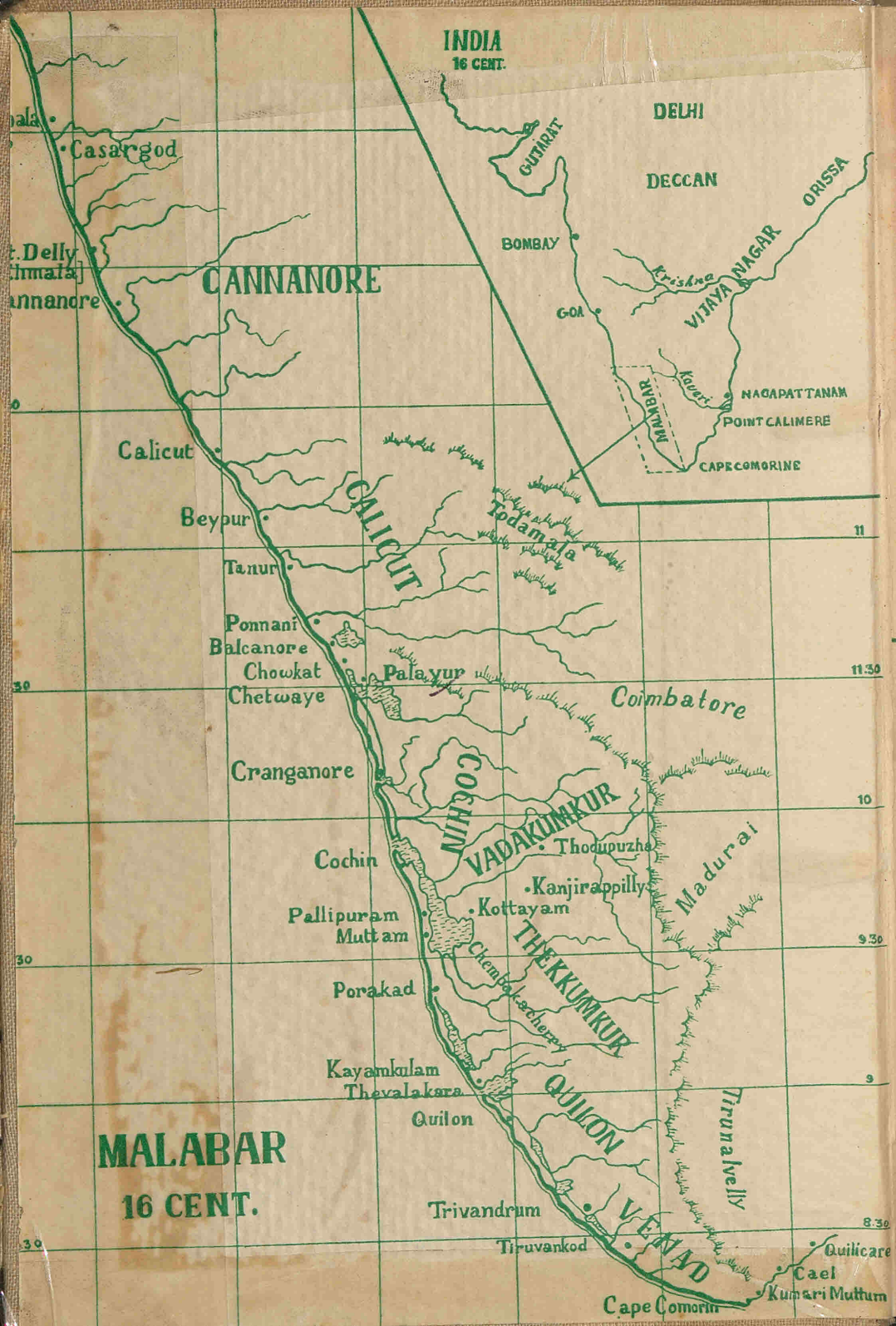
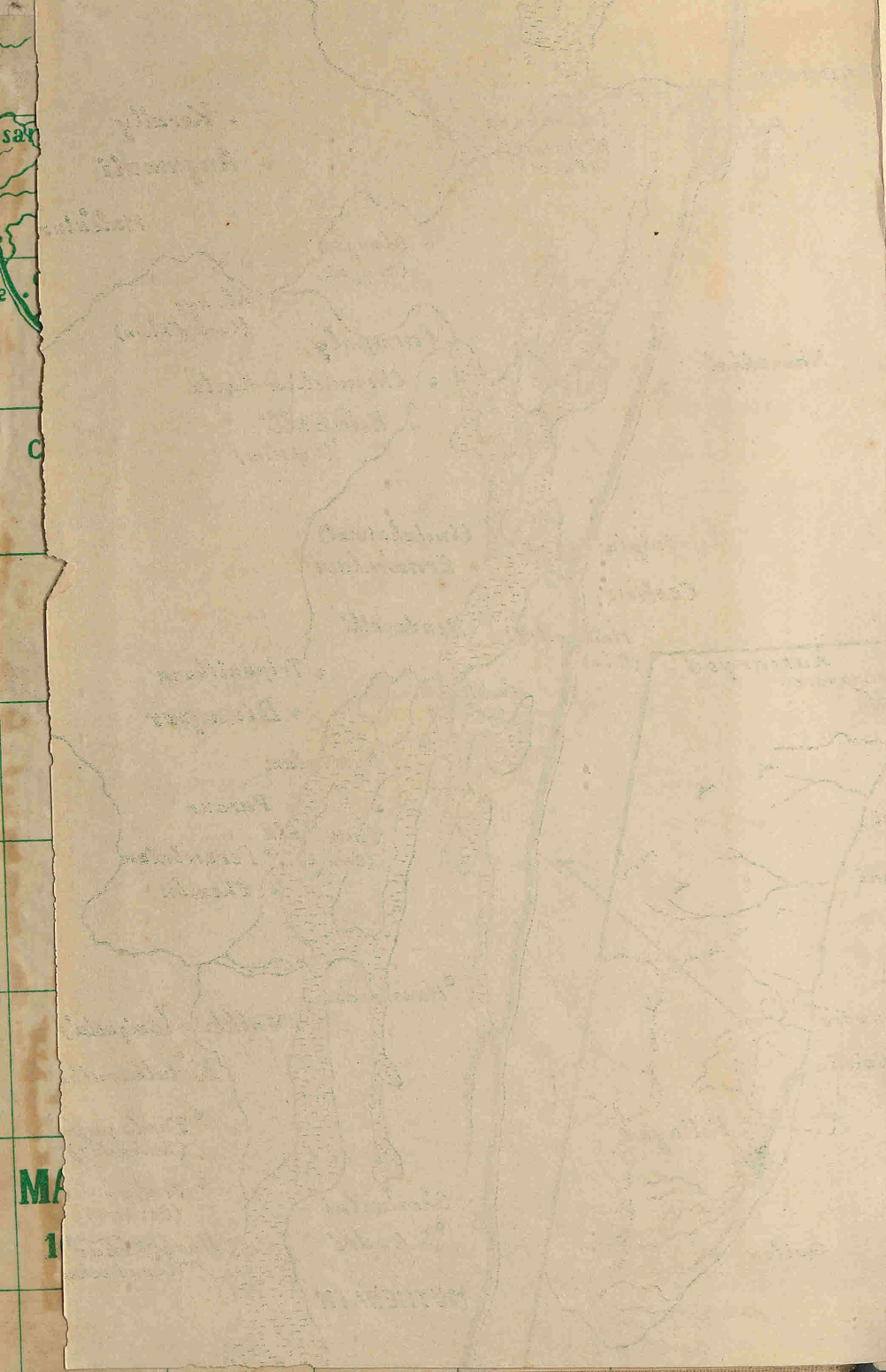
TRADITIONS OF THE ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

