil literature and history. The great Tamil poet, Thiruvalluvar, had abundantly used it applied to a particular class of society because of their specialised character of sense of justice and other characters of virtues. This has been pointed out by the historian, Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla, of Kerala. As a matter of fact, the royal branch of Kerala, *Trippapur* (a Sanskritised form of Tamil, *Thiru Paappu* –Godly are) belongs to this group of *Santors*. There are thirty-nine branches specified under this branch. But historical analysis of the roots of this branch over a period of about 3000 to 5000 years, shows that this group has more than 250 branches all over India, as has been pointed in the book, *The Dravidian Lineages*...The originator of the Jainism, Saint Mahaviira is said to be from the 'Nata' (Nada) or *Jnatrika* clan of *Lichchavi* tribe. The *Manas, Vishnukundins, Vidyadharins, Sri-Maras, Talakas, Pishtapurins, Adityas, Talavakaras, Gautamas, Vrishnis, Yadavas, Mallas or Tvashitris, Idigas, Gauds*...etc are some of them [49].

Unfortunately, this tribe is presently segregated as backward class, like almost all the ex-ruling classes of India, through the new politicisation of Aryan instruments. Their royal folds are almost surrendered to the *Nambutiri* politics of Kerala. Anthropologically these *Santor* or Nata tribes are categorised as Austroloids. But presently a lot of mixing can be observed as it is seen in any classes of the Age. Due to the over enthusiasm shown by the Aryan writers, especially the Brahmanical classes, duly supported by their allies, the history

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[49] Refer to Appendix III in *The Dravidian Lineages*...M.Immanuel, p. 359.

Fig. 1



"Ara-Palli" (In all probability, the 'First Church') constructed by St. Thomas, at Thiruvithamcode. Near the Church, it is said that the bodies of two of the early converts of the *Santors* were buried. The recent booklet, "*Ara-Palli*", released in 2008, by Saint Mary's Orthodox Church, in Malayalam, refers to the family of early royal descendants (of Amalagiri), the claimants of the famous *Viiraraghava Pattayam* (p,6). Now the Church is with the Syrian Church of Kerala and is renovated.

Fig. 2



The painting of icons depicted in the *Vasantha Mandapam* of Eraniyel palace in Kanyakunmari district, now in its ruins (photo taken on 16.9.2004).

Fig. 3



The breath-taking, eye-soothing, wonderful and colourful wooden depictions, painted in the ancient traditional ways, in the roof-frames of the *Vasantha Mandapam* of the famous Eraniyel Palace in Kanyakumari district. Now in its decayed ruins (photo by CHLIRO-India, 2004).

Fig. 4



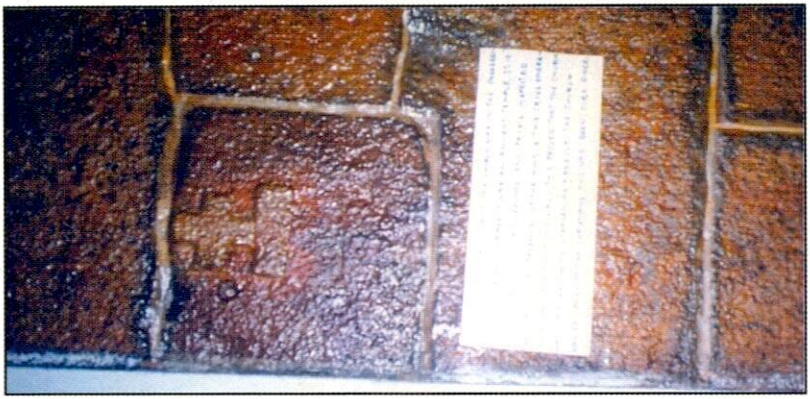
Portrait of Sri John Jagadish Aiyya, an early Convert from the Cheraman Perumal dynasty and the claimant heir of the Eraniyel Palace, is being opened by Sociologists and historians on 21.9.2008, on His 67th Memorial Day of demise, at His 94th year. He was a descendant of *Eraniyel Chathankara Desathu Uraali Vilagathu Aaru Muttram Konda Kannattivilagathu Thekke Puthan Viittil* Niithiyudayan Gunamudayan family, a descendant of King, Udaya Martanda Kulasekhara Perumal (1798-1810) of Travancore. The King was kidnapped and murdered.

Fig. 5



Depiction of materials for 'Holy Communion', Angels, etc, at "Ara-Palli".

Fig. 6



The symbol of 'Cross' and other marks found depicted on the Stone-beams of "Ara-Palli" at Thiruvithamcode (photo taken in 2002)

Fig. 7



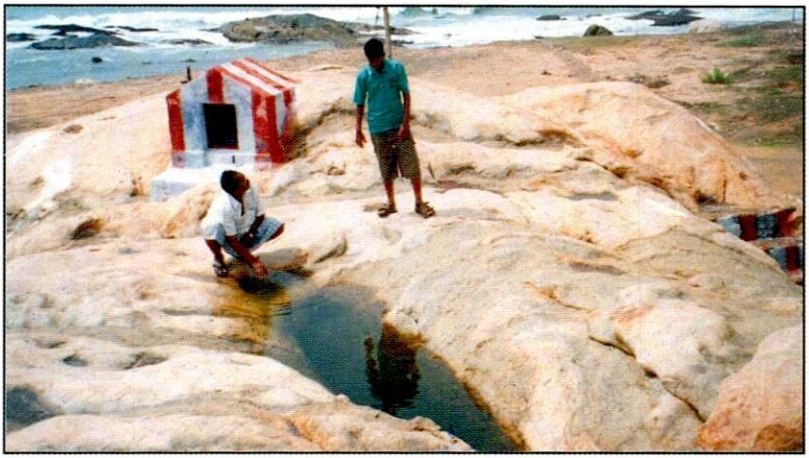
The big Stone-Couch, cut from a single piece of marble granite to decorate the Vasantha Mandapam –Sleeping Chamber- of the Cheraman Perumal Kings of early Venadu, at Eraniyel Palace, in Kanyakumari district. The king was kidnapped from here and a new myth was created that the Perumal was bodily lifted to heaven by God. Many deaths like these have occurred to the Kshatriya Nadans of earlier times, before their fall.

Fig. 8



The "Paraloka Yesu Nathar Koil" otherwise called "Periya Azhagiya Nayagi Annai Koil" at Thiruvithamcode, a little away from *Ara-Palli,* had been maintained by the early Royal Family of *Venadu. "Periya Azhagaiya Nayagi"* is a term applied to the 'Naden' Families in this locality. There is underground 'Tunnel' connecting this Church & the Royal Palaces. Its Cross, symbols of Lion and *Garuda*, etc, have been destroyed few years ago. Church is being renovated now.

Fig. 9



A sweet water spring on the shore, supposed to have been used by St. Thomas, at Chinna Muttom, in Kanyakumari.

Fig. 10



The "Foot Print" found on one of the high rocks of Matha Malai where St. Thomas had meditated when he was directing the construction of the "Ara-Palli", at Thiruvithamcode.

Fig. 11



A Statue made by the Tamilnadu government, to honour the Tamil *Santor* Grammarian 'Athencottu Asan' of 9th century BC, at his birth place, 'Athen Code'.

about this *Santor* or *Nata* (Nada) classes is disintegrating. Yet, there are ample scopes for a hard-working scholar to find out links of this *Nata* or *Trippapur* groups to connect them with the early rulers of Kerala and also with the rulers of India. Records tell us that, members of these royal rulers like *Cheral Imaya Varampan* had established his flag even at the foothills of the Himalayas. The King, Kalangaai Kanni Naar Mudi Cheral had his crown made of the smooth Palm-Fibre, a symbol of the Epic hero, Bhishmar, one of the greatest *Kalari Asans* of the world.

The oral tradition of the people of Kanniyakumari where the majority population is the *Santors* (Nadars) is that they were the rulers of the land during the times of the arrival of Saint Thomas, in the 52nd AD. These people had divided their country into many divisions of smaller units, above fifty-six in number, for administrative ease, each unit being controlled by a Chieftain or small king, under a greater emperor. Some of the branches of the *Santor* claim that they were the members or offshoots of the 'missing tribe' of Israel. The family of *Vidwan* Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi presents a list of sixty-one generations of royal family who had accepted Christianity, through the preaching of St. Thomas. The list starts as under:

King Udaya Santan Asan	– BC7	– 88 AD
Amalagiri Aten Asan	- 34	– 89 AD
Poraiyan Rayar Asan	- 67	– 97 AD

Kassiissa Yacobu Samiyar who is supposed to have written the book, *Yuda Thomassin Nadapadigal*, which the family used to recite during the festive days. The list goes up to the year 1886, followed by the year, 1945 [50].

In the year, 1948, a small booklet was released by Moran MAR Baselious Geevarghese Catholicos, from

[50] *Yesu Dharmathil Chera Arasu* –Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi, p. 34-36.

the Office of The Orthodox Syrian Church of the East, giving some claims and 'bits of history' of the Thiruvithamcode Church built by St. Thomas. The title of the booklet is *St. Mary's Syrian Church –Church Histoy*. There are lots of confusions in the notes made there, especially on the markings of years and dates, making complications in the Malayalam Era and Christian Era. There are some confusion in the interpretations of traders like *Tharisaikkar*, etc. However, it is worthwhile to gather some of the information given there for record. It says:

St. Thomas arrived in 52nd AD and established seven Churches at Kalayankara, near Kodungalloor, Paloor near Chavakkadu, Kottakayal near north Parur, Gothamangalam near Pallippuram, Niranam, Kurakenikollam, and Nilakkal. "The name of the Thiruvithamcode Church from the list of Churches established by St. Thomas in Kerala might have been invertently omitted by historians"[51]. "The descendants of those *Tharisayakkaranmar* or *Chevalier* who were opposed to the Crude religious practices of the '**Manikkavachakkar**' are the real inhabitants of the present day Thiruvithamcode...Among them 'Lok Natan Chettiyar' is a a known figure"[52]. Here the point to be noted is the 'oppression' at the instence of 'Manikkavachakar' who was a staunch opposer of Jainism, and who was responsible to kill 8000 jains on a single day, sent to the gallows. The point to be noted is most of the Jains were from the *Nadalwar* community and Mahavira himself was the "son of a Nada"[53]. *Chettikal* or the Chedis were an ancient term applied to the trading community including the *Nadalwars* who had titles as *Ainoottuvar* or as *Nanadesigal*. In the booklet the following description is given to the Church:

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[51] *St. Mary's Syrian Church*, from Parumala Seminary, 1948, p.13.

[52] The above booklet, p.14.

[53] *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol.II,p.413, K.M.Munshi, etc.

> The Church building was constructed in granite having ornamental works. Its walls are 2.5 feet thick, and has a dimention of 45 feet length and 16 feet width and are 10 feet high. The sculptural engravings on the Church building are at par with the Palace at Padmanabhapuram in quality and antiquity. The ancientness of the Church was proved by certain pictures hung on its walls, especially those of Jesus Christ, the Angels, St. Thomas the apostle and St. George, the Martyr. The paintings of the Sun, the Moon, and other heavenly bodies are monumental examples. There was the sacred pond for baptism and a pillar for holding water. The style of construction of Church has very similarity with that of the ancient temple construction prevalent in South Travancore[54]

Two things are to be noted here with specific interest. Almost all the Indian Hindu temples are constructed in the present pattern only after the 6th to 8th fentury AD and later. The St. Thomas Church at Thiruvithamcode may be said to be the example of the model of temple construction in the South in its 'Granite and Rock paving pattern'. Another thing to be noted is the antiquity of Padmanabhapuram palace is not remote as that of the *Ara Palli*, because the the former is very late as 14th or 15th century AD wheras the Church is of 1st century AD. For the ownership of Padmanabhapuram Palace, presently it is resting with a *Puthupparakkal* family of *Nadalwar* in a Court Case originated as NO.1420 at Kuzhithurai Court; another Case at Supreme Court, Delhi. Apart from the royal family at Trivandrum, there are twelve families of Thiruppappur Nadans are traced out, now staying in and around Thiruvithamcode and Padmanabhapuram of Kanyakumari district, out of the original 18 *(pathinettu Koottam- Thurrakkar)* families described in the Suchindrum inscriptions. Unless the history of the

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[54] *St. Mary's Syrian Church*, p.14

Nadalwars are inclulcated, the history of Kerala, and even the history of India cannot be straightened. Here it is worth mentioning of the Christain type of 'Gaurdian Angel', perhaps 'Muthapper' depicted in the Eraniyel Palace owned by John Jagadish Aiya[55], a descendant of Cheraman Perumal, the King, Udaya Martanda Kulasekhara Perumal of 1798-1810 AD.

The confusion made on the record of the years are "1123, and 1119" years of renovation of *Ara Palli* mentioned in the booklet. This should be Malayalam Era, equivalent to 1948 and 1944 AD. Unless the particular type of era is specified, it would be simple camouflage of history. But in the other side it tells about the antiquity: "It is noted that Thiruvithamcode was a flourishing commercial centre in the second century AD. From Ptolemy's writings we have enough proof to show that Thiruvithamcode was an important centre of business activities in those days"[56].

The booklet also states that "According to legends St. Thomas had brought a brand of believers to this place **from Mylapore** as immigrants. The *Venadu* King, who was benevolent to his subjects gifted 64 dwelling places and properties on either side of the "Thariya" streets"[57]. If this is true, then the argument that St. Thomas had first visited Mylapore before he came to Thiruvithamcode and established the first Church here (*Ara Plli*) then afterwards went to Cranganoor and had built up all the other seven Churches in those places, later came back to Thiruvithamcode again and from here went back to Mylapore where he met his martyrdom becomes very evident. The notes also say that it was in the year 1119 ME (1944 AD), 1st of *Tulam* that the late H.H.Geevarghese II Cathalicos had sent one representative to Thiruvithamcode to claim the Church which had many acres of landed property of

[55] Note- Now under litigation.
[56] *St. Mary's Church*, p.15.
[57] *St. May's Church*, p.17.

which only 21 cents had remained at that time. This period was a very critical period for the *Santors* whose history had been down-trodden because of greater Aryanisation and Malayalisation by a mixed government, supported by Nambutiris and other allied groups. However, *Vidwan* Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi (Nadalwar) claims that two of his ancestors, "Yacob Kasseessa" (Kassiissa Yacobu Samiyar), and his brother (two of the erly converts from the royal family), were buried at the site of the *Ara Palli*, at Thiruvithamcode. They had relations at Qyuilon also. Aryanisation had curbed the early facts of history when re-written around 16th to 19th century AD by authors of vested interest, which is not yet been remedied.

The booklet also says that the "Tharissayakkar" who were having the knowledge of the "Power of alchemy" had been honoured by the King of *Venadu*. This power of alchemy was a secret thing to convert metals into gold, resting with the *Siddha Occults* akin to the *Nadalwars – Santors*, mentioned in the Text of the History of Nadars in the Palm-leaf Text, *Valamkaimaalai*. Apart from this, the booklet mentions of some Vellalar or Pillais and Chettis. In 1944, the land was with some of the local people, and one of the Parish authorities claims that the original documents were misappropriated and finally lost or destroyed. Such things mar the truthful history, to determine the families or people concerened with the real history. Anyway, it is our duty to sort out such bits of information and connect them together to arrive at the final conclusion

Accounting for the above facts, it could be thought that there should be some reasons to believe 'a Perfect Plan of Jesus Christ' to bring the members of the 'Lost Sheep" including the *Santor* tribe, who were later known as *Shanan, Nadan, Asans, Trippapur,* and in various 250 other names in India and abroad, to the 'One Body' of Christ, for which he was born to this world. It is seen that the great plan of the Living God is accomplished in various stages by converting these members to the fold of the Church.