A.M. MUNDADAN


INDIA
16 CENT.
DELHI
GUJARAT
DECCAN
ORISSA
BOMBAY
Krishna
VIJAYA NAGAR
GOA
Kaveri
NAGAPATTANAM
MALABAR
POINT CALIMERE
CAPE COMORINE
Casargod
CANNANORE
Calicut
CALICUT
Beypur
Todamala
Tanur
Ponnani
Balcanore
Chowkat
Chetwaye
Palayur
Coimbatore
Cranganore
COCHIN
VADAKUMKUR
Thodupuzha
Cochin
Kanjirappilly
Madurai
Pallipuram
Muttam
Kottayam
THEKKUMKUR
Porakad
Chembakacherry
Kayamkulam
Thevalakara
Quilon
QUILON
Tirunalvelly
MALABAR
16 CENT.
Trivandrum
VENAD
Tiruvankod
Quilicare
Cael
Kumari Muttum
Cape Comorin
11
11.30
10
9.30
9
8.30


Cranganore
Palipport
Malianhara
N.o Parur
(Paru)
Koratty
Angamali
Maleatur
Alangad
(Mangate)
Alwaye
(Carte d'Alwa)
Varapoly
Nharakhal
Cheranelloor Karta
Edapalli
(Repelim)
(Anchekaimal)
Vaipim
Ernakulam
Cochin
Kendaruthi
Mattancheri
(Riba)
Tripunithura
Kassargod
Cannanore
Castello
Diamper
Kumbalam
Arur
Paraur
Calicut
Vaduthala
(Baracki)
Perumbalam
Ponnani
Chembu
Manakkodam
Cranganore
Vaikkom (Baiqueta)
Cochin
Kaduthuruthi
Kottayam
Thalayazhi
(Talhado?)
Vechur
(Bechur)
Shertallai
S. André
Kuda Vechur
(Curu Bechu
Quilon
MUTHEDATH

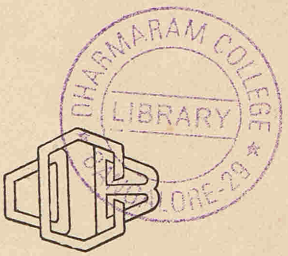


TRADITIONS OF THOMAS CHRISTIANS

Sixteenth Century Traditions of St Thomas Christians

A. MATHIAS MUNDADAN, C. M. I.

With a Foreword
by
G. SCHURHAMMER, S. J.



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Permissu Superiorum

To

MY MOTHER

FOREWORD

Two points are treated in the pressent volume: the question of the tomb of Saint Thomas in Mylapore, now a suburb of Madras, and the history of the Christians of Saint Thomas after the death of the apostle up to the arrival of the first Latin missionaries in the Middle Ages.

In his introduction to the first point the author gives a short review of the different opinions about the apostolate of Saint Thomas in India without entering into a critical evaluation of the arguments given for or against it. Then follows the question of the tomb in Mylapore, which is treated *in extenso* according to the published and unpublished sources from the second to the 18th century, which we have collected and hope to publish in the near future in their original texts. Of the greatest importance are here the Portuguese reports about the discovery of the tomb in 1517, about its opening by order of the Portugese king in 1522 and about the local traditions concerning the apostle and his tomb for which Christian and non-Christian witnesses were called in 1533.

In the second part of the book Portuguese and Indian sources are examined for the chief event in the history of the Christians of Saint Thomas: their exodus from Mylapore to the South Coast of India, the arrival of Thomas of Cana and the foundation of the community of Cranganore, which gave origin to the two divisions of the Nordists and Sudists, the coming of the brothers Sapor and Prot and the community in Quilon, the fallen–away communities in Kerala and the Syrian Church at Cape Comorin. Then the author describes the social and the socio-ecclesiastical life of the Christians of Saint Thomas, their cult and liturgical life, and their attitude towards the Latin rite and the Portuguese efforts of of Latininization.

The thesis which the present book formed a part, was written in 1960. Three years later we treated the question of the Mylapore tomb and its traditions in the second volume of our work "Franz Xaver. Sein Leben und seine Zeit" (Freiburg 1963) 547–579 and pointed to a new argument for the authenticity of the tomb, which we had already proposed the year before in a conference at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau:

The bricks in the oldest existing portion in the southern wall of the tomb are about 15. 5 inches long, 8 inches wide and 3 inches thick. Mr. A. Longhurst, Superintendent of the Archaeological Department, Southern Circle, of India, who inspected the tomb in 1921, declared that these bricks were of great antiquity, because they were of the kind found in the Buddhist stupas, only that those were larger: 20 x 10 x 3 inches. Twenty–four years later, in 1945, excavations were made south of Mylapore in Arikamedu near Pondicherry and, for the first time in India, a Roman trading station was discovered, founded in the beginning of the first century A. D. In the oldest layer the buildings were of wood and the ceramics found were of the first century. In the second layer the buildings, begun about 50 A. D. and abandoned before the end of the first century, were of bricks, and the bricks of these buildings were similar to those of the tomb of St. Thomas in Mylapore, of the average size of 15. 5 x 8 x 3 inches! The bricks of the buildings, added in the second century have all already a different size.

Rome, December 1, 1965. GEORG SCHURHAMMER S. J.

PREFACE

In the preface to my previous book: *The arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob, 1498-1552*, I had written: "In the original study, a dissertation presented to the Gregorian University for our doctorate in Church History, two other themes were also included: 1. the history of the 'discovery' and excavation by the Portuguese of what is supposed to be the tomb of St. Thomas, the Apostle....; 2. the traditions of the Christians of St. Thomas which the Portuguese came to know and racord in the sixteenth century. We have left them out here with the hope of publishing them in a separate work." It gives me great satisfaction that the hope expressed there has come to realization with the publication of the present volume.

The Portuguese who arrived in India at the close of the 15th century with some vague information about the Indian apostolate of St Thomas, soon bagan to hear about the existence of the 'tomb' and 'house' of St Thomas at Mylapore or the Choromnndel Coast. It took twenty or more years before they were able to give serious attention to the matter. From 1517 onwards regular visits were made by several groups of Portuguese to Mylapore, and the visitors, whether on official mission or not, submitted reports to the Portuguese authorities. In 1523 the tomb was excavated, and a new Church built. Meanwhile a few Portuguese settled down in the locality for good and, as the years passed, the number of settlers went on increasing.

The visitors and settlers made a thorough exploration of Mylapore and its vicinity, places popularly believed to have been sanctified by the ministry and death of St Thomas. Either in connection with these exploratory activities or independently of them, the Portuguese unearthed, both on the Choromandel and in Malabar, a mine of information treasured

in the memories of the people and in ancient books and records. Acting on private as well as official initiative, not only did they explore places and gather information but were also careful to embody this information into written accounts, in the form of letters, reports, depositions, and well-composed histories, which went on accumulating during the whole of the 16th and well into the 17th century. They are today the richest and, perhaps, the earliest written sources of the Indian tradition on the apostolate and the tomb of St Thomas, and also on the past history of the Christians of St Thomas. Many of the accounts describe in some detail the life, the customs and the practices of the Christians as the Portuguese witnessed them in the 16th century. In the present work I have largely drawn on this source material and tried to present a synthesis, in two sections: the first on the tomb of Mylapore and the traditions relating to the apostolate of St Thomas; and the second on the other traditions of the Thomas Christians.

The first part is introduced by a chapter which, after a very short review of the opinions of scholars about the question of the Indian apostolate of St Thomas, indicates and discusses briefly the following points: the location of the 'tomb' on the Choromandel Coast, some views on the authenticity of the tomb, and a number of pre-Portuguese references to the tomb from the 3rd to the 16th century.

The second chapter takes up the questions how the Portuguese came to know of the tomb, how they 'discovered' it, and how they explored Mylapore and the surrounding places- In this connection a short survey and criticism of the Portuguese sources are presented. The pre-Portuguese references to the tomb, together with the manner in which the Portuguese came to know and 'discover' the tomb give the lie to the suggestion made by some authors that the identification of the Mylapore tomb as the burial place of St Thomas is a Portuguese invention.

The third chapter summarises the rich tradition about the tomb and the Indian apostolate of St Thomas under two headings: the Chaldeo-Malabar tradition and the Mylapore tradition – this distinction being based on the sources from

which the Portuguese derived their information. An appendix to this chapter and another to the fifth (in the second part) give the gist of local written sources – sources collected by local people and thus considered to be distinct from the Portuguese sources.

The fourth chapter covers the Portuguese excavation of the tomb, their researches and activities in Mylapore and its vicinity. The first part concludes with an emphasis on a few considerations in favour of the South Indian apostolate of St Thomas and the authenticity of the tomb.

The second part of the book is a continuation of the first as far as the traditions are concerned. In the 16th century, the Portuguese found the community of the Christians of St Thomas, living its life in a particular social and ecclesiastical set-up, with their own customs and cherishing their own traditions handed down by word of mouth or through written records.

This community life is the subject matter of the second part, which begins with a chapter on the origins and past history of the community. Tadition presents three elements as contributing to the formation of the community: the original Malabar stock, the immigrant Christians from Choromandel and East Syrian Christians who might have sattled down in Malabar from the 4th to the 8th or even the 10th century. A discussion of these three elements is followed by a survey of the divisions and distinctions found among the Christians, together with their causes and origins –again in the light of tradition.

The next chapter describes the day–to–day life of the Christians, their occupations, their social status, their communal and ecclesiastical organizations in the 16th century and in the preceding period. The final chapter pieces together the bits of information the Portuguese give about the religious and liturgical life of the community.