8 Mana Viira Valanaadu

Conversion of Kandappa Rasa

It is said that during this period (52-57 AD), one Chieftain, named Kandappa-Rasa (worshipper of Tamil god *Murugan*), under the Pandya king, heard about St Thomas and went to meet him at Thiruvithancodu, to seek help from him to cure the illness of his wife and daughter who were possessed by evil spirits. Finally they were cured and the Chieftain was baptized and had accepted a new Persian name, 'Saphor' which is sometimes written as 'Saipur' in Tamil. The royal family of Cochin also reports such miraculous healings by St Thomas. The conversion of Saphor is described by Alex Cruz Muthaiah in *Mana Viira Valanaadu.*

Mana Viira Valanadu

On the south of the Western Ghats, adjacent to the Mahendra Giri, from the Hills called 'Nambimalai' originates the small river *Nattaaru.* It pastures the Vaikunda Naadu, flowing through Eruvaadi, Kanni Naadu, it enriches the Muttakkulam. It is called *Naattaaru,* because it is considered as the river of the people, fulfilling their needs. It runs towards the east and flows into the Bay of Bengal, near Thiruchendur. There existed one great country called Mana Viira Valanaadu. It was an offshoot of the Main Tamil *Pandyas.* It was bounded on the north by the river, Porunai (*Paruni Aaru*), and in the south, by the river, *Nattaru.*

In the early Inscriptions also this kingdom, more correctly, these sets of little kingdoms, ruled by ten major Chieftains, are described. One

Pillar of Inscription of 1639 AD, found in the forests of Muthukrishnapuram of Kuthira Mozhi village, of Thiruchendur division, says about this Mana Viira Valanaadu. An inscription found on the south wall of Chenpagaraman Mandap of Thaanumalaya Perumal temple at Susiindram, tells about this country [58]. In the inscription, King, Mootha Thiruvati Aditya Varma says:

On the east of the streamlet, Pantri Vaaikaal, south of the river Vaipparu, west of the Seas, and on the east of this Stone Pillar, lays the '*Amuda Kula Valanaadu, Maana Viira Valanaadu*...This inscription indicates division of this country on the south of the river Thambraparni, as the *Amudakula Valanaadu* and the regions extending the plains of the river as *Mana Viira Valanaadu'*. This kingdom consisted of, according to the Thiruchendur Inscription of 1639 AD, ten divisions (*Naadu*) each ruled by a Chieftain (*Kurru Nila Mannan*). A Temple Inscription of the 13th century AD found in the Susiindram Dwaraka Krishnan Koil, indicates that there were Eighteen Divisions, ruled by Eighteen Nadans. The earlier inscriptions of 1228, 1229, 1231 AD, all tell the same Eighteen Divisions ruled by Eighteen *Nadalvans* or Nadans [59]

There are oral traditions supported by folk songs like local *Vill-paattu* (Bow-Songs) to substantiate these facts. According to it, five of the important rulers of the ten Chieftains of the southern regions are mentioned. They are, Maanaachiya Nadan, Chinna Maadan Nadan, Valli Kutty Nadan, Kulasekhara Nadan, and Chokkan Thiruppappu Nadan. They were from the early Pandya dynasty installed as Chieftains. Among these was one Christian King –Chieftain (*Kuru*

[58] Inscription NO.67/1092 of *Travancore Archaeological series*, (Regional Reg. NO.32).

[59] Quoted in *Mana Viira Valanaadu* by Alex C.Muthaiah, 1995.p. 84-87.

Nila Mannan). He was King, Ahathukkuthavi. He had constructed the Church of St. Ahatha. But this country is seen disintegrated by the end of 18th century AD, consequent to the Muslim supremacy of the Khan-rule[60].

In the southwest boundaries of this kingdom, some remains are there of a fort which existed from the *Sangam* period around 200 BC to 100 AD. There are certain place-names still known as *Kottai Vilai* (Fort-Land). These areas were under the constant interaction of the great trio-kingdoms, the *Chera, Chola* and *Pandyas*. Around the mid of the first century AD, this part of the Mana Viira Valanaadu was ruled by one scion of the Pandya king, called Kanthapparasa. He is said to be one of the early Christians influenced by the miracles performed by St Thomas, when the Saint was around the area of Thiruvithamcodu.

> It is said that Kandappa Rasa's wife and his daughter were often troubled by evil spirits and were suffering beyond any measures of cure. The Ministers who had heard about the Saint, advised the Rasa to visit the Saint. Encouraged by the priests and the ministers, the Chieftain was determined to call St Thomas to his Courts. So, according to the local tradition, one new Bullock Cart was made, to start a new journey for an auspicious purpose. People were sent to meet St Thomas at Thiruvithamcodu (Thiru Vaazhumcodu). The matter was explained to the Saint. Thinking that God has given him a new field for Gospel work, St Thomas agreed to go with them and started the journey to Mana Viira Valanaadu. The journey was through thick forests and hilly tracts through *Salai, Matom,* through places like, Chungan kadai, Kaattadi Malai, Kannu Pothai and the Thovalai passes. Knowing the purpose of the visit of the Saint,

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[60] *Maana Viira Valanaadu,* Alex Cruz Muthaiah, p.94.

one notorious spirit from the valley of the Devils came against the way of the Saint preventing him to continue his mission. St Thomas cursed the Devil in the name of Jesus and commanded it to stand still as a watch dog till his return. The spirit had to obey and, it is said that people still hear some days, the quarry of the spirit, 'when will Thoma return'? There is a Stone Pillar with certain Inscription on it giving details of the borders of land. Consequently a temple was erected on the place where the Stone Pillar stood, and now it is being worshiped as a temple of *Essakki Maadan* by the Hindus [61]

Alex Cruz Muthaiah continues:

St Thomas continued his journey along with his hosts and reached the palace of the Chieftain (*Kurunila Mannan).* Before the arrival of the Saint, the mother and daughter had fainted and fallen motionless like two dead bodies. The Saint went nearby and rebuked the evil spirits in them and healed the victims. Experiencing the new wonders, the king (*Chittarasan*), Kandapparasa of Mana kingdom has become a disciple of St Thomas and ordered his countrymen to follow this wonderful God of St Thomas. The king accepted a new name, 'Saphor' and got himself baptized by the Saint. This oral tradition sung by locals as songs and recitals during auspicious days, had been recorded by V.C.George, in his book, *Punitha Thomayarathu Appostalathuvamum Vedasadthiyamum*, 6th Chapter, pp, 44-54 [62].

One thing to be noted here is that the 'Mana' Kingdoms (*Mana Viira Valanaadu*) are seen thriving in Orissa and even in the still northern parts of India. This is explained in the book, *The Dravidian Lineages-The Nadars Through the Ages.* The author says

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[61] Alex,C. Muthaiah, same book, 132-133.

[62] Alex C.Muthaiah, Quoted in *Mana Viira Valanadu,* 134-135.

> The Mana dynasties of Nadars are said to have spread out from South to North through Deccan and Orissa. Even today, the colour, simplicity, bravery of Nadars, and the people of Deccan and Orissa stay witness to each other. Regarding the origin of the Manas it is said:
>
> That three brothers, Udaya Mana, Sridhanta Mana, and Aditya Mana were all merchants, and went on business from Ayodhya to Tambralipti. On their return they stayed in one village, (Hazaribah) and Udaya Mana became the ruler, with the favour of king Adisimha of Magadha...In the last quarter of the sixth century AD, a Mana dynasty identical with the above, was ruling over the greater part of Orissa[63].

"Talking on the geographical history of Ayodhya, we observe that there is a place with the same name in Salem District of Tamilnadu which was part of the early *Chera* or Aye country of ancient times" (M.Immanuel, 2002.119) The relation between the Manas, the Pandyas and the other major dynasties of India is explained in the book, *The Dravidian Lineages*...by M. Immanuel (2002, 113, 119, 198, etc.).

Family traditions hold that the members of the family of Alex Cruz M. are the descendants of Kandappa Rasa, early convert of St Thomas. They and their *Uravinmurai* (blood-relations) are still Catholic Christians.

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[63] *History and Culture of Indian People*, K.M. Munshi, etc., vol. III, p.92

9 Veeraraghava Pattayam & Tharissa Palli Ssassanam

There are three important documents of Copper Plates, written in *Vattezhuthu*, of Tamil character, connected to the Christian Churches of Kerala. Two of these documents belong to the Syrian Church at Kottayam. These Grants are issued by king Sthanu Ravi. This title *Sthanu*, in local Tamil is written as *Thanu, Thanuvan, Nanu*, etc., as found used by one of the early Christian converts from the family of *Sthanu Malayan Thiruppapu* family of *Santors* (Nadans), in Kanniyakumari District. The third one belongs to one particular family called *Moovidathumercheri Illam (Moovidathu Mer Cheri Illam* –meaning, the superior among the three top ranking *illams* or houses). According to local traditions and the census report of early 1901 AD, *Illam* is a sub-division among the 39 main branches of *Natan* or *Santor* tribe, to which belongs the royal branch of *Trippapur* offshoot, the ruling dynasty of Kerala. The antiquity of *Santor* is time immemorial.

It was Dr. Gundert who had first commented about these records of Grants. These rare records were subjected for many thefts, hidings, and political handlings among the early rulers, the Portuguese, the British and even the later rulers of *Venadu*. These plates bring to light social groups like *Vannan, Vellalar, Ilavar, Santor, Nattar, Maha-Nattar,* etc.

Many variations, confusions, misreadings, etc., have been observed in the interpretations of many of the words found in the Plates. For example: *Talaikkanam, enikanam, menipon, Santan Mattu polippon, Madil-Nayan, Ilakaiyar, Vannan, Kaanam,* etc, are worth examining.

One thing that the readers are to observe is that in most of the inscriptions, copper-plates or the edicts, the language used in them are the language of the particular Tamil handled in Vilavancodu (ancient Villavan-Codu, the originators of the *Chera* kingdoms), like the usage of words such as *Pendaatti, Meni, Attikoduppu, Attivaippu,* etc.

Locally, the word, *Kaanam* has two meanings; one is the cereal called *Kaanam*, used for feeding the horse. The other meaning is tax. Depending upon this term, there is a branch of *Santors* known by the name, *Kaana* or *Kana* (probably the tax-collector). He is one among the thirty-nine branches of earlier *Natan* tribe. Another word *Kani-kaanam* is used for the best fruit (yield) presented to the authority on the auspicious day in the month of *Chithirai.* Another word, *Kuzhi-Kaanam* is a term used in connection with the transaction of land for lease when the man who takes the land for cultivation on lease, if he plants any trees on the land, the owner of the land has to pay an amount of compensation to the cultivator, is called *Kuzhi-kkanam.* This amount is adjusted or paid back when the period of lease is terminated and the land returned to the owner. Another meaning for the word is a measure; *Kaani-Nilam* means, the measure of land area covered by a measure of one *maraikkal* seed sowed. This is the lowest unit *(Kaani-Nilam)* of land possessed by any agriculturist. The word *Talai-kaanam* is used to indicate the tax implied upon any adult member fit for earning in the house. But sometimes, this is misinterpreted as the tax for 'fetters' pertaining to Palm tree.

The word very regrettably misinterpreted is *Santan maatu meni pon.* This is a typical example of a word which tells us the lack of proper information about the earlier history and linguistic culture of the top-ranking tribes of early Kerala, to the interpreters. *'Santan'*, like *"Ilava"*, was the highly revered community of early *Chera* country. *" Maatu"* is a comparison for

quality. *"Meni"* is the grade of quality. *"Pon"* is gold. A Palm-leaf Text, *Valamkaimaalai* of ancient times, tells us that the *'Santor'* had printed gold coins and those were of the best quality; 100 *'Santor*-Coin' (*Shanar Cash*) was equivalent to 132 *"Puli-Varahan"* of the Marattahs and one *'Santor-Cash'* was equivalent to Rs.5.2 of those days, in 1851[64]. This reveals that the *Chanar-Cash* (*Santor-Cash*) was valid more than the Marattahs' *"Puli-Varahan"*. It is to be remembered that the interpretations to these Copper plates and grants were given at a different period, during the British reign, when the social standings were mostly reversed, with many of the high ranks of societies, of earlier times, were pulled down and many of the lower ranks been brought up by the new Aryan groups who had taken possession of Kerala, in a very later stage. The interpreters of the Plates have taken only the contemporary social groups into account contrary to the ranks existed earlier.

Another word is *Ilakaiyar.* This is interpreted by Dr.Gundert, as "a low caste men or slaves of Simhala" (T.A.Gopinatha Rao- 1908, 63). Certainly the earlier history of these people, the *Santors* and *Ilavar* reveals that they were the representatives of the top ranking social groups of *Valamkai* and *Idamkai* (Right-Hands & Left-Hands) of ancient times. These factors are totally neglected by the interpreters.

Another word is *"Madil Nayan"*. This word has been accepted by the present interpreters, as "Nair", and is given status as to the ranks of the *Nambutiri.* This is an example that the interpreters have taken the contemporary ranks of 19th century AD to apply to all the texts pertaining even to the remote past of about 1500 years ago. *"Madil"* (*Mathil"*) is a compound-wall or can be accepted as a fort. Here, *"Nayan"* is simply the man 'in-charge' of the fort, watching the fort, i.e., a sentry. It could mean anybody who holds that post. 'Nair'

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[64] *Records of Saraswathi Mahal, Marattahs*

is a breed coming later, born to the *Nambutiris* in '*Sudra*' women, around 15th century AD or a little later.

"Polippon" is another confusing word for those who do not know the traditions of the early *Santors*. T.A.Gopinatha Rao confesses:

I am unable to understand the exact meaning of this term. *"Poli"* in the language of inscriptions is the same as *Palisai*, interest. Upon what this interest-gold was levied, is not clear[65].

According to the local traditions of the Tamils *"Polivu"* among the high-ranking *Santors*, is the 'Gifts' that the guests offer to the host on ceremonial or auspicious occasions, especially on marriages, house-warming, etc. Locally, *Polivu* also has the meaning of harvest or 'collection'. The term *"Mahamai"* or *"Mahimai"* is the equivalent word used in the Tamil country. This word is defined by social scientists as 'a gift, given out of respects, to the king or ruler, without any compulsion' among the *"Uravinmurai"* (kindred people). When this 'free-gift' is made 'compulsory' it becomes a 'tax'.

About *Thiyam Aluvan* Gopinatha Rao says:

> The exact meaning of this word is not clear; it is a compound of *Tiyam* and *Aluvan*. This word Tiyam Aluvan should therefore mean the ruler or the head of the Thiyars in the locality. It is similar to *Nadu-alvan*[66], the chief officer of a *Nadu* or a district. The headmen of each community are known on the east coast as the *Nattar* or *Maha-Nattar*[67]

According to Elamkulam, *Aluvar* (Alvars) had the title *Rajasekharas*

There are many such misconceptions in reading, interpreting, and presenting the real facts of

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[65] *Travancore Archaeological Series* vol.. II, III, 1908, p.64.

[66] *Travancore Archaeological Series*, vol II, III, Gopinatha Rao, p. 65.

[67] *Kerala Charithrathile Iruladanja Edugal*, Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla *1953, p.16.*

inscriptions. These types of interpretations can mislead facts, mislead history, and misconceive societies. Hence to find the truth about history of such periods of antiquity like the coming of St Thomas, need a detailed study to the roots of history, communities and languages, customs, traditions and of so many such other factors.

The *Veeraraghavapattayam* - Copper Plate

This is a plate, 14 inches by 4 inches of size, issued by Veera Raghava Chakravarty, of the lines of Veera Kerala Chakravarthy, to one merchant, Iravi Kortan, around 1028 AD. But there is difference of opinions regarding the date of issue. Some are of the opinion that it was issued on 230 AD, some say on 774 AD, 1320 AD, etc. (C.V.Cheriyan, 1973, 116-118). The nature of the grant is somewhat like the privileges enjoyed by the local *Santors.*

The local tradition here is that this Grant was issued to a local merchant from the ancestral family of *Santra Iravi Kotravan Asan, Santra Vaduga Asan* of Manali. *Santra Menmiga Kasiisa Yacob, Santra Manmiiga Kassisa Andreyus* were the royal members converted at the instance of St Thomas. After baptising these first royal members, St Thomas went to Malayattur, Kodungallur, etc, in the northern Kerala. It is believed that the bodies of the above two first converts are buried at the site of the Church established by St Thomas at Thiruvithamcodu. This is claimed so by Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi, of Manali, which is hardly four kilometres away from the Church established by the Saint, at Thiruvithamcodu. They have a family record of sixty-one generations, ending with Amalagiri Antonimuthu, S/o Amalagiri Pithalis-IX, S/o Packiyanathan Annavi, S/o Amalagiri Thiruppapu Annavi, S/o Innassi Annavi, S/o Mariya Mallan Mayakutty Annavi, etc[68]

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[68] *Yesu Dharmathil Chera Arasa Kulam*-2004, Amalagiri,P.A,p. 34-36.

Near Manali, there is a place called *Thomayar Thottam* (Garden of St Thomas), even today, under this family. The names of neighbouring places such as *Venadu, Odanadu, Valluvanadu,* Anjuvannam etc., mentioned in the *Veeraraghavapattayam* also help us to vouch for this location. These versions are further confirmed by Amalagiri P. Anthonimuthu in *Yesu Darmathil Chera Arasar Kula*m (The *Chera* Royal Family in Christian Religion)[69]. One thing we have to bear in mind is that the Grant is given to a merchant, Iravi Korthan. Here, the word, or title, 'Iravi' is very much connected to the royal family of Kerala. Hence it is imperative that the Grant was issued to a member of the royal family among the *Santors* who were engaged in inter-continental trade, which is evident from the details given by the early historian, Herodotus. It is a matter of extreme relief to note that the authenticity of the subject being acknowledged by a report released by St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Thiruvithamcode that the ancestors of Amalagiri family were the recepients of the Viira Raghava Pattayam. (*Ara-Palli*, P,6-Preface)

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[69] Pp. 34-40, 80-81.

10 The 52 AD, and the Question of *Nambutiris* in Kerala

The history of Kerala around 52nd AD is totally covered under darkness. The dynastical record kept in the royal Palace-Museum at Thiruvananthapuram, the later capital of Kerala, starts only from the 9th century AD, a period shrouded with myth and mystery in history. According to this record, the first King of Venadu was Ayyan Thiruvadi, (Ayyanadigal Thiruvadi). He ruled from c870-890 AD. Generally, it is believed that the rulers of Kerala, especially the *Ayyanadi* Tiruvadigal have originated from a people called *Vaanavan* (Heavenly origin or, otherwise interpreted as people of upper-land). But, when compared to the antiquity of Kerala, this period is only a very later one. In the Indian Epics like *The Mahabharata* we find that the kings of Kerala are very active in distributing meals to the soldiers of *Mahabharata*-war. This people, or, tribe of *Vaanavan* can be thought to be the people who had returned to this land from an upper land, who originally had spread from the Lamurian Continent, passed through the Gangatic regions towards the Middle east and now returned to their original kinsmen in India. There might have been many such upward and downward migrations in the course of the history of about 30000 to 60000 years or more. There are so many references given, scattered in history and literature, about the lively existence of this very ancient *Chera* country, which had a close contact with the Middle East and many other parts of the World Nations. Then, where had the whole history of this great Nation of antiquity been vanished? A more serious research is required to go to the roots.

Biblical history reveals that around 612 B.C., the people of Southern Jewdeya were captured along with

their priestly Levite brothers. The northern Samaria was already lost for the Jewish community even before 722 BC. The whereabouts of the lost tribes of the Israelites are not clearly mentioned in the Bible or in the history. It is the opinion of Panayan Johnson that the so-called *Vaanavans* could be one of the lost tribes of the Jews[70] who had come to their ancestral home of India, seeking their kinsmen. We do not know the clear history of the chosen people of God, especially, the *Panayans* or King-Priests or the Levites who had ruled in the Tamil country with the Fish as their insignia. But, one copper plate, however, indicates some clue about the spread or assimilation of these *Panayans* (who are of the great Lunaar dynasty). The Plate says:

> The Pandya Parameswara lineage is that which had churned the vast Bay of Bengal, and learnt Tamil from the great Sage Agastya by offering many homage of honours, and depicted the insignia of Fish on the great Himalayas and, he is the one from the lineage, who had diverted the course of the Seas and had captured the crown of Indra himself and was born in the Lunar dynasty [71].

Scrutiny of history which is traceable even from the 9th century AD reveals some facts or links with the ancient tribes of Tamils with the ruling Dynasty of the *Cheras*. We are also able to ascertain some mixing up of tribes with the root-dynasty, in certain periods of time, especially in the later periods. From the period when the presence of *Nambutiris* are noticed on the scene, chopping up of the original dynastic roots; adapting to a sort of 'mixing of races' to the advantage of an 'Aryan' administration is observed to have

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[70] Panayan S.Johnson, p.74,75.

[71] *The Sivakasi Cheppedu of Viirapandyan* –Extract taken and translated into English, from Panayan Johnson,2008, p.75.

developed and a philosophy of 'separation', more correctly, a philosophy of 'isolation' of many of the 'Virgin Royal Families' had taken place among the Thiruppapur roots of the *Santors*. Many original roots were expelled from the royal folds. Through this tactics, many of the roots like the *Santors, Ilavas, Illoms, Villavas, Bhants, Kana, (Gana), Idiga, Kalal, Poojari,* etc., were almost detached from the Royal Links of the 'Ruling' Families 'sponsored' by the Nambutiri groups, in the later periods.

In order to know, how it was done, we need to study the special characteristics of the *Nambutiris*. But this would be a much-specialised study, which is out of place in this present context. But, the study about the origin and prominence of the period of *Nambutiris* in Kerala is very essential to know about the history of early Christianity, which was prompted by the Saint Thomas. This becomes more important because, a huge amount of myth is corroborated with St Thomas and the conversion of *Nambutiris* to Christianity in Kerala. *Nambutiris* were very rich in learning; they were rich in the practices of mysticism and magic of *Tantric* occults. But all these knowledge they kept within themselves and used for the purpose of their own selfish material growth and to exterminate their Rivals.

There is a common notion, artificially created by the modern historians that hereditarily the Kerala dynasty had been following the pattern of matrilineal system of ascendancy of throne from time immemorial. At least, that is the kind of impression that has been created by many of the modern historians after the 20th century AD. But one of the very prominent historians of Kerala, a scholar thorough with ancient literature of Tamil and Sanskrit, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai is of the opinion that the origin of the matrilineal system has come only after 10th century AD[72]. But, a

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[72] *Kerala Charithrathile Iruladanja Edugal*, 1953, Elamkulam, p. 17

very strict scrutiny of analytical history of Kerala will reveal that the matriarchal system of the throne in Kerala had come still much later, somewhere around 15th or 17th century AD, when a fit member was not easily found in the patriarchal members within the royal family[73]. Elamkulam says that even up to the 11th century AD, the Tamil *Pandyas* and the Cholas had matrimonial alliances in the country. There are many incidents of history that reveal that the matrimonial alliances between the Kerala rulers and the *Pandyas* continued even up to 18th century AD.

According to the historian Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, the prominence of *Nambutiris*, in Kerala, was attained only after the 10th century AD. He further clarifies:

It is difficult to find out what happened in the 7th and 8th century AD, in Kerala. A big group of Brahmins entered into Kerala, through *Tulu-nadu*, for propagating their ideologies and methods of administration here. They, along with the Hindus, were engaged in exterminating the remaining Buddhists and Jains throughout India, during this period. It was, in fact, a 'live or die battle' between these two groups. For this purpose, they had the support of certain kings who had been promoted to the status of *Kshatriyas*, by the Brahmins. In the pretext of Buddhist Sages, they (Brahmins) entered into the group and created confusions by implementing objectionable principles in Buddhism and Jainism to create hatred and fear among its members about their own religion.

They were very learned *Pandits*. We understand from the Tamil literature of those periods that even by the end of the 6th century AD, these new entrants had started to persecute the followers of Buddhism and Jainism, by plucking out the teeth of the heroes who were reluctant to accept the newly imposed *Chathurvarna* System (System of Four-Castes). They

[73] *Kerala Society Papers 1 to10, 11 series.*

also destroyed the Buddha, Jaina *Viharas*, and the Idols installed therein in the *Viharas*. It can be inferred that by the 8th century AD, they were successful in destroying the Buddhists from the land. The collections of broken and defected Buddhist and Jaina Idols, recovered in the country are mostly of the 7th and 8th century AD. These destroyers –the Aryans, had entered from Telugu and Kannada regions that had hated the Buddhism and Jainism...Prabhakara and Sankara were the two notorious individuals from Kerala who had dedicated their whole life to see the total extermination of Buddhism and Jainism in the land [74].

Introduction of 'immorality' was the instrumental mechanism used by these Brahmanical institutions, which fought tooth and nail to impose Caste system recognising the Brahmin at the top and destroying the authority of Buddhism-Jainism in India. Some details are given here:

> *The Sadakumara Charitra*, written in the 8th century AD, by Dandhi, pictures the Buddhist *Bhikunis* (female disciples) as the messengers of prostitution. Such *Sannyasinis* were available in large numbers just for a mere supply of clothes got from the burial grounds to enchant a number of Buddhist monks. A variety of literature and stories were created to insult the monks. Mahendra Varma's *Bhagavata Juggam, Mathavilasm* were few among such creations. Mostly these were common amidst the Brahmins and the *Ampalavasis* – people who were attached to the temples. Their jobs were to destroy the Buddha *Viharas,* to send the monks to gallows, to divert or to engage the female disciples into prostitution, to enslave the common people following the Buddhism and treat them as labourers and slaves, etc., were their main jobs, in the 8th century AD[75]

[74] Elamkulam-1953, 46, 47-note NO.2

[75] *Kerala Charithrathile Iruladanja Edugal,* Elamkulam, 1953,p. 47(notes).

It is interesting to note that the motives of these activities were found materialised only after the 14th or 15th century AD. Of course, we are able to see the presence of the *Nambutiris* around the 6th or 8th century AD in Kerala, but their total supremacy is observed only around 16th or 18th century AD. To take India as a whole, it is difficult to see any Sanskrit Inscription before the 2nd century AD, except one or two scattered in the whole of India. At the same time after the 8th and 9th century AD, we are able to observe many Sanskrit inscriptions in many parts of India. Yet, it is amazing to find more than 95 percent of inscriptions in Kerala, written only in the local language, Tamil or Malayalam. All these facts naturally raise the question that whether the *Nambutiris* were present at all, at the period of the visit of St Thomas to Kerala.

A great impression, through the medium of later literature in different languages, especially, through the Sanskrit language, had been created to assume the presence of Brahmins for many centuries in Kerala. There are even myths created to establish stories that the country, the land of Kerala itself, was created by a Brahmin Sage, Parasurama, in the remote past. The strange thing is that such editions have entered even into the books of history of Kerala. However, these are now proved to be false and are considered only mythical.

There are many shrewd ways of misrepresenting the truths of history. One of such methods is noticed even in this twenty first century. That is an inscription carved in Sanskrit, and preserved in the Royal Museum at Thiruvanandapuram, the capital of present Kerala. It is kept amidst the 61 lineal lists of the Kings of Kerala, starting from the year, c 870 AD. This intelligent way of propagation can mislead historians of a 1000 or even 100 years of future period, to assume that the people were well conversant with this language and Sanskrit was the true Royal language of the country. But, historical analysis very well

reveals that almost all inscriptions in Kerala, with the exception of a very negligible few, are written down in Tamil or a mixture of Malayalam and Tamil called *Malayazhmai*. Even though the Brahmanic *Nambutiris* had gripped the total administrative system of Kerala around 18th century AD, they could not change the language of the people or the tradition of recording their transactions of historical incidents by the people's own language. This is another factor to vouch for the absence of such *Nambutiris* during the times of St Thomas as early as the first century AD. The information got from one inscription further strengthens this argument. This inscription is found in the *Kumaranallur Pagavathy Temple*, Kottayam, in Kerala. M.Immanuel writes:

One Inscription of 13th century AD, marked at Kottayam Kumara Nallur Pagavathy temple throws much light on the *Vili-Chantar* (Mizhi Chantar), a clan of Nadars, and in addition, it also allows us to know of the conditions of the *Sudras* and Brahmins in that period. The Inscription reads as below:

Urahattu kudiyirukkum Soothirar Piramanarai
Thurvaham paraihil panthirandu kanam pon
Kuduppithu (II) Sarathandam saihil Erupathu
Naalu kanam pon kuduppithu, Soothiran
Soothiranai Kuraikkil Aaru kazhanju pon koduppithu
Kollil pantharu
Kazhanju pon koduppithu, Eppen kadariyar kol-
Vithu Venpoli nadu Vaazhum avarhalmaridam Urahattu
Sentoru nantru thiinku saihil thendung
Kollumpozhuthu Urar yiru kooru paraya perrar
Ekkcham pizhaichavar Mizhikkalathu thozhukka Vi-Ch
Chantarai pizhaichoril ppaduvithu

The substance, in short, is:

'If the *Sudras* of the village misbehave with the Brahmins, they have to pay a penalty of 12 *kanam* of gold..., etc. The *Gramanis*, or village heads should not have two opinions on this. In case of any one violating this order, shall be considered as violating the valorous *Vi-Chchantar (Vizhi* or *Mizhi-Chantar-* the rulers) themselves' [76].

In this inscription of 13th century AD, the language in Kerala is Tamil. Malayalam, as a script has not taken root yet. According to this, the position of the *Sudras* (Nairs) is not high as it is found in the 17th or 19th century AD. The position of the Brahmins, too is not as commanding as it is found in the period around the 18th century AD. If it were not so, we find no reason for this declaration to be given in the 13th century AD. They (the Brahmins), in this period, are probably just starting to spread their wings over the royal throne. But, history reveals to us that these *Sudras* who, in the 13th century, had hated the Brahmins, are becoming the most favoured class, by the 17th and 18th centuries and we find the Brahmins freely enter into the *Sudra* household and marry (or 'keep merry' with) their women folks and both of them grow to a greater prominence in society by the end of 18th and 19th centuries, creating a new breed, the "*Nairs*".

This inscription also tells us about the *Santors*, *(Vi-Chantor)* one of the earliest ruling classes of Kerala, from the Lunar lineage of *Panayans*. They, the *Vizhi-Chantor* (this expression has the meaning of *Kannan Vazhi, i.e.,* of the lineage of Krishna-i.e., *Yadava,* or *Vrishni-Kula*) are the ruling class, in the 13th century AD. But later, the same *Santors* have been thrown to the position, almost of outcastes, except for a few families attached to the royal throne by the 19th century AD. This is the hidden fact of politics. In

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[76] *The Dravidian Lineages- the Nadars Through the Ages,* M.Immanuel-2002, p. 192.

this process, it is very likely that many of the *Santors* too have merged with the *Nambutiris* to save their position, and those who have not accepted the *Nambutirian-philosophies* had been simply thrown out of the royal fold or butchered or been enslaved.

There is a depiction in the Mahadevar temple at Thirpparappu, in the present Kanniyakumari district. It shows an enslaved person, chained, and with a big load on his back. The depiction is dated 1739 AD. It is presumed that the depiction is meant to demonstrate the story of enslaving the traditional dynastical lineage on that period to give way to another set of 'take over' by some allied groups of Sanskritic allies. The fall of the tribes of the *Panayan* or King-priest sections of the people is well recorded in history, giving ample chances for historians and social scientists to debate and find out the truth from a heap of lies that followed thereafter in historiography.

Many of the Nobles or *Chantor* groups of the *Panayan* lineages have been overthrown from their prominent positions, their lands and power confiscated, were reduced to the position of enslaved persons under chains. In such situations, may be as destined by the God himself, these people had accepted Christianity and even donated land and properties from their little left out possessions. Thus one of the *Panayan* lineages, Pandyan Parakrama Paarthipan, otherwise known by the name, Karman Nadar too had accepted Christianity and worked for the cause of the Christian Mission [77].

The oral traditions hold that many of the Chieftain families of the *Panayan* or *Chantor* tribes who had been subjugated by the new allied groups of Nambutiri oriented Malayalam rule, around the later part of 18th century AD, and early 19th century AD, had been subjected for different kinds of torture and vindications. Many attempts are known to have been

[77] Recorded by Panayan S.Johnson, on the basis of ancestral Oral tradition.

successfully made to annihilate the whole members of such families by treachery, secret killings, and even through the mediums of *Tantric* Occults. The kinds of tortures implemented were semi-judicial and semi-secret, in order to give a public impression that 'justice' was enhanced in the country. One of such methods is described by Panayan S.Johnson as below:

> Many of the aboriginal Chieftains at Attoor, who have converted themselves to Christianity, were arrested in groups, on charges of alleged false cases, their hand and feet were tied to each other in double numbers and were led through the streets. Their ankles and feet were scorched by red-hot iron. Then they were put to the jails. After two days they were paraded through the villages declaring mass punishments for two years' *Oozhiyam* (enslaved work without pay). Customary trumpet-beats were sounded to declare this punishment to the new converts. But within a short while, in the pretension of releasing them, they all were captured again secretly, taken to distant places, ordered to be thrown away into the distant seas where there was heavy under-current, to totally annihilate the tribe. But, the men in-charge, in some cases, have shown pity and thrown them at some spots of the river-mouth where from they could swim away and escape to make a hidden living[78].

These sorts of Oral traditions are not without any records. C.M Agur, who had written the LMS Church History wrote:

'We are hardly able to give an adequate description of the untold persecutions, which the Native Christians were undergoing especially at Attoor, Aramany, Tirupparapoo, Kannanoor, Odayar Villay, Pulippanam and other villages in the Neyyoor district. The Pidagacars of Attoor, Sirucoal, Thiruvattar,

[78] Extract from *Naadodi Vazhvum Rajariiga Aasarya Vamsavum*, p.17,18.

Aramanay, Kaliyal, and Thirpparapoo were the prime movers and organisers of the plot against Christians and they were assisted by Athichampillay – Sairmakaran of Themanoor, Mullampillay – Visarippukarar of granary, Palpupillay, the elephant keeper of Attoor. Bhagavathy Pillay the tana Naik of Thackalay who assembled about five hundred (500) persons, and marched from *Pidaga* to *Pidaga.* And employing blacksmiths, Carpenters, who made pikes, hatches, bows, Arrows, and Swords to Commence Violence...Among the Christians seized at Attoor was the School Master, and the principal man of the Village (Mallan Nadar) who had recently embraced Christianity; his house was burnt down. The house of another "Respectable man" (Karman Nadar *[79]) whom with others, they had falsely charged with murder was burnt. They seized his three sons...The persecutors insulting the women cruelly cut off the ear of a woman upwards Ninety Years of age...They burnt down the Mission School and the Church at Attoor, set fire to the houses of Christians and plundered them. They took Christians as captives, tied them up and gave the other end of the rope to be tied up with the trunks of the elephants, and paraded them, the hands and feet tied with Iron rods, through the Thackalay Tana. ...In their rage, they murdered Vedamanickam of Pambadikonam, at Attoor and buried him' [80]

There are hundreds and thousands of such incidents of persecutions to be picked up in those days of Dark Age of 18th and 19th centuries AD. Kerala had a very great tolerance for religion from times immemorial. There were great traditions of Jainism, Buddhism, Jewish religion and Christian traditions.