At the end the picture which emerges is not complete in all the details but more or less generally satisfying. This picture is sufficient to give us a glimpse of the life of the Thomas Christians prior to the influence of the Portuguese on them.

The Portuguese were from the beginning not a little puzzled by the particular pattern of Christian life of the Thomas Christians. From the earliest years of their arrival they made known their desire to make the Christians conform to the Portuguese manners and modes but their initial attempts to change them were rather sporadic. A more or less systematic effort began with the establishment of the college or seminary at Cranganore (1541). The community did change in the course of time, though not in the same degree and with the same speed as the Portuguese expected them to do. In order to grasp fully this process of change one has to study it against the background of the peculiar life the Christians lived in the 16th century, at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in India.

Further it may be observed that even a superficial student of the history of the Thomas Christians will wonder at the spontaneity with which this community had adjusted itself to its environment. Of course, this natural impulse led to some abuses and the Diamper Synod (1599) was right in correcting a few customnry practices. The Synod, however, culminated in the organised attempt by the Portuguese to change the life of the community, in a way that stifled the spontaneity itself. Consequently it may be justly said that from the end of the 16th century onwards the community became less and less adaptive. The present study of the 16th century traditions of the community will, I hope, bring home this fact very clearly.

Let me conclude this preface with a word of thanks to all those who have helped so generously and in so many ways in the preparation of this book. Particular mention must be made of Fathers George Schurhammer, Joseph Wicki, Placid Podipara and Jonas Thaliath, who have given me special assistance. To Fr. Schurhammer, who has again blessed me with a foreword, I gratefully dedicate this book.

Dharmaram College
Bangalore, June 1, 1970. A. M. MUNDADAN, C. M. I.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DHGF	*Dictionnaire d'Histoire e Géorgraphique Ecclesiastique.*
DI	WICKI, *Documenta Indica.*
EX	SCHURHAMMER and WICKI, *Epistolae.*
HOSTEN	HOSTEN, *Antiquities.*
KSP	*Kerala Society Papers.*
LTK	*Lexikon fur Theologie u. Kirche.*
PG	MIGNE, *Patrologia Greca.*
PL	MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina.*
PM	PADMANABHA MENON.
Q	SCHURHAMMER, *Die zeitgenosischen Quellen.*
SCHURHAMMER	SCHURAMMER, *The Malabar Church.*
SRD	SILVA REGO, *Documentação.*

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PART - I

The Tomb of Mylapore and the Traditions Connected with It.

CHAPTER 1

THE TOMB OF MYLAPORE BEFORE THE PORTUGUESE CAME

The Portuguese arrived in India at the end of the fifteenth century. When they came they certainly possessed some vague information concerning the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. Not long after their arrival they began to hear reports about the existence of what was described as the 'house' and 'tomb' of St. Thomas in Mylapore on the Choromandel Coast. But during the first decade or two the Portuguese officials were so busy on the Malabar Coast and in Goa that they could give practically little attention to matters concerning Choromandel. It was only in the early twenties of the sixteenth century that they made earnest efforts to explore Choromandel and Mylapore and the 'house' of St. Thomas.

In this chapter we will first give a summary survey of the present opinion among scholars regarding the question of St. Thomas' apostolate in India. Then the story of the tomb before the Portuguese 'discovered' it will be briefly traced, adducing also some of the views on the authenticity of the tomb.

I. The Apostolate of St. Thomas In India

Our purpose here is not, nor is it in any way the scope of our study, to enter into any critical evaluation of the arguments given for or against, by the scholars, on the question of St. Thomas' apostolate in India. What we propose to do is to present in a summary where the question stands at present.

For a review of the respective positions taken by different scholars on this question we may refer the readers to a learned article by Hambye S. J. in *The Clergy Monthly*. [1] He classifies these scholars into four groups: the first of these groups, in which is included the Bollandist Peeters S. J., denies any kind of Indian apostolate of St. Thomas; the second group is formed of those who support the North Indian apostolate of the Apostle but deny or disregard the South Indian apostolate; those who are strongly for the North Indian apostolate but keep an open mind, ready to weigh the pros and cons of the possibility of the South Indian apostolate belong to the third class; the fourth group of scholars, while trying to combine both the North Indian and South Indian apostolates, consider the South Indian apostolate more reliable.[2]

After this short review of the different types of scholars, Hambye goes on to define the nature of our knowledge of the whole question. Our source of knowledge for the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas is a tradition because we do not possess any written account of it contemporary to the apostolate as we have St. Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* of St. Paul's activities and of some of St. Peter's activities. The earliest written record about St. Thomas' preaching in India is the romantic apocryphal *Acts of St. Thomas*, written in Syriac towards the end of the second century or by the beginning of the third century.[3] From the third century on-

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1. HAMBYE 363-75. We are indebted to this article for many of our points in this introductory section of the present chapter.
2. For a number of authors belonging to the first group, see ibd. 363, nn. 1 & 2; to the second group, 363, nn. 3 & 4; to the third group, 363, n. 5; to the fourth group, 364, nn. 6-15. It may be observed here that the first two of these groups are mostly concerned with the study of the apocryphal *Acts of St. Thomas*. The third is also in some degree concerned about it. As to the South Indian tradition these authors (except T. K. Joseph) do not know of it or do not bother about it. The fourth group, on the contrary, are generally either men of the soil or those who have had much direct contact with the St. Thomas Christian community of Malabar.
3. The Syriac text is published by BEDJAN, in *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, tom. III, Paris-Leipzig 1892, pp. 1-175; WRIGHT, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, London 1871, vol. I: Syriac text; Vol. II: English translation. Cf. MEDLYCOTT, 221-225, about different versions and editions of the *Acts* and 213-297, for a critical analysis of the same.

wards we find frequent allusions to the Parthian or Indian apostolate of St. Thomas in the writings of the Church-Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers. Beginning with the fourth century the tradition is constant and unanimous in all the Churches.[4]

This tradition, as it originated outside India, may be called the western tradition, in contrast to the Indian tradition found among the Christians of St. Thomas, and among their non-Christian neighbours of Malabar and Tamilnad. By this we do not intend here to deny any reciprocal influences or assert the absolute independence of one from the other even in their origins. We may, however, remark that the contents of the two traditions seem to argue at least a partial independence, although it has to be admitted that a serious and scientific attempt for comparative evaluation of the contents is still a desideratum to establish once for all any such independence.

Hambye following Farquhar[5] inclines to the view that the western tradition itself is not a single tradition but probably a combination of two elements, one of which originated in Edessa and the other in Alexandria.

The contents of the western tradition, whether it is single or combined, may be summarised thus: Thomas the Apostle preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, converted many, including members of some royal family, suffered martyrdom there, and was first buried in India itself; later his mortal remains were transferred to the West (to Edessa) where they were honourably deposited and venerated. The main source for this tradition is, no doubt, the *Acts of St. Thomas*[6]

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4. The works of PERUMALIL and MEDLYCOTT may be usefully consulted for a collection of the testimonies of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers. Another important work is that of VÄTH. A good idea of bibliography on the question may also be had from these works.

5. FARQUHAR, J. N., *The Apostle Thomas in North India*; *The Apostle Thomas in South India*.

6. The *Acts*, an historical romance, describe first the apostolate of St. Thomas in North India at the court of Gûdnapher (Gondopharres, for the historicity and times of this N. Indian king, the work of LOHUIZEN-DE-LEEUW, J. E. van, *The "Scythian" period*, may be consulted). The ruler asks his guest to build him a palace and gives him money for this purpose. But the apostle spends the sum

in which India is named the field of St. Thomas' activity. The third century writers up to the council of Nicaea assigned the field to Parthia.[7] But the post-Nicene writers are to consider it India.[8] This difference is the main basis for Hambye to distinguish a double origin for the western tradition.[9]

The Indian tradition is not so clearly uniform; it varies, as we go from source to source and from place to place. The general trend may be summarised here as follows: St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of our Lord came direct from the Near-East and landed in Cranganore about 52 A. D.; he converted high caste Hindu families in Cranganore, Palayur, Quilon etc.; consecrated priests from some of these families; built some seven churches, erected crosses; then passed over to the eastern coast and suffered martyrdom there; his tomb is in Mylapore on that coast.[10]

The western tradition is generally taken as based on the *Acts of St. Thomas.* Thus the authors who deny any kind of historic value for this work, deny absolutely the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas; while those who assert the North Indian apostolate attribute some historic value to the *Acts.* We are rather inclined to think that the *Acts* cannot be the only source of the western tradition, which is constant and unanimous from the beginning of the fourth century, espe-