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[79] * NB. This man is known to be the great grand-father of Panayan S.Johnson, a great descendant of the Parakrama Pandya, supposed to have been a branch of the Levite (to be confirmed by analytical DNA tests and other historical factors of dynastical records).

[80] *L.M.S.Church Histoy*, C.M Agur, p.830-33.

But why then this sort of new types of persecutions? This is a matter to be thought out by thinkers. The persecutions went to something beyond the limits of religion and faith. It was truly dynastical, a craze for annihilating the aboriginal *Panayan* tribe and to do away with their civilization of royal rule of 'Justice' . As a matter of fact, it was the usurping of power by a 'Nambutiri oriented New Allied Groups', the culmination of implementing a novel way of Sanskritised culture of *Sanadhana Dharma*, to its strict sense, in the land. To prove this hidden fact, there are still remaining rudiments of historical evidences for those who can work hard to pick up at random, from Oral traditions as well as semi-recorded medias.

There are many reasons to believe that the *Manu Dharma Sastra* implemented by the Brahmanical forces are only the shrewdly modified forms of the original Old Testament of the Bible. There are many hidden rudiments in both the Texts to identify their similarity in the essence of the principles, especially in the earlier form of the Texts of *Manu Sastra*. It is known that there are several editions of these Texts in different stages of its propagation made to suit the purpose of the Brahmanical ideals of *Sanadhana Dharma* supremacy. M.Immanuel writes:

> The early *Kshatriyas*, before the infiltration of the Brahmanical impact on them, were known to have ruled the lands with justice. For the standard of Judgements, a system was maintained by the Dravidians, known as *Manava Dharma Sutram*. But, when it had reached the hands of the Aryan Brahmins, it was subjected to repeated revisions and attained a new name as the *Manu Dharma Sastra* that it ultimately lost its purpose and created havoc in the Indian land as to the fate of a little sheep in the hands of a butcher. The historians say that "*Smriti* was probably based upon a *Manava Dharma Sutra* which is now lost. It was possibly revised several times"[81]

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[81] *The Dravidian Lineages –The Nadars Through the Ages*, p.60,61.

K.M.Munshi writes:

> The commentary of Medhatithi on the *Manu-Smriti* belongs to the ninth century, of Govindaraja to the eleventh, and of Kulluka, probably to the 13th century. There are many other *Smriti* works of more or less similar nature of which those of Vishnu, Yajnavalkya, Narada, Brihaspati and Katyayana are more important than others. They are all important sources of law[82]

But, all the dates given here cannot be accepted as strictly accurate, because, the period of 'Kulluka' is accepted, by many, to be as fifteenth century AD. The general opinion is that the *Manu Smriti*, in the present Brahmanical form has come to us around the 14th century AD. Apart from these, there was another *Niithi Sastra* called *Nata Sutra* or *Nata Nyaya* (may be of 200 B.C) which is known to be now lost. Contradictory to the Brahmanical *Manu Sastra,* the *Kautilya Dharma Sastra* pleads for the cause of the *Kshatriyas* who maintain a strict form of Justice to their subjects. Early form of *Manusmriti,* in many cases, deals with the Sacrificial aspects of ritualistic law as given in the Holy Bible. It is not improbable that the earliest form of Old Testaments of the Bible, are transcribed into new forms of law which are slowly interpreted and re-interpreted giving the ultimate colour of present *Manusmriti* to suit the selfish ideals of the Brahmanical class, for their political existence in the land, in a later period.

In this sort of political jugglery, it is difficult to say whether the first converts of St Thomas to Christianity were the *Nambutiris*, or the real ruling class, the *Santors*, or that the *Santors* who had accepted Christianity at the instance of St Thomas had later, around the 18th century, or even a little earlier, had accepted the title of *Nambutiris* or, as *Madampys,* and

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[82] *The History and Culture of the Indian People – The Age of the Imperial Unity*, K.M.Munshi, V.II,p,256

worked against their own tribes of lower economical groups to make them a backward class for their own selfish motives, is difficult to say.

This argument is strengthened by yet another fact. 'Illam' (*Illom*) is one among the traditional 39 branches of *Santor* tribe who were otherwise called 'Natan'. By 18th and 19th century AD, we find 'Illam' is used for some *Nambutiri* families also. But, when we move to the 20th century AD, we find this original title traditionally applied only to the Nadars (*Santors*) is adapted by a few of the well-to-do mixed Nair families and for some others who write as *'Illathu Pillai'* Also. Such occurrences make things difficult for a historian to trace out the real root.

11 Conversion of 'Asans' the Warrior Class

The Santors, the Manigramakkar

The tomb of the Saint Thomas, at Mylapore, is claimed by Christians, Hindus and Muslims. It is claimed by Saracens also. But, whom it really belongs to? This contradiction can be solved only if we are able to find out the group of the people who were patrons of these entire three major religions at different times, or sometimes, even at the same period, among the members of the same family. There are beliefs that the *Santor* king Cheraman Perumal had become a Christian and had gone so much religious that he divided his country among his dear ones and went away, dedicating himself for the services of God. There is also another tradition that another Cheraman Perumal, the king of Kerala, had accepted Islam and went to Mecca and died on his return journey; but his descendants had followed his religion in Kerala.

These persons were from the tribe of the *Santors* (*Saindhavas*) and their Hindu connection, either as *Vishnavites*, or *Saivites* is unquestionable. During the days of St Thomas, most of the *Santor* tribes were mostly Jains or Buddhists. *Palli* or *Aarama* (garden) was the name of such Jain or Buddhist worship places in Kerala or in Tamilnadu. History reveals that 'Vanavan' was the ruler of the *Chera* country from whom the dynasty originated. It is no wonder that the idols installed in such temples represented the same physical nature of the rulers of the land as observed by the writer, John Foster:

> The Seven and half inches high idol, with long hair done up in a knot, and covered with a head-cloth; wears a *mundu* (skirt), of Tamil type; he is

naked to the waist. He has a necklace of 25 beads and hanging from it, a large **Pectoral Cross**, with a lotus set at its centre [83].

We are not to be surprised to find a symbol of 'Cross' attached to the ruler of Kerala. This is not a lone incident. A Coin dated before the 12th century AD, printed by the *Pandya* King also depicts a **Cross** on it. It depicts a Cross at the top, one Bow at the left side, followed by a Rabbit and symbol of two Fish on the right, followed by some inscription at the bottom of the Coin. This is commented by Marco Polo, and Elliot [84]

We should not think Kerala, culturally, as a separate country from the Tamils. The period had only Tamil as their language through out these Tamil or Malayalam (*Malai*) regions. Even today, the only ancient people who continue to follow these three religions in the same family are the *Santors*, inclusive of the *Ezhavas*. About them it is said that the father may conduct *pooja* for his family deity, *Kaali*, in one of the family rooms, one son to the St. Mary, in another, and another son or brother do worship to the almighty 'Allah' in yet another room. There are even Muslim colonies of these converts from these *Santors* living in Tamilnadu and Kerala.

About the early Christians of Kerala T.K.Velu Pillai writes:

> The propagation of the faith was regarded as sacred duty by all the people who came under its sway for, "Jesus came and spoke unto them saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and His Son and of the Holy Ghost." Of those disciples of the Lord who proceeded in different directions to preach the Gospel, one, the Apostle Thomas,

[83] *History of Christianity in India, Vol. I,* Mundanan p. 35-note: 41
[84] *Elliot*, 119, PL.III, 129; quoted by Johnson, 2003,p,197.

> visited Malabar and pursued his ministration. The Malabar Christians believe the visit of St Thomas to be a historical verity, a title to the undisputed ancient character of their church [85].

About the conversion of the ruler of the country to the Islamic faith, writes the same author:

> Alberni who was familiar with this part of India mentions Quilon. Mr.Logan alludes to a traditional account of the conversion of the last Cheraman Perumal to Islam...He then embarked secretly in the vessel prepared for him along with the Sheik and his companions, and they proceeded to Pantalayini Kollam. From there he sailed to Sahr where he assumed the name of Abdul Rahiman Samoori and stayed there for a considerable time [86].

The Perumals who are the descendants of the early Kerala rulers are from the *Santor* tribe. Trippapur (*Thiruppapu)* is one of the royal branches among them. This is clarified in the All India Census Report of 1901. These factors are very elaborately discussed in the book, *The Dravidian Lineages-The Nadars Through the Ages* -Immanuel.

Here it is worth mentioning of something about the glorious historical facts on the *Cheraman Perumal* family. They were a Family favouring and promoting Christianity for hundreds of years. There are some important evidences from the Family Mansion at Eraniel to impress upon their connection with Christianity. These evidences are meant to be published separately in an opportune occasion. However, it would be quite fitting to the present occasion to quote something from this 'Family Trust' formed under this ex-ruling family of the country. It is said as under:

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[85] *State Manual of Travancore,* T.K.Velupillai-651

[86] T.K.V.Pillai-806, 807

"During his life time Sri Jagadish Aiya had founded a Family Trust named, *CHERAMAN PERUMAL MEMORIAL FAMILY TRUST,* under Registration NO.127, with the address, 14-89/ 32 A, Sara Cottage, Singapore Street, Neyyoor (Near Eraniel), Kanniyakumari district. Some of the aspects in that Trust are noteworthy:

WHEREAS, of long, it has been observed that the ancient roots of ruling dynasties of *Cheraman Perumal* and its various branches have gone astray and weak, because of no unifying programme and ventures to enhance mutual help to the one to the other. There has been economical depression, mismanagement of properties, and loss of Unity, and above all, there was a great loss and deprival of the true history of the family and the family-roots. This has caused to forget our ancestral roots with the earlier Aye dynasty, the Yadavas, the *Vrishnis, Jains, Christians, Hindus* and the *Panayans* wih their diversified branches throughout India and even abroad, who in the course of ages had been destined to take the name of *Perumals*, in the ancient State of *Venadu*, to rule the ancient countries in Southern and Mid-India. There have been tussles for historical existence, on which many had been even killed in treasons, in wars, duel combats, and also through the forces from outside the normal squares. There are incidents of confiscating our ancestral properties by force. There have been Cases of deprival of Rights, even the basic Human Rights. There were times that even the left out Freedom to enjoy our Social Liberties and not to speak of enjoying our ancestral properties [87].

John Jagadish Aiya, a dynastical descendant of the *Cheraman Perumal* Family and the Claimant of the Eraniel Palace and the Shankumugham

[87] *Cheraman Perumal Memorial Family Trust,* p.2-3, from John Rose, Nephew of Jagadish Aiya.

Palace, was born on 22.6.1914, at *Kal Naatti Vilai,* a little away from *Umayammai Vilai of Eraniel,* in *Chattankara Desathu Uuralivilagathu Aaru Muttram Konda Kannattivilagathu Thekke Puthan Viittil, Niithi Udayan Gunamudayan Family of the descendant of Kulasekhara Perumals.* His ancestors are traced out from "Udaya Martanda Kulasekhara Perumal (Ruler of Travancore, 1798-1810). The Family Tree, as found in their Family History can be given as below:

King Udaya Martanda Kulasekhara Perumal

(Murdered at Eraniel Palace)

↓

Ponnanintha Perumal- alias Ponnananjan Karuppan

(Kings Brother)

↓

Alagudaya Perumal (Alagudayan)

(Elaya brother)

↓

Niithiyudaya Perumal (Niithiyudayan

(Son)

↓

Niithiyudayan Gunamudayan John

(Yovan Engineer)

↓

John Jagadish Aiya

(John Peruvattar, Thampuran, Contractor, Asan)" [88]

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[88] *Jagadish Aiya, 67th Day Condolence Committee* : members: Prof. Velayudha Perumal Chellam, Dr.P.Sarveswaran, Dr.M.Immanuel, Dr.I.Henry Luis, Adv. R.Radhakrishnan, Anthony M.Xaviour, Dr.M.Henry Alson Thiruppappu, Prof.Treasa Brighta, p.7,

The deserted political situations of the ancient Tamil oriented Royal dynasties had created new vacuum (especially from 1801), into the dynastical records for which many Court Cases are still going on in the country for more than one and half a century to two hundred years now. When those dynastical records are made straight, if it could be made, then things would become much easier for Socio-Religious historians to easily assertain the root of early Christianity in Kerala as well as in the whole of Indian Peninsula.

Such a Socio-historical analysis will also help us to determine the earlier principles held in our indigenous religion which the Sanskritised thinkers call as "Hinduism". It is necessary to think and find out the original Indian Philosophy of Religion and its basic principles. The hidden secrets lying deep into the layers of darkness in the so-called "Hinduism" are to be exposed to know the real philosophical approach and attitude of Indian people. The following concepts can, to some extent, verify or demonstrate the mind of our earlier rulers of our people.

The Royal 'King-Priests', in the early days, were considered by the people of the country as gods or *Devathas*. King was their god on earth. Kings like 'Thiru Niilakanda Parameswara Pandyan, Somasundara Pandyan, etc., were considered even as the Lord *Siva*. Vankiya Rajasekara Pandyans, alias, Karuppanna Pandyan, was considered as *Vishnu*. Sri Uggra Pandya was considered as Lord *Muruga* or even as *Brahma* or Iswarya Pandya as Manikandan or Lord *Sastha*. The King or High Priest (King-Priest –not the Brahmanical Brahman) was considered as god and was addressed as *'Perumal'* or *'Peruman'*. This title, *Perumal* was attributed to gods like Brahma, Vishnu or Siva. These titles were meant exclusively for the *Panayan* or *Chantor* tribes who had ruled the Chera, Chola Pandya countries, till recent past.

But the fact remains that these Kings were not gods, but only humans. Ancient poets and poetesses like Ouvai, etc., reveal these facts to us. The poets teach us through their valuable teachings that the High Priest (King-Priests) like *Siva, Brahma, Vishnu,* who accepts or resolve into themselves all the sins coming out of the process of uttering the *panchakshara,* and the lies spread in the *"Vinn" (sky)* and the roaring sound that comes from the utterance of the *deva mantra, "Namasivayah"* could never see the glory of the eternal piety of God, or the way of the Lord of Salvation leading to eternity. Neither their consorts the goddesses like *Kottravai, Vindai, Durggai, Viira Lakshi, Kaali, Sarawathy, Narayani* or *Kumari Pagavathy* can show us the way of Salvation, because they themselves have to find it for their sake from the Lord of Salvation. Not even the *Panaya Devis* can show us the path, because the Lord Almighty has destined it to be given to those whom He has chosen for Himself (the Israelites) and whom He has appointed from the *Suryakula* and *Agnikula* as His Priests like the Levites *(Panayan)* as His eternal Servants to show the path of Salvation and the Lord has tied them on His own Head as one Family to execute His great Purposes in His own time [89].

The term *Santor,* although not found in too many inscriptions in the same form, it is available in quite a number, scattered here and there in many different forms. But, at the same time, it is abundantly found in Tamil literature. The great poet, Thiruvalluvar has profusely used this term. He clearly points out this term applicable to a particular class of society because of their specialised character, especially, character of upholding truth and justice. In Sanskrit language this character is termed as *Jnatri* or Jnatrikas. As a matter

[89] *Ouvvaiyar, Thirumoolar,* etc., quoted in *Naadodi Vaazhvum Rajariiga Aasariya Vamsamum,*p.88-91.

of fact, the royal branch of Kerala, *Thirupappu (Trippapur-*Sanskritised form of Tamil*)* belongs to this group of *Santors.* There are thirty-nine branches specified under this group. But historical analysis for a period of about 3000 years shows that these groups have more than 250 branches extended even to northern India. Their root with the Jaina and Buddhist classes is well established. The originator of Jainism, Saint Mahavira is said to be a son of Nadar (Nata) of the *Jnatrika* (*Nata*) clan of the *Lichchavi* tribe. The *Manas, Vishnukundins, Sri-Maras, Talakas, Pishtapurins, Adityas, Talavakara, Gautamas, Vrishnis, Vidyadharins,* The *Mallas,* the *Tvashtris, Yadus.* the *Kalchuris,* etc., are some of their branches [90]

Unfortunately this tribe is presently segregated as a backward class through the new politicisation of Aryan character. Their royal folds are almost surrendered to the Nambutiri-politics of Kerala. Anthropologically these people are classified under the Austroloids. But presently a lot of mixing can be observed as it is seen in any classes of the age. Due to the over enthusiasm shown by the Aryan writers, especially, the Brahmanical writers, supported by their allies, the history about this class is disintegrating. Yet there are ample scope for a hard-working scholar to find out links of this *Santors* to connect them with the early rulers of Kerala, and even to the rulers of Southern and Northern India. Records tell that members of these royal rulers like *Cheral Imaya Varampan* had established his flag even at the foothills of Himalayas. *Kalangaai Kanni Naar Mudi Cheral* was another famous king of the *Cheras.* These kings are not yet been accounted in the books of history of Kerala, although Northern kings like Asoka and Sri Buddha are duly recorded.

The oral tradition of the people of Kanniyakumari where the majority population is the *Santors,* is that

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[90] *The Dravidian Lineages –the Nadars Through the Ages,* M.Immanuel, 2002, p.113-121, 359, etc.

they were the rulers of the land during the times of the visit of St Thomas and that their ancestors were the pioneers to accept Christianity. Some of the branches of this *Santor* class claim that they are a branch of the missing tribe of the Jews.

The family of *Vidwan* Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi, produces a list of 61 generations of a royal family who had accepted Christianity, converted by St Thomas and claims to have written the first copy of *Yooda Thomassin Nadapadigal* (*The Acts of Thomas*), taken by some missionaries, from their family. The Family-list goes like:

Udaya Santan *Asan*- BC 7 – 88AD
Amalagiri Athen *Asan*- 34-89 AD
Poraiyan Rayar *Asan*: 67-97 AD
Kassiissa Yacobu Samiyar [91]

The list goes from BC 7-88AD, up to 1886/1945 AD.

In order to establish facts, there are some reasons to believe the plan of Jesus Christ to embrace the members of the 'lost sheep' belonging to the *Santor* tribe, who were later known as *Shannan, Nadars, Asans, Thiruppapu, Jnatrikas*, etc., and in various other names also had worked its purpose. It is seen that the great Plan of the Living God is accomplished in various stages by converting these members to the fold of the Church. A list of such conversion, of course, in the later stage, as a result of the coming of St Thomas in this country is given below:

Asans of 'Santor' Tribe in conversion:

(Extract from *Oru Thiirdhadaga Janathayude Charitram*, Bishop Samuel Amritam, 1997).

Podiyan *Asan* (Podi *Asan*) of Ambilikonam, in Parassala District, Kerala, in the 20th century AD, killed the cow grazing on his crops, missionary helped to dismiss the case- became Christian

[91] Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi, 2004, p.34-36.

and converted to Jesus. (Bishop, Rev.Samuel Amritam, CSI South Kerala Diocese -1977, 562).

Nediyamcode *Asan*, Kerala, I. Omana Silvi, S.Daivadaanam family gave land for constructing Church- 20th century

Lazarus Memorial Church, Nedumengadu, Kerala 1900.

This Church is formed around the 1900-s, more specifically in 1920, to free from the oppression caused by the so called Caste-Hindus over the local Nadar population, that this Church has been founded through the consorted efforts of the local Nadars like Lawrence Contractor, Daniel *Asan*, Peruvarambil Patrose, Mailamoodu Vedanayagam, *Desakaaval* Daniel, Parakkonam Nalla Thampi, Kalkkuzhi Daniel *Vaidyan*, who gave land and money for the construction of the church. It is to be mentioned that Madam Daisy Lazarus had given 1.235 acres of land for construction of a New Church free of cost, from her own property.

Kannanmoola, Trivandrum (1839)

Originated by Lazar, Anpu, Stephan, John, etc. of Nadar community.

Quilon 1826

One Ponnaiyan (Pon Aiyan), with families from Neyyattinkara, like Arulanandam, Mariya, etc also were helpful to establish the Church there.

Kottarakkara 1830

Palayathil Niittil Oomman Upathesi & family, the Aviyode (Aye Code) family (255). The Missionary reports of 1830 say that services were conducted in Tamil also in the Church.

Mai Naadu (Land of Truth) changed to Mayyanadu-1821. (Kollam Dist.)

Kottukkonam –Kollam Dist. – Panavur (Village of Palm-grooves), Poovathoor-migrated population

from Neyyattinkara, Amaravila, Nellikkakuzhi... etc.- originators, Massillamani, Yesuvadian, Kudiyiruppu Yesuvadian (272).

Perimpakonam- (Per-Inpa-Konam = Place of great Joy) Kollam District.

Originators: 1870-originals of Neyyattinkarai-Puvar potta Daniel ***Asan,*** Esakkiyel, Abraham, etc.

Poovathoor- Kollam District.

People from Neyyattinkara, Amaravila etc., spread out from the four important families-brothers (Podiyan Markos, Podiyan Yoseph, Podiyan Suvisesha Muthu, Podiayn Yeob. -1889.

Elavur (Elaya) Karikkam –Aattingal District.

Founder-Convert is a Kochuraman Nadar (Muthamkonam –Pulimathu- Kochuraman Nadar)-1917.

Kiizhattingal –Attingal District 1860.

Ezhavar, oppressed by caste-Hindus (98) Kolinchi-Mooppan established the Church–Attingal Dist.

Navaikulam –Attingal Dist – 1920, by Valiya Kunnil **Perumal** and his wife, Kannatti, son Nallathampi, son in law- Perumal (Joseph), Appavu. Mitra Mala – Attingal, by Krishnan Nadar, influenced by his friend and relation, Vaidyar Chellayyan ***Asan***. Mangalapuram- Attingal Dist, by Tamils like Arulanandam, Ayyappan. Vaikam-Attingal Dist. –Ezhava dominance. Vempayam – Attingal, 1861, Oppressed by Nairs, Karuthudayan, Enose, Andrayas.

Panavur- (Village of Palm grooves) Nedumengadu District.

Known to be above 170 years of tradition. 1820-Chathan Ishak, Chadachi Kunjamma came to this place from South Travancore. They occupied 50

acres of land and donated 6.5 acres to establish this Christian Church.

Mottamoodu- Venganoor Dist.

By Pappan Nadar, Thirumala Gnanappan Nadar. Mangalathukonam- Venganoor Dist. Influenced by Arkkan ***Asan.*** In 1889 it was dedicated for the *Dalits*, *Ezhavas* and for all communities. (Bishop Rev. Dr. Samuel Amritam, Rev. Justin Charles, 1997). This reflects the flow of the community who are now thrown like insignificant, something like outcastes, but historically remains to hold much substantial facts radiating light to explain hidden facts in history [92].

The above details give us some impression of the historical facts that how the 'lost sheep' of the Eternal God, are destined to be united, through the great plan of Him in its own appointed time. The *Nadar* otherwise known in ancient times as *Nadalwars* were scattered through out India and were observed to be in the power of ruling the country for centuries together. Perhaps, for awhile they had gone mad on their pride and fame, and been thrown down to a state of destitutes, planned by the 'Will of God' to be re-organised to know the 'Word of God' in its own appointed time, as a down-trodden class, around the 18th century AD. When they have recognised the 'Love of God' who had called them back as a community, they have come forward to give out their land and money to construct Churches and other Institutions for 'Education' and also other shelters for the poor. What could be inferred from the multifaced history of this community of *Nadars*, alongwith their other 'kindred groups' like the Syrian Christians, and many others, scattered in India

[92] Note: most of the above details of conversions of the Santor Asans are taken from the book *Oru Thiirthadaka Janathayude Charitram*, CSI, Dekshina Kerala Idavaga Sabhakalude Charitra Samgraham, Chief editor, Rt. Rev. Dr.Samuel Amritam, and Convenor Rev. Justin Charles, 1997.

and elsewhere, it could be simply ascertained that this has happened as a plan of the Great God, the Father, to 'Catch His Fishes' to enjoin the 'House of God' in His own appointed time to re-make the poor to the Riches, to make them as the owners of the 'Kingdom of God'.

Historically, it could not be ascertained, for sure, of the routes followed by St. Thomas to come to India and the path that he had followed to visit the important cities of India. Four places in India remain very convincingly prominent of his gospel work and stay. The first one is Taxila in the northern India, the second is Cranganoor, in Kerala, the third is Thiruvithamcode in the southern Kerala, or so to say, the capital of Travancore known in ancient days as "Thiru Athencode" or "Tittowa" for the Greeks and Romans. This place is located by Ptolemy, near 8.11' *va* X 77.21 *ki* degrees or around, 122.00' *ki* X 15.20' *va* degrees, in the world map [93]. The fourth place is "Mylapore" in the present Tamilnadu State. This place, probably, was known as "Calamina"[94] in the ancient periods, for the outsiders. In this modern age, this place is demarked as "St.Thomas Church", at Mylapore, in Tamilnadu. Taxila, or ancient "Takshasila (Takshas'ila)" was the seat of power of *Gandharas*. King Gondophores was a ruler of that country during the visit of St. Thomas. This king's name was treated as mythical, until "billion Coins of Gondophores" were unearthed during the recent excavation at Taxila[95]. In all probability, the *Gandharvas* were the ancient Tamil *Gandharuvar*, with '*Garuda*' as their emblem, mentioned in the history texts of the *Santors*, known as *Valamkaimaalai* (Pam-leaf text).

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[93] *Ptolemy*, V.S.V.Ragavan, p,318,319.

[94] *History of Catholic Church in Kanyakumari*,Dr.V.Lawrence, p,24, quoted from, Pylee, 1977.

[95] *Hindu Religion is the Offshoot of St.Thomas Dravidian Chriastianity*, Dr.D.Devakala, p.32,33.

12 Last days of St.Thomas & the Exodus of the Mizos

Taking into account of the period of 1st century AD, we understand the prominence of Buddhism and Jainism in the area even from Asoka's period which had entertained lot of *'Yavana'* Officials in his Court, who had spoken *Aramic* language like Jesus Christ. Probably St. Thomas also had spoken the same language for interaction. The cultural link and traditions of Trade, language, religions must be considered for the route that St.Thomas had followed. The Egyptians, Yavanas, the Aramic people, etc., had good trade relation with many of the business centres in India. Their religious or philosophical aspect too is to be taken into consideration. Taxila was a great centre of learning, like that of Pataliputra, Nalanda, Kalinga, Urraiyur, Thiruchirrappally, Tanjore, Thiru Athen code, Parthipasekarapuram, Vizhinjam, Cranganoor, Misiri, etc. A possibility of following these centres of knowledge of Educational Institutions where certain types of philosophical teachings were propagated and discussed, could not be ruled out to have followed by St.Thomas. The traditions of some of the inhabitants of present Mizoram, especially of the Kuki Mizos, who claim to be one of the lost tribes of Israel compel us to think that St.Thomas had made a visit even to them and travelled eastward towards them, from Taxila. His assumed visit to China strengthens us because the geographical locations of the Mizoram or wherever the Kukis had been during the 1st century AD, is not to be neglected because it could be very closer to Tibet and China.

If the aforesaid route is to be taken, then it is probable that St.Thomas had visited the "Thiruvithamcode" (Thiru Athencode), the capital of

the great "Chera Villavas" first before visiting the Cranganoor in the northern Kerala. In this case, it would be the second visit for him to reach Mylapore. The Dravidian link of the Aramics or the Semitics explains to us for the reason for a visit to India, to their earlier kindred groups, even well remembered by the great plans of God. This also explains the then existing course of religious activity filled with Jainism and Buddhism, the remnants of which are well observed in the South and North even from such a remote period of time. But, if he had followed an Oceanic route, then, probably, he has visited Cranganoor first and then came back to Thriruvithamcode. But almost all the historians, until the recent times of 21th century, had rather buried the fact about Thiruvithamcode. It would have gone under the dark sands of time but for the existence of the *Ara Palli* (half Church) still standing at the old capital of Travancore.

It is said that it was from Thiruvithamcode, that he had started his "last" journey to eternity. At Thiruvithamcode, he seems to have stayed for quite some time to establish the Church and appoint his first catechist, "Paranjothiyar", a local man from the *Santor* royal traditions, who taught 'Tamil' to St. Thomas. He, then constructs smaller shrines around Muttom, etc., preaching the word of God to the people, and it seems that he had taught the art of constructions to the major people here who till date have maintained the traditions of wood-craft, stone-cutting and brick-works all through the years. Finally he bid goodbye to his 'Little Flock' here at Thiruvithamcode and Chinna Muttom and started his journey to the northern Tamil country, to the land of the Pandyas. He started his work at Mylapore and is finally got killed on 21st December 68AD[96]. It is not clearly known whether this date of martyrdom is accurate or not; some say 72 AD.

[96] *History of Catholic Church in Kanyakumari District*, Dr.V.Lawrence,p. 24.

Death and Burial of St.Thomas - Site Study.

From the big township of Mylapore, you turn to the west and you find a small mount of about 300 feet high. On 20.4.2008, we, a group of five people have decided to go up to the mount called St.Thomas mount. We reached the bottom of the mount at about 7 a.m and saw sports persons walking up and down as a routine of their physical exercise for body fitness. There are many writings on either side of the main gateway. According to the writings, many repeated renovations had been noticed on that site, and the latest observed to be, was in 2004.

The mount is situated on the east of Guindy, in the suburbs of Chennai (Madras) city, and on the South of the Meenambakkam (New Kamaraj) Airport. On the very entrance itself there were found three big copper plates, probably to remember somebody buried there or in memory of them (I could not read the language written there). Slowly we claimed up the 135 steps and reached the top of the hill. There is a Church where almost two hundred people can be accommodated for service. The Church is constructed East-Westwards, almost in the form of a Cross. It has been renovated repeatedly. A new Church-Bell has been installed on 30.6.2007. The old Bell was found placed 'carelessly' on the ground, closer to a big Banyan tree, on the eastern side of the Church. The Bell was quite thick and was about 2.5 feet wide at its mouth. In the Church hall it is written "SENHORA DA + HIS 1523 EXPECTACAO".

A stone pillar is found erected in the Church compound commemorating the visit of Pope Paul II, on 5.2.1986. The whole of Madras city is visible from the top of the Mount. It is a beautiful site. According to the edicts there, the Church was dedicated to the "Lady of Expectation" in the year, 1523, by the

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[97] Note: as explained in the *State Manual of Travancore*,p, 856, (T.K.Velupilla)

Portuguese. A piece of 'Bone of St.Thomas' is preserved in a decorated container, inside the Church, as a relic. The Doors and Window frames of the Church are made of Stone.

There is a Painting kept inside the Church. It is the picture portraying the man who had 'stabbed' St.Thomas. The culprit had pierced the Saint from behind with a traditional *'Vel'* – a big javelin or lance, a type that was used by the Tamil armymen. It is written on the painting "Stabbed here while praying leaning on a Cross which he cut to install there". The painting shows that the man who had pierced the Saint was wearing a head turban in the style and pattern used by the early *Nadalwar* warriors, with *Urumalkettu*[97] and *Kuthuwar –dhoti* (a warrior's or a Toddy-taper's knotted dress).

There is an inscription written in *'Nagari Palidu'* language, on a Cross-, the content of which is explained as "Through the Cross – Sufferings, The Messaiah, Jesus Christ brought Salvation to the world". It is also indicated that a picture of "Our Lady" painted by St.Luke was brought by St.Thomas to India. It is interesting that the picture of the 'Cross' depicted by St.Thomas resembles the construction done by him at Thiruvithamcode, in Kanyakumari district where he had established a 'Half Church' or *Ara Palli.*

At the entrance to the Church there are two inscriptions with dates "1759 and 1764". Outside the Church, on the eastern side, there is a 'bust' of Col.William Lambton with the inscriptions like: "Born in 1753 in England and died on 30th January 1833 in a camp at Hinganghat in Maharashtra. A genius who planned great Trigonometrical Survey launched his fieldwork from this place on 10th April 1802. As a part of the Bicentenerial Celebration of "The great Arc" this Bronze is unveiled by Dr.P.Nag, Surveyor Central O India, on 17.9.2003".

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[98] *Valamkaimaalai* palm-leaf text of Nadars.

Chinnamalai (Small Mount)

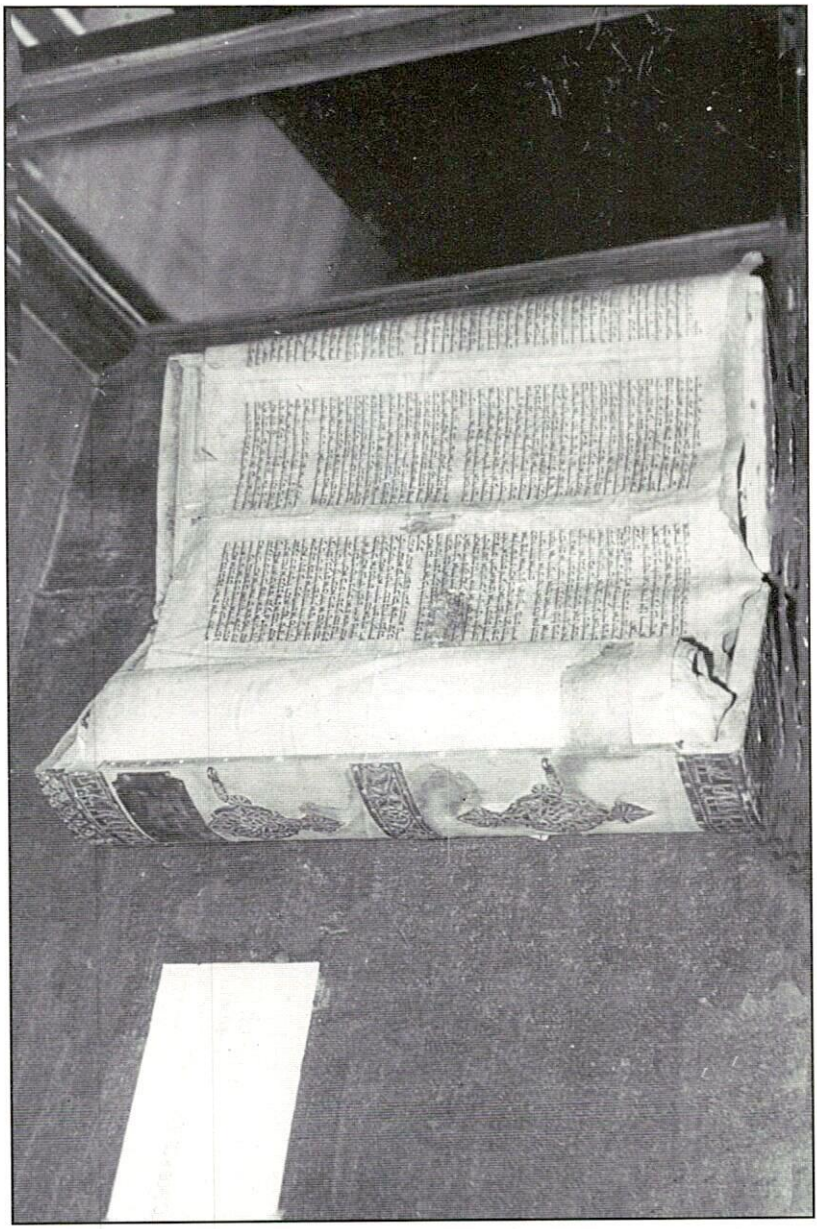
A little away from St.Thomas mount, which was also known by the name *"Parrangi Malai"*, there is a small mount called Chinna Malai. There is a Cave here in this mount. Legends say that it was here that the Saint was hiding from the enemies of the kingly priests. Inside the Cave, there is a small spring and a Creek from which water flows out constantly. It is considered by people as 'Sacred Water' fit to heal the sick, because of the dwelling of the Saint there during his last days. Even today, people drink that water for healing or for blessings. Here is a narrow 'window' opening to the outside of the Cave. It was through this window that St. Thomas had escaped from his enemies in of one the attacks that he had from them. There is also a "Foot-Print" at Chinna Malai, perhaps created later to remember St.Thomas's stay there.