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on the poor and the angry king puts him into prison. Thereupon Gad, Gudnapher's brother, dies and when brought back to life narrates the beauty of the pala e which Thomas had built in heaven. The king is converted and receives baptism together with his brother, and the Apostle preaches the faith all over the country. Then Thomas travels overland to another kingdom to the capital of king Mazdai, called by its ruler. Here too he converts many; is stabbed to death by order of the king on the top of a hill, half a mile from the town. Long afterwards a son of the ruler falls sick. Mazdai gets the tomb of the martyr opened to heal the son with the relics, but the bones were not found, "for one of the brethren had taken them away secretly and conveyed them to the West".

7. Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius.

8. Socrates, Rufinus, J. Chrysostom, Ambrose, Paulinus of Nola, Gregory of Naziansus.

9. Jerome, J. Chrysostom, Isidore of Seville etc. seem to combine both traditions.

10. For details, cf. ch. 2.

cially since the *Acts* are acknowledged by certain Fathers already in the fourth century as apocryphal.[11] There must have existed already before the composition of the *Acts* some element in the oral tradition about the apostolate of St. Thomas, which probably formed the nucleus or the point of departure for the romantic *Acts*. In establishing this historical nucleus the double trend in the western tradition, suggested by authors, if well explored, may be a step forward.

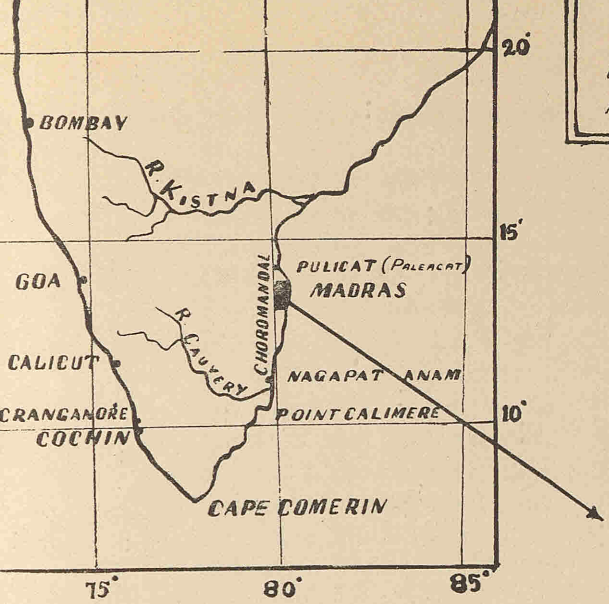
Another factor to be noted is that the scholars who deny or admit the apostolate of St. Thomas in India, do not take into account the Indian tradition at all. The Indian tradition on the other hand does not know any North Indian apostolate of St. Thomas. But the Indian tradition suffers from one disadvantage, namely that it still remains in the initial stage of scientific investigation, while the western tradition has been fairly well scrutinised scientifically. As regards the Indian tradition very much has yet to be done in the fields of philology, palaeography, archaeology, epigraphy etc. before we can truly appreciate its value. Once we succeed to make such an evaluation of its contents, it may provide the historic nucleus of the *Acts* and a link between the facts of the first century and the unanimous fourth century tradition of all the Churches. So much is enough for the moment about the question of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas. We have to make a few other remarks about it at the end of this part. Here we pass on to examine the question of the supposed tomb of St. Thomas.

II. The Tomb Before The Portugues "Discovered" It.

Although the Portuguese, from the early years of their arrival in India, had begun to hear about the tomb of St. Thomas on the Choromandel Coast, it seems that it was only in 1517 some of them actually entered Mylapore to visit it.

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11. It is acknowledged as apocryphal by Epiphanius, St. Augustine St. Turibius of Astroya etc.



MYLAPORE
AND SURROUNDINGS

KOOUM R.

Long Tank

MYLAPORE
(area)

St. Thome' Cathedra

ADEYAR R.

Little Mount

Big Mount

BAY OF BENGAL

1. The Site and Surroundings

The tomb in question is situated in Mylapore[12], at one time a famous town on the eastern coast of South India. This coast is known in history by a more precise name: the Choromandel Coast[13] which signified the country extending from the point where the coast turned northwards, i.e., from Point Calimere, where the coast-line which runs in north-easterly direction from Cape Comorin, takes a due North-South direction up to the delta of the Krishna river.[14] Ma'bar[15] was the name given by the Mohammedans of the 13th and 14th centuries to this country. Abdulfeda distinctly names Cape Comorin as the point where Malabar ended and Ma'bar began.[16] The only town, besides Mylapore, mentioned by Barbosa on this coast is Paleacate.[17]

Now Mylapore is situated in the suburbs of the present great city of Madras. It was, no doubt, an ancient town. To get an idea of its ancient history the booklet of B. A. Figredo, *Voices from the Dust* may be usefully consulted. It is the fruit of the archaeological researches he made in Mylapore. With the material he discovered he composes a short history of the ancient town of Mylapore. There was on the Choromandel Coast, *Mylai* (Mylapore), a town important at the latest from the 2nd century A. D., well known to Roman traders.[18] As Hindu influence predominated during this period, surely there must have been a Hindu temple in a town of such importance. That there was a temple we have proof from the 7th c. onwards. From the evidence at hand we may

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12. The name is generally interpreted as the town of peacocks.
13. Choromandel = *Cholamandalam* or *Choramandalam* = the country of the *Cholas*. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 7; BARBOSA II 124, n.2.
14. BARBOSA, ibd.
15. *Ma'bar (Mabar, Maabar, Mabare, Mobar)* = "crossing place", in Arabic; (probably this was the middle point of the eastern trade route of the Arabs). Cf. YULE & BURNELL 526.
16. Cf. ibd.
17. Paleacate, now Pulicat, at the southern end of an island (25 miles North of Madras) which separates the lake or lagoon of Pulicat from the sea. BARBOSA II 129, n. 1. Madras, which is a creation of the East India Company's rule, was an unknown name during that time. Ibd. 124, n. 2.
18. Cf. FIGREDO 5, n. 1.

conclude that there was a *Siva* temple on the foreshore in ancient times and it was for some reason or other abandoned, probably due to the encroachment of the sea; a presumption supported both by Jain and Christian traditions. [19] Successively or simultaneously there seem to have existed there a Vishnavite and a Jain temple.[20]

For the conditions of Choromandel and the town Mylapore during the early Portuguese period, we may just quote Barbosa.[21] Choromandel was seventy or eighty leagues from Malabar, and was under the king of Narasinga or Vijayanagar. It was a very rich and fertile country. Rice was produced in plenty there, and was the main export from that place.[22] The Chalys, a set of very cunning commercial people, hailed from this place. The native Muslims of the place were rich merchants.

"Going further and leaving behind Choromandel [23] and its lands there is on the sea strand a city, which, right ancient and almost deserted, is called Mylapore". Once it was a great and beautiful town, pertaining to the king of Narsinga. Here lay buried the body of the Blessed Apostle St. Thomas in a little church near the sea.

It was in 1517 that a group of Portuguese visited this town and venerated the tomb there. It seems that already then they conceived some plan to convert it into a colony for the veterans of the Portuguese army. In 1523/4 repairs were done to the tomb and on that occasion it was excavated. Ever since that time we find a colony of an increasing number of Portuguese veterans. The Portuguese establishment was lost in 1662, when the Dutch assisted the Mohammedans in capturing it. Towards the end of Aurangazeb's reign it possessed a mint of the Mughal Emperor.[24] In 1606 Mylapore was erected as a diocese; till then it was first under Goa

19. About this tradition we will speak later on.
20. FIGREDO, ibd., 8f.
21. BARBOSA II 125 f.
22. CORREA I 593 ff.
23. Sup. n.13
24. BARBOSA II 126, n.1.

and from 1558 under the Cochin diocese. In the four hundred years between 1523 and 1903 the tomb in Mylapore was broken open three times for one reason or other: in 1523 the first Portuguese excavation took place; in 1893–1896 the present Gothic cathedral was built; in 1903 the tomb was widened westward when the present crypt was built in commemoration of the tri-centenary of the erection of the Mylapore diocese [25].

2. Opinions of Scholars about the Authenticity of the Tomb

For those who deny the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas the question of the tomb is no problem; they deny *a priori* all authenticity to it. As we have already pointed out the authors who support the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas are either men of the soil or men who were intimately connected with Malabar. Others generally deny or discard the South Indian tradition. One of the exceptions is T. K. Joseph, who is not only a son of Malabar but a Thomas Christian, and knows very well the traditions of these Christians. But he is strongly for the North-West Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, and is equally