Today there is a museum little away where some of the depictions are made to remember the Saint's existence in this place almost two thousand years ago. There are many books, CD editions, etc., to remember the old story of St. Thomas's preaching the gospel of Christ in this part of the world. There are celebrations taking place every year commemorating the life of St.Thomas in India, especially at Mylapore, remembering his burial there, at 'Santhome'. It is said that he was killed by a set of people who were *"Kaali Bhaktas"*. These are the set of people who are staunch worshippers of the mother goddess, *Kaali*, one of the war-goddesses of India who is known to be the 'Care Taker' of the *Santors* otherwise called the *Nadalwars*[98]. These are very brutal people, very strong in their faith, who will not hesitate to murder anyone against their belief. Moreover, according to old traditions, it was this set of people who acted like the King-Priests before the take over of the present set of

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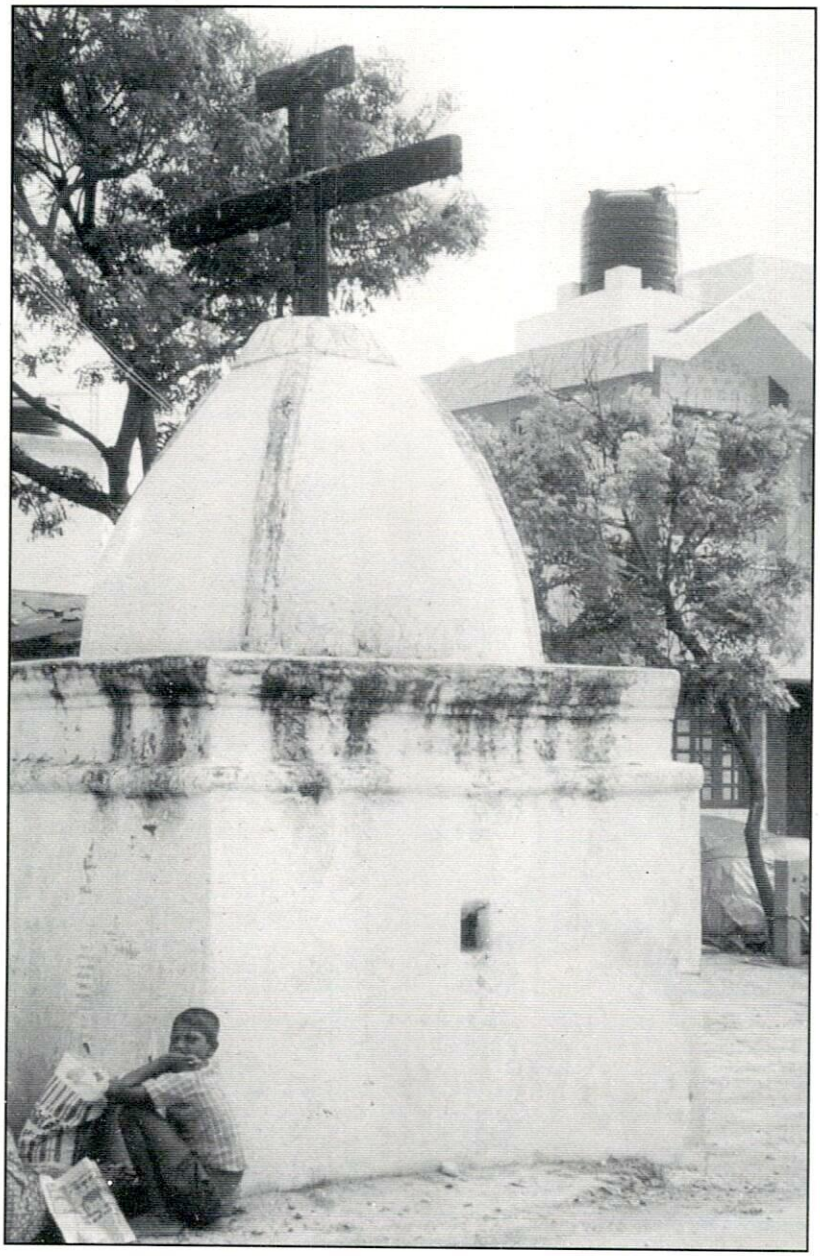
[99] Other opinion is 72 AD. *Christianity in South India*, Dr.J.Alasiar,2006, p,10.

Fig. 12



The Leather / Papyrus Bible, in Hebrew, owned by the early converts of the Cochin Royal Family, now preserved in the Tripunithura Museum, Ernakulam.

Fig. 13



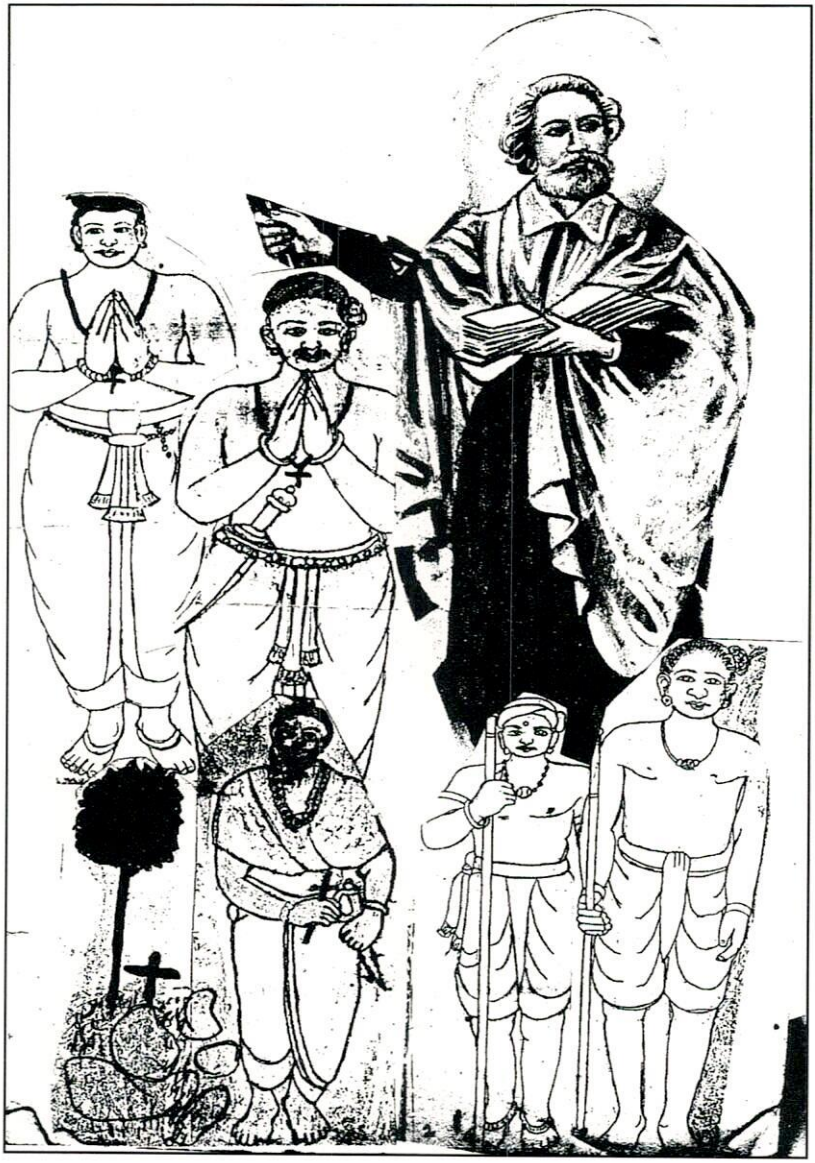
A *Kurusadi* shrine built at Chinna Muttom, near Kanyakumari, in memory of St. Thomas, where he had preached the Gospel of Christ.

Fig. 14



The symbol of Christianity, an Icon of the Guardian Angel made of Wood, from the Eraniyel Palace, is now removed and, or, preserved in the nearby temple. This is a significant proof of early Christianity among the *Venadu* Rulers.

Fig. 15



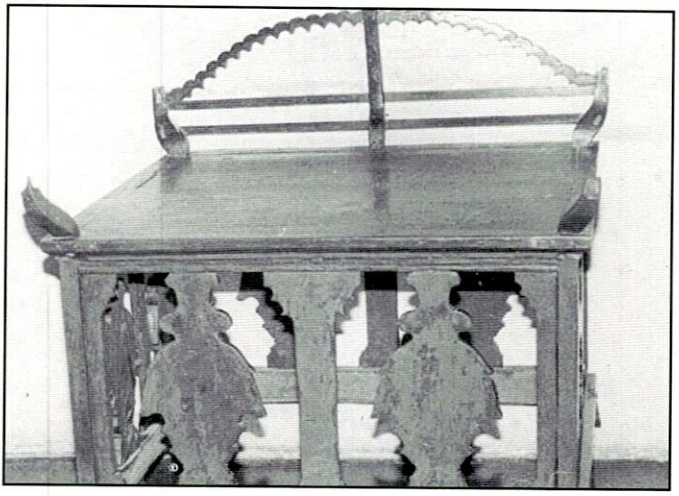
Pictures of 'Santra Manmiiga Yacob, and his brother 'Santra Manmiiga Anthreya' (with knifes) from the Chera Royal Dynasty, along with their in-mates, converted by St. Thomas. Courtesy: The Family of Amalagiri Anthonimuthu Annavi Nadayar, Manali, Kanyakumari district.

Fig. 16



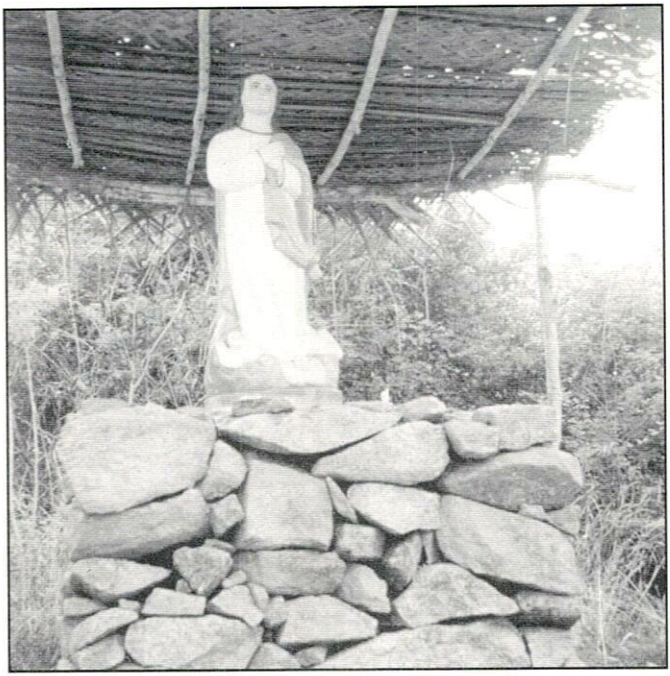
Photo of a 'Pillar' of Eraniyel Palace now in ruins. (photo : 16.9.2004)

Fig. 17



The 'Bow', symbol of the *Villavas* or the early Chera Nadans, now in the Padmanabhapuram Palace Museum, in Kanyakumari district.

Fig. 18



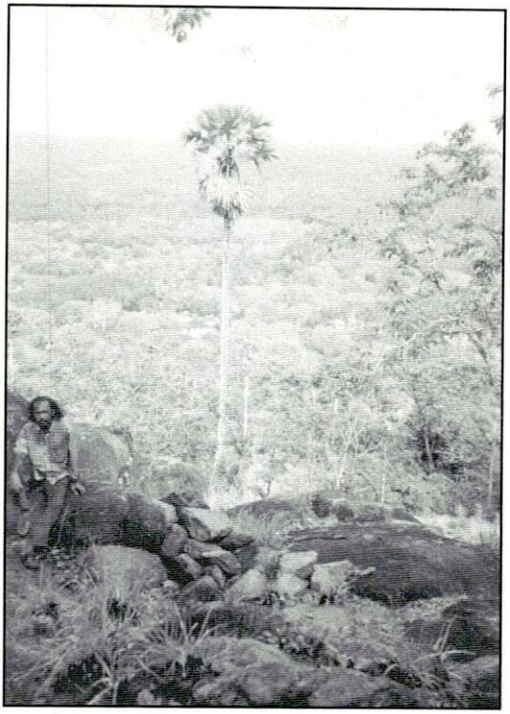
A newly dedicated 'Mary' placed recently at the middle of the "Matha Malai" (Photo,2004)

Fig. 19



Depiction of symbolic Saints on the Wooden Cupboard, later placed at "Ara-Palli" at Thiruvithamcode, built by St. Thomas.

Fig. 20



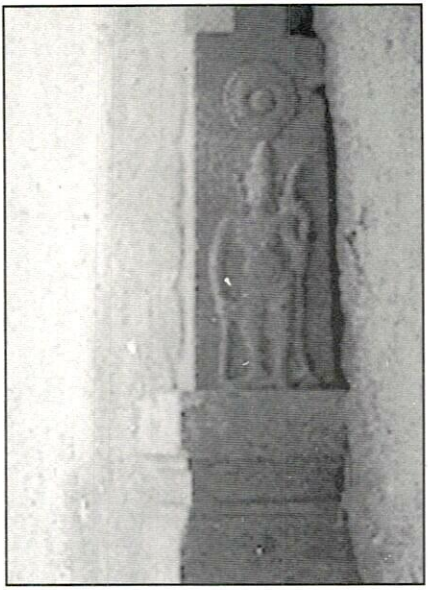
A view from the top of the "Matha Malai" where St. Thomas stayed.

Fig. 21



"Matha Malai" with marking of the 'Way to the Kuhai', the 'Cave'. where St. Thomas lived.

Fig. 22



Depiction of Bowed Perumal on the Pillar at Eraniyel Palace. Bow is the symbol of Villava Nadans.

Fig. 23



The 'Baptism Cup' made of Stone of about three feet tall, for preserving the 'Holy Water', found in the *Paraloha Yesu Nather Koil*, Thiruvithamcode.

Brahmins who had come in a later stage. Hence, in all probability, it was these set of King-Priests or the *Nadalwars* who also had the traditional name as *Gurukkal* who had killed St.Thomas. This too might be a God's plan to save a 'lot' of this community, later, from the 'lost sheep'. Traditions hold that St.Thomas has attained martyrdom on 21st December of 68 AD[99], and was buried at 'Santhome', Mylapore, where the huge 'Santhome Church' stands today, in Tamilnadu. His death has given way to many to know and accept the teaching of Jesus Christ for Salvation as well as to make exodus to the parental 'Father-land', like the modern Mizos of Northeast India.

The Jewish Mizos

Mizoram is a small State in the North-East India. It is very difficult to say that how have Mizos acquainted a link with the Jewish Israelites. Considering the present location of Mizoram, it falls encircled by Bangladesh, Burma, Nagaland and Meghalaya, bordering the lower Brahmaputra valleys and the upper Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet and the borders of China in the north. But the Kuki tribes of the Mizos have a close resemblance with the ancient people of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering Bhutan and Tibet. In the way of general look, they resemble the Phillipinos, Japanese, Nagas and as many of the northeast or Mongolian tribes. But mostly, their cheek-bones resemble the Jewish type. What was their early path to enter India is not known to me. But, they were and still, are, a rebellious, war-like people with lots of 'killings' to their credit in their characterised history. At the same time, they are very lovable and religious people too. Recently they have established some links with the Jewish roots in the norms of many traditions and other characters of the tribe. In the past two decades, many thousands of them have migrated to the New Israel land. Ron Csillag gives us the story of Bnei Menashe Jews from Mizoram to their 'Promised land'.

Shimon Gante has been mistaken as Filipino, Japanese, native Hawaiin, and a kung fu master. "If someone met me on the street, they would never think I'm Indian" he says with a shrug. "You learn to take everything in stride". All in a day's work for a member of one of the Bible's 10 lost tribes.

Once an out of control teen-ager in his native India, Gante's parents persuaded him to go live in Israel in an effort to curb his rowdy behaviour, which including his fighting and getting banged up in motor cycle races. "They told me 'if you continue to live in India, you're not going to see past 25'"

He hurried in the Jewish State in 1993 and "it worked". Now 33, the former medical student is a soft-spoken rabbi in Israel, ministering to his fellow Benin Menashe Jews, both in the country and those effectively stranded back home.

Gante was not in Toronto this month to knock Israel but to raise funds for and awareness of the Bnei Menashe, who claim be descendants of the biblical lost tribe of Manasseh. About 1000 of them live in Israel, with many Jews (and evangelical Christians) happily viewing as fulfilling prophecies that the "in-gathering of the exiles" heralds the messiah's appearance.

Late last month, four plane-loads of 218 Bnei Manashe arrived in Israel, the youngest born, just two weeks earlier, while the oldest was 84 year-old Sara Haunhar, whose lifelong dream had always been "to set foot on God's Holy land before I die".

It's a story rife with drama and romance – of a people who improbably put passionate claim to

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[100] Toronto Star, dated 30.12.2006, Article, *From India to Israel*, Ron Csillag, p.L10.

be the descendants of the ancient Israelite tribe of Manasseh, one of the 10 tribes of northern Israel exiled by Assyrian conquerors 27 centuries ago and supposedly lost to history. And of all places to surface: the remote north-eastern Indian states of Manipur and Mizoram, both of which border Myanmar (Burma). There, some 1.5 million hill people collectively call themselves the "Children of Manmasi" or "Menmasseh". Though converted to Christianity by British missionaries from the 1850s to about 1910, their oral history, songs and traditions were clearly derived from the Hebrew Bible. They believed the tribe meandered through **Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet and China,** before settling in northeast India.

Then in 1953, a tribal leader named Challianthanga had a dream in which his people returned to Zion. That led to a break away group of 10,000 Bnei Menashe, who have hewed to strict Jewish customs as best as they could including observing dietary laws, keeping the Sabbath and circumcising the baby boys. Buffeting the legendary Kuki-Mizo ancestor Manmasi was one and the same with Manasseh, one of Joseph's sons and Jacob's grandson.

Synagogues sprang up in the 1970s. By the 1980s, contact was made with Israel, and between 1990 and 2003, roughly 800 Bnei Menashe trickled in on tourist visas. They studied for conversion, and usually within an year of their arrival, were accepted as Jews and citizens. For the most part they have adjusted well[100].

But, as usual, they had the political problems from India and Israel as well. Indians did not want such 'Conversion' to other religion to their citizens

[101] *Toronto Star* dated 30. 12. 2006, *From India to Israel*, L10, RonCsillag

and to be sent outside. But, the government, of Israel, a part of it, objected to the argument that the Menashe Mizos were dubious, and they wanted to 'avoid the poverty in India and wanted to escape to other country, as an excuse'. This is the common impression that the West, normally, makes with the Indian converts. But this allegation was refuted strongly by Gante:

> "Well I can testify to the fact that I did not come to escape poverty". Gante says firmly. "My father was mayor of the city. We had four servants in the house for full time. I had cable TV in my room. I had a motorcycle when I was 16. And there were a lot of people like me. In 2005, Israel's Shephardi Chief Rabbi, Shlomo Amar, recognized the Bnei Menashe as indeed descendant from the lost tribe of Manasseh and therefore eligible to immigrate to Israel.
>
> Between 8,000 and 9,000 Bnei Manashe in India find themselves in a kind of catch-22. They would have to go to Israel to formally enter the Jewish fold – but Israel has barred them from entering unless they are already converted. If the Indian government would only allow the rabbinical court to go back there and convert them, that would be the best solution.
>
> Meantime, while Mizoram is relatively peaceful and stable, the state of Manipur is home to an insurgency between the rival Naga and Kuki-tribes. Jews belong to the latter, and many have been killed in tribal fighting. Jews on the repressive Burmese side of the border are generally left alone. Gante says that Genetic testing on the community has confirmed Semitics Marks in their DNA[101]"

DNA tests are the best way, these days, to confirm and settle down disputes of racial origin in our modern age. The *Nadalwars* have not officially claimed to possess the Jewish roots in them. But there are

literary evidences to show that Jews might have the Lamurian links with them and that they had undertaken repeated **"to and fro"** journeys from and back to India or Indian submerged regions. The DNA tests of the Tamils, including one from Kanyakumari district shows an antiquity of 1,50,000 to 1,70,000 years. More scientific researches are to be conducted to confirm the *Nadalwar* links to the Jews. Incidentally, it is note-worthy that these Nadars or *Nadalwars* have more than 250 tribes or branch-names as kindred groups extending to north, south, west and eastern India, and even going far to Indonesia.

The route followed by the Mizos as "Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet, China and India" perhaps, will help future researchers to find out the route of St.Thomas. Persia –Afghanistan –India; or Persia –Afghanistan, Tibet –India, etc., can be ascertained the normal trade routes of ancient times. If such trade and cultural routes are followed upon, then it would be possible that St.Thomas has come to India through Afghanistan-Taxila-Pataliputra, Nalanda-Kalinga-Tanjore-Tiruchirappalli (Urriyoor) -Korkai- Thiru Athencode (Colchi or Colachel), established the first Church at Thiruvithamcode and then went up to Cranganoor, established seven churches and then came back to Thiruvithamcode, Muttom and then went back to Mylapore where he met his martyrdom. Anyway, for confirmation, more study and research are to be conducted by dedicated scholars. We are to remember that Thiru Athencode was then a great Centre of Learning.

Conclusion

Although there are several books on the question of 'St Thomas and early Christianity in India', by many authors, it would be a real task to find out the truth. It is needed to go much deeper into the politico-socio-historical roots of the land as was existing during the exact period of St Thomas, because, many changes have been found occurred in history as well as in the projection of social groups with the passage of time during these 1957 years. This study requires reading of early inscriptions of various languages, studying the social groups then existing as well as understanding the waves of different cultural groups that took possessions, one after the other, with new philosophies and new thought process to bury down the earlier existing ones, in order to create new theories. This is going to be a very tedious task indeed. However, there are rudiments of proofs to ascertain that St Thomas was here in India to propagate the 'Law of Love' preached by Jesus Christ to the people of India.

Now, the question is, why should a disciple of Jesus Christ, or an Israelite come to this distant country of India, rather than to the closer places of Samaria, the other Middle East countries or even to the more attractive western countries? We see in the Holy Bible:

> These twelve men were sent out by Jesus with the following instructions: 'do not go to any Gentile territory or any Samaritan towns. Instead you are to go to those lost sheep, the people of Israel. Go and preach the Kingdom of heaven [102].

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[102] Holy Bible, *Mathew* Ch.10.5-6.

This verse and the history behind this, is very important to know the reason why the disciples of Jesus were sent to India, one after the other in the course of different periods. To analyse this we need to study history and culture of different social groups of the world, including that of India. We need to know more about Israelites too. We need to know more about the 'uncorrupted (if possible) history of the early rulers of India, especially South India too. According to S.Johnson:

> A branch of Dravidians, known as Sumerians from the Amorites might have migrated from the regions of Canaan around 1500 BC and settled down around the Punjab and Indus Valley regions of India. It is seen that a mixed race of Israelites from Samaria with the Dravidian characters had ruled India around 700 BC. These Dravidian groups are later pushed back by the new invaders of Kushanars, Greeks, Persians or a mixed groups of all these. These Dravidians, pushed to the Southern regions, had ruled as the Cholas, Pandyas and the *Cheras*, with the characteristics of the Levites. They were learned people with a divine mind, having the usual attachments to the world curtailed, called themselves in such terms like *Panayan, Nadan* etc. For example, they had names like *Thalayananganathu Seruventra Pandyan Neduchzhiyan 'Panayan'*; *Adi Viira Parakkirama Pandya Nadan'* [103].

This seems to be bit unbelievable in the historical evidences available at present. This word '*Nadan, Naden, Nadalvan, Panayan,* and more of 250 of such terms equivalent to *Santor* are given in the book, *The Dravidian Lineages- The Nadars through Ages,* by Dr.M.Immanuel. Many inscriptions found in the present 'Hindu' temples also depict

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[103] *Kaalam Kadaisiya, Kristuvuvin Varugai Sameepama,* (Comparative Study) S.Johnson-2003, 35

the term *Panayan* and *Naden*. Yet, their connection with the Israelites is difficult to be established. Johnson further clarifies:

> The Israelites who had been thus scattered around 6th century BC, and also around 1st century AD, especially the later Levites who had mixed up their culture with the *Baal* or *Nandi* (Bull) worship, had left out some symbols and words to identify them, in the temples that they had constructed in the later periods. Few of these words are: *Veda Pandithan, Panayan, Kadalon, Naden,* etc. The insignia of early Jews was a Seven-branched golden lamp attached with Horn or Trumpet, at one side and on the other end, the **bifurcated branch of Palm-Flower** (male Palm). 'Ancient Jewish lamp (B.C.1000, 1100) with three symbols of Judaism: Seven branched candle stand, with burning lights (menorah), flanked by Palm branch (lulab- *Panam poovu* or *Aluvachi*-in Tamil) and ceremonial horn (*shofar*) [104].

Palm-Tree, in early Indian literature as well as in Sanskrit is glorified in many ways. Bible also compares it with 'people of Justice'. There are many inscriptions and depictions about it in many parts of the world, sometimes remaining unidentified yet. The early relationship of the Jewish people and the Palm tree is almost vanished. The only people available at the moment having the link with the Palm tree are the *Santors* (*Chantors* or *Panayans)* of India, South and North. Indian temples, especially the Perumal temples of Trivandrum in Kerala, and the Perumal temples of Kanniyakumari District still keep Palm-Tree oriented 'secrets' and stories hidden within them. In India itself, the *Chantors* or the Nadars are known in more than 250 names, many more are yet to be found out. More study is needed to reveal and locate their

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[104] The same book, as above, by S. Johnson,2003, 197.

branches all over the world. Incidentally, the Royal Garland adorned by the early *Chera* Kings was the garland made from the flowers of male Palm-Trees.

The Palm-tree and the *Panayans* (Levite type of King-Priests) are inter-twisted in history, either glorified or derogatorily pictured (in the later period) by historians and societies. But historical scrutiny reveals a lot of evidences to show their worthy place in history. There are many inscriptions referring to these sections of people and their culture. From those many inscriptions, the one, which is, now preserved in the Padmanabhapuram Palace Museum, near Thackalay, in Kanniyakumari district is note worthy. This inscription reveals the position of the Nadalwars *Chantors*, alias *Panayans*) till the year 1696 AD. It is surprising to note that these people, the Nadars, now considered to be backwards, were responsible for clearing off or pardoning the sins committed by the caste Hindus like the Nairs and others, only if they (Nairs or the culprits) could call out the name "Nadan" or simply touch or catch hold of a 'Palm-Tree' as an asylum. This act frees the culprit from the sin committed. M.Immanuel writes:

> According to this tradition, if a *Pulaya* or *Mannan* touches a Nair woman, or pelt a stone at her, or just call out "I have seen you", the Nair woman must go with that person and shall be abandoned by her society. But in the process, if the Nair woman touches a Palm-tree, or calls out a 'Nadan' of the region, she has to be freed at once on the spot. What was the origin of the custom is not known. It may be presumed that originally the Nair women belonged to the *Pulayas*[105] and after the Nambutiris have taken charge of their protection, a custom developed that if such women were seen outside the house, they could

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[105] Elamkulam Kunjan Pilla, 1953, *Kerala Charitrathile Iruladanja Edugal, Notes-47*..

be claimed by the *Pulayas*. However, the remedy for their captivity was a 'Nadan or a Palmyra Tree. This age old tradition was finally abandoned through a Royal Proclamation of the year, K.V. 871, *Magaram, 25, which is in the year, 1696 AD, by the King, Viira Kerala Varma*[106]

So, in order to understand the Socio-Political system existing during the time of the visit of St. Thomas, it is necessary to make a thorough analysis with the help of linguistic and inscriptional studies on various aspects of cultural and political and racial, perspective. This study alone can lead us to the fact that who were the people predominantly available in those specific period and the possibilities of conversion by the royal fold, rather than imagining stories told on mythical conclusions. We need to differentiate between the traditional term of *Panayan* and the general 'King-Priest' and the later generalised 'Brahmanical term for priest' to mean a Brahmin, in the present day's conception.

It is understood that this tribe of special Royal Priestly class ruled the Southern India from 1st century AD to 1725 AD assuming titles such as *Jadila Varman*, *Mara Varman*, etc. If these things are taken true, then it is likely that the oral tradition which holds St Thomas has converted and baptised 'Udaya Santan *Asan*' king of a small division, who lived in 7 BC-88 AD, claimed by the family of Amalagiri Anthonimutthu Annavi, in his book *Yesu Darmathil Chera Arasar Kulam* (The *Chera* Royal Family in the Christian Faith) is true. If it is true, the theory of Nambutiris as the first converts of Christianity, as it is held today, is to be re-considered to hold truth or acceptability.

It is held by this family that St Thomas converted twelve families of the Royal *Santors* who were then

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[106] *Anatomy of a Folklore –Ottan Kathai-A Deified Spy and his King Viira Martanda Varma*, M.Immanuel, p.29, Royal Proclamation under inscription NO.15, Trav. Arch. Ser.vol.VII, p.26; NO.68-Trv. Epig (1096)

following Buddhism, Jainism, etc., into Christian faith and appointed them as his disciples to spread the faith to their relatives and people of other regions. This goes in tune with the Biblical requirement of visiting the 'lost sheep'. These twelve families are:

> Udaya Santan *Asan*, *Chera*code Azhakuthambi *Asan*, Perappancode Thava Perumal *Asan*, Thikkanamcode Kaakkaiyandi *Asan*, Melamcode Aten Kanni *Asan*, Kaarancode Michel Aandi *Asan*, Malaicode Kariya Manickam *Asan*, Vellicode Iluppaimuthu *Asan*, Ummancode Yanai Adakki *Asan*, Kotticode Koil Paappu *Asan*, Veppancode Sarma Chitthan *Asan*, Thiruvithamcode Tharissapalli Asan [107].

It is learnt that twelve of these disciples were kept under the Chieftain (*Chittarasar)*, Udaya Santan *Asan*. St Thomas observed fasting for 41 days and followed the custom of Holy Communion, washing the feet of all these disciples, before the community feast. It is amazing to observe this custom is still followed among the *Santors* (Nadar community) of this place and also in Kerala. This custom is called locally, '*Ayanam* or *Asanam*' (sacred feast). Locally this word has the meaning: honourable feast, or ascending up. These days, this *Asanam* is observed only few days before the marriage of a girl or son in the family of *Santors*, organised by their *Uravinmurai*, i.e., blood relations. Christian and Hindu sections of *Santors* follow this. Under modernisation, this tradition too is fading away fast.

Antonimuthu Annaavi claims:

> The Veera Raghava Pattayam is presently at Kottayam. Sreedhara Menon, (1978, p. 135), says that the Plate was preserved earlier in the Thazhaicode temple, near Erinjalakkudai of

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[107] *Yesu Darmathil Chera Arasar Kudumbam,* Anthonimuthu Annavi, 49)

Kerala. But, this Grant was issued to the 11th lineal member of Udaya Santra Menmiga Aten (*Asan*) who was first baptised by St Thomas. It was issued in 345 AD, to Santra Vaduga Kotravan of Manali to be enjoyed for generation after generation. King Mantharan *Cheral* or Vel Kezhu Kuttuvan, was the Emperor of *Cherar* Code (*Chera*code). In his 36th year of sacred rule, this Grant comprising of Manali and Anjuvannam was given to Santra Iravi Kotravan *Asan*, Santra Vadugan *Asan* [108].

Locally it is believed that St Thomas had trained up the indigenous *Santor* tribes in the art of constructions of buildings. Later these *Sastras* were kept in some of the Hindu temples of the *Santors*. It is a fact, even today that almost 98% of the Stonecutters and architects of stone carving belong to the tribes of *Santors*. In the earlier inscriptions they are referred to as '*Pathinettu Nattan Makkal Manickamana Thacchaassari*'[109].

It is evident that these 'Eighteen Nattan Makkal' – a group of eighteen families had also worked as great 'Merchant Guilds' in the earlier times. In inscriptions they are understood to have been referred to as "*lala-maleyala-nanadesigal; nanadesi byavaharigalu; padinenbhumi, padinenvishayam; tennilankai-valanjiyar; bira-vanigaru; bhallunkidantha-hastar, Korrakkudai-panmai-300; munai-virar, pavadi-virar, Kaikolar; jayapalar; Vira-kodiyor,*"[110]

Many of these words are fitting to the narration seen in the Palm-leaf Text, *Valamkaimaali* of the *Santors*. This text refers to these warrior groups involved in inter-continental trade and describe them as '*Ezhunoottuvar, Arunuttuvar, Munnoottuvar, Ainoottuvar*, etc. The equivalent description in the inscriptions of

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[108] Same book, Annavi, 81.

[109] Inscription NO.117, of 1228 AD, Nadana Kasinathan, 1972

[110] *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of* Inscriptions and Ceramic-sherds, Noboru Karashima, 2002, 76-78.

early times is: "*Kongavalar*-700; *Jayapalar, Kaikolar; ainurruvar, Korakkudai-panmai-300; Billa-300, Kavarai; Nattu-chettigal*" (Noboru Karashima, 78,79). Among these, the *Kavarai* is the 'Kavara' or Kavathi[111]. This is one of the thirty-nine branches of the modern Nadars. These tribes spread out in many numbers in Karnataka also. The Chettis are the ancient *Cheidis* who are one of the earliest branches of the *Yayati-Nadans*. They are said to be from the *'Panai-naadu'*. Karashima refers to them:

> They are referred to as 'our (*ainuttuvar's*) son's (*nammakkal*) signifying their lower or servicing status. The *ainurruvar* is specified as *padeninbumi nanadesi ainurruvar* and also as *Panainattu ainurruvar*...of the locality (Panainadu), which is related to the broader Organisation [112].

Unlike the present days, the relationship of the Nadans of the land and the *Arayar* (lords of the Sea, or Fishermen) of Seas were very cordial right from the *Sangam* era. Anthropologically also, they have the same features. Hinduisations of the original Indian temples, Aryanisation of Indian literatures, etc., have buried many facts of history, especially, social and indigenous racial history. The enormous amount of *Sastras* (treatise) found with the *Santors*, especially in Kanniyakumari District, in a variety of subjects of ancient science, still vouch for this *Santor* race as the originators of many Cultures and Codes. Still, there are many rudiments of historical facts scattered in these area to link them up with their past culture and royal characters of noble living.

The question whether the Aryan *Nambutiris* were existent at all in the parts of Kerala or in the Southern India is to be examined thoroughly. The language, cultural traditions, etc., do not allow us to assume for their presence as early as first century AD in Kerala.

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[111] *The Dravidian Lineages-Nadars Through the Ages*, M.Immanuel, p. 5,171, etc.

[112] *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic-sherds*.Noboru Karashima, 2002, 76-78

Above everything, the question of first and foremost human inhabitation in the globe is to be determined to find out the probable racial migrations over the world. The Linguistic analysis also becomes very imminent. Tamil, as a language gives us the roots of many world languages in an impartial linguistic study.

Another factor, still important to determine human migration is the study of D.N.A. analysis of genetic character of human races all over the globe. A recently conducted study by Western and Eastern scientists proves that human migration had started through the African countries, probably beginning from a lost continent, the Lamuria. However, the scientists are of the opinion that a 'Cape Comorin' (Kanniyakumari) Route of human migration is more projected in such D.N.A analysis of the *Perumalai Kallar* of Tamilnadu. If this is true, many of the arguments put forth in this text gather more momentum for a favourable conclusion of a 'to and fro' migration of human races from the South and South-East towards North and North-West and again vice' versa, which is repeated more than once in the history of about 10000 to 30000 years of human inhabitation [113].

Such a theory amazingly helps to explain the words of Jesus Christ 'go among the lost sheep'. Recently one set of people from Mizoram of northeastern India, is proved to be the descendants of Israel. They are identified from a local song that they used to sing in times of trial as if crossing through the seas and deserts, etc. How many more are left yet to be found out and re-tracted?

In my own boyhood, I have heard some kind of songs sung by some elders and neighbours to the effect of some passage of Bible to indicate:

> 'in the days to come children will play with snakes, lamb will eat straw with Lion, men and

[113] *The Dravidian Lineages-Nadars through the Ages,* M.Immanuel, 2002.

animals will live together without any fear, love and unity will prevail everywhere...etc' [114].

The persons who had sung the songs to me were ordinary labourers without much of education. It was sung in the fields, at the time of work. I remember their names, Ponnumuthu Nadan, Chellan (Selvam) Nadar. Both of them were from the *Santor* tribe; one was a labourer and the other, toddy taper. They were about 30 or 40 years elder to me. Those people are now dead. The songs were quite lengthy, to recite for about an hour. I have to still search for the availability of such folk songs anywhere around in any written form. The persons who sung those songs were not Christians to the present standards. They were Hindus. How was it, that such philosophy of oneness, (the total essence of all the teaching of the Bible) had come to their mind and attention unless someone of the past generations had passed it on to them, such a philosophy of Love preached by Jesus Christ? The Bible verse in this context goes like this:

> Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, and leopards will lie down with young goats. Calves and lion cubs will feed together and little children will take care of them. Cows and bears will eat together, and their calves and cubs will lie down in peace. Lions will eat straw as cattle do. Even a baby will not be harmed if it plays near a poisonous snake ...there will be nothing harmful or evil (Isaiah, 11:6-9 [115]

How this philosophy of 'Oneness' had come to the minds of such, so called 'pagan' community? In the early inscriptions of Kerala, there are some writings expecting a great gathering of the people **'Under One Umbrella'**. This too is a part of, rather a vital part of, Biblical teaching. This philosophy is found also in the Palm Leaf Text of the *Santors*, the *Valamkaimaalai.* This is also found

[114] Oral traditions narrated by some elders in Kanniyakumari district, S.T.Mangad.
[115] *Good News Bible* version, Isaiah, 11. 6-9.
[116] *Kanniyakumari Kalvettugal,* No. 63 of 1140 AD, Nadana Kasinathan, 1972.

in some Temple inscription [116] at Suchindrum in the Kanniyakumari Dist. More searches are required to be done to bring forth the hidden secrets behind such rare philosophical references. There are many such traditions projecting forward for an inquisitive mind to find out more to the fact that the preaching of Christ has been passed on to the people of India, especially of South India, by disciples of Christ, starting from St Thomas.

The routes that the Saint had followed are yet another thing to be determined. In this respect, the earlier seaports such as Colachel, Muttom, Kanniyakumari (Cape-Comorin), Korkai, Thenkapattanam, etc, become very important. Unfortunately we do not have the history of northern Kerala, even of Cranganore, of the time of first century AD. What we have is a vague history after the 7th century or 10th century AD.

Analysing the finds of the Coins from different foreign countries detected in many parts of India, Dr. John Samuel writes:

> It is note-worthy that among all the places of India, Tamilnadu has been identified as the prime State where the hoards of Roman coins are found out in maximum numbers. These coins possess the impressions of kings like Augustus Caesar, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius Caesar, etc. Many golden coins of the emperor Nero also are detected in Tamilnadu[117].

He points out that Travancore, in comparison with Kottayam has less number of coins. But here, the fact is to be pressed that the efforts taken for excavation in the southern parts of Travancore are very lesser and almost negligent, than the efforts made in the northern parts. Moreover, the sea-erosion occurred around the

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[117] *Thamizhagam Vantha Thooya Thoma*, G.John Samuel,2003, 32

ancient Colachel areas and the southern parts are to be accounted for the lower finds of coins in these areas.

Making reference to Kanniyakumari and one of its famous business centres, Kottar, Dr.V. Lawrence says:

> Kanniyakumari was not only the confluence of seas but also the meeting ground of cultures...it emerged as the meeting ground of early Christianity that was associated with St Thomas...History of Malabar mentions the existence of St Thomas Christians in Kottar as merchants...In any case, Christians were living in Kottar long before St. Francis Xavier appeared on the scene. 'One inscription' dated 1494 contains the edict of the local ruler granting tax exemptions to the residents of Kumari Muttom and authorising the levy of a light cess from the fishermen[118]

The *Sthala Purana* of the Southern parts of Kerala adjacent to Kanniyakumari claims that they are the originators of the *Chera* Kingdom, as the famous *Villavas*. Linguistically, it is to be observed that most of the family names like *Pakalomattaom, Mer-Cheri*, etc., prove to be of Tamil origin. The Church that St Thomas surely built at Thiruvithamcodu is a monumental proof to declare the coming of St Thomas to this part of the country. Perhaps this is the first of a Gothic type of construction that we have in India. Most of the Indian temples, either Hindu or Buddhist, coming in this type are only of later 6th or 7th century AD. A special study is to be made over this first Church of India. Presently this Church is maintained by a Committee, *St. Mary's Syrian Church, Thiruvithamcode,* of Kerala. The ownership is changed. So also have occurred many changes in the ownership of the Copper-Plates.

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[118] *History of The Catholic Church in Kanniyakumari District*. V.Lawrence, 2002,45,46

The present management of this St. Mary's Church (as the Thomas Church at Thiruvithamcodu is presently known) say that the original owners had 'settled' down at Karthikapalli of north Travancore and they have 'copied' the documents:

> The services of the Tharisayakkar who settled down at Karthikapalli were utilised for copying divine documents and books till the first part of the 15th century AD[119].

As a matter of fact, family of Amalagiri Antoy Annavi claims that their forefathers had written the first edition of the book, *Yooda Thomasin Nadapadigal* (The Acts of St. Thomas) and they had the palm-leaf copies till some hundred years ago when they used to recite it on occasions of *Asanam* (holy feast). Branches of this family probably had settled down at Karthikapally and Kottayam. They were intercontinental traders and had the title, *Annavi.* Of course, more study and prudent research are required for conclusions.

Panayan S Johnson refers to one Parakraman Laban, from the Pandyan dynasty; later reduced to a common civilian family living in the suburbs of Attoor, in the present Kanniyakumari district was a lineage from the Levites. The members of this family are still living in the area. But it is understood that many of their family records are either destroyed by the new set of allied forces who had later taken over the rule of the country (around 18th and 19th century AD) or been lost during riots and fire by the enemy groups. It is said that this family has come to this region to help King Martanda Varma during his trial of strength with the erstwhile Thampys. This family was given many gifts of land and properties by the King. After becoming Christians, this Laban family had gifted many valuable wooden articles and other aids for Church constructions and development in the

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[119] *St. Mary's Syrian Church,* George Mathew, K. George Chandy, 1997, 20

Kadamalakuntru L.M.S. Church. They, then, still had huge properties from the royal fold. Politically this has been proved that in the years between 1870 and 1900 AD, the then Royal Government of Travancore had released declarations by *Murasu* and also by displaying Public Notices, calling for the members of the family to come back to the royal Office and accept the royal grants. But the major members of the family, including those from the *Thirupuram* family at Neyyattinkara, also, have 'Rejected' the offer. A few of those who had gone to accept the 'Possession' have never come back [120].

Facts are found scattered, to be collected to find the possible truth in history. These facts help us to presume that 'Why St.Thomas was sent by the Holy Spirit' to this distant land to preach the Gospel of Christ for the Salvation of many, as was promised by God to Abraham, in those days. Such an analytical study, without any bias, will surely reveal facts that St Thomas visited India, especially the southern parts of India and preached the Gospel of Christ, established Churches here, and got killed, by the worshippers of mother goddess *Kaali*, (the *Santors*) as is pointed out by Mundanan. Whether the *Santors* have later designated themselves as *Nambutiris*, or the Brahmins themselves, have, at one opportune stage, have overthrown the *Santors* and have taken their positions and Possessions and were known by the new name as *Nambutiri*-Brahmin, is yet to be confirmed. On the information available based on the present socio-historical research, it is inferred that the early Converts of St Thomas were from the Royal Families of *Santors* (*Nadalwars*), but not the *Nambutiri Brahmins*. Whatever be, the Indian, specially the Kanniyakumari and Kerala oral traditions hold that St Thomas came to this land and walked through the coastal regions and preached the Gospel of Christ to the 'Lost Sheep' as was commanded by his Master, Jesus Christ.

[120] Panayan S.Johnson, 2008, p.226-230.

GLOSSARY

Assariyar	:	Priests, King-priest, Gurukkal of Nadar tribe caring temples.
Athencode	:	Place in Kanyakumari dist. An ancient city with Aten kings.
Chantor	:	An epithet to Nadars, meaning 'Noble, High born royal family.
Chera	:	The very ancient rulers of present Kerala regions of south.
Ezhavas	:	A major community of Kerala linked up with Nadars.
Gurukkal	:	An epithet for a class of Nadars engaged in priesthood
Idamkaiyar	:	Left hand tribes, helpers of the Kings
Idayan Amudan	:	Shepherd born of Toddy taper among the Nadar, Ezhavas, etc.
Idigas	:	A branch of Nadars living in Karnataka regions
Jainism	:	A religion of peace established by Mahavira, son of a "*Nata*"
Karingachira	:	A temple (Church) established by St. Thoms
Kshatriya	:	A term coined later, equivalent to 'Naden' or a Ruler.
Kulasekhara	:	A branch of early rulers of Kerala from the Nadalwar tribe
Kurusadi	:	Christian Shrine established by the influence of St. Thomas
Muttom:	:	Place at Cape Comorin aquinted by St. Thomas
Madai	:	A very ancient model of coin of Tamils to equate barter system
Mahabharatam	:	Ancient record of war between two groups :Pandus and Kurus
Malayalam	:	The language of present Kerala formed in 16th century AD
Maligai	:	A Palace, Pagoda
Mana	:	An ancient kingdoms of South and Central India
Manikkavachagar	:	An 8th century poet causing the death of 8000 Jains in a day
Manudharma	:	A Law book coined by Brahmins to divide Indian Castes to rule
Menashe	:	A term used by the Mizos of India to remember 'Mannasseh'
Mizhi	:	Eye, "Kannan" of Krishna tribe like Yadavas.
Mizo	:	A State in the north-east of India known as 'Mizoram'.

Muthappan	:	Elder father, a word of respect to St. Thomas used by Christians
Mylapore	:	A place in Tamilnadu where St. Thomas was killed.
Nadalvar	:	A Ruling Tribe from the Nadar class reduced by the Brahmins
Naden	:	A Leader, King, Ruler, later Sanskritised as "Kshatriya".
Nadayar	:	Same as 'Nadar' meaning a ruler
Nahusha	:	An epithet to Nadalwar in its Sanskritised form
Nambutiri	:	The later totalitarian Brahmins of Kerala came after 7th century.
Nayan	:	An ancient leader or man in charge.
Ovvai	:	An ancient Tamil Poetess
Palli	:	A Buddhist or Jain Church (temple)
Palmesyar	:	Toddy tapers, Sailors who formed the Phoenicians
Panacha	:	Pertaining to Palm-tree
Panayan	:	A priest, toddy taper, ruler of a country, king-priest
Pathinettukuttam	:	A branch of Nadalwar tribe for temple administration
Perumal	:	Big men or Santor, a ruling dynasty of Tamils
Rambaan	:	A people of Jewish character lived in Kerala, priests.
Santor	:	epithet to Nadars, Noble, men of clean and just nature
Sastras	:	Records of valuable treatise
Siddha	:	Saints of Indian philosophy of Yogic cult
Taxila	:	Known as Taksha Sila, a centre of learning visited by St.Thomas
Thambravarni	:	River of South India on the banks of which have lived great Sages.
Thiruppappu	:	One of the Royal Ruling Clans of Travancore applied to Nadars
Thiruvithamcode	:	A very ancient capital of Kerala or "Venadu"
Uravinmurai	:	The Kindred groups of royal dynasties eating *Ayanam* feast
Urumalkettu	:	Custom of Nadars adoring the Head Turban, at the age of 18
Valamkaiyar	:	The Right Hand support to Kings, applied to Nadalwars
Vanavan	:	The mythical originator of the dynasty of Kerala
Villavas	:	The root of Nadalwar dynasty and their 250 branches in India

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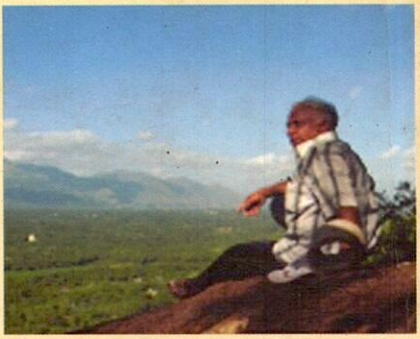
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The author, M. Immanuel, the founder Chairman of CHLIRO-INDIA (Cultural Historical Linguistic Indigenous Research Organisation of India) has several books and research papers to his credit, is all set to remove the 'Zigzags' of history. Originally this Research paper was presented in the first International Conference held in U.S.A, on 'Early Christianity in India'.



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The people of these places were great Jains and Buddhists. The educational centres were known as "Pallis". 'Paranjothiyar' was the first Catechist appointed by St. Thomas. The link with the Syrian Christians, Muthappar and the Nadalwars are interesting.

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Historical Research & Publications Trust
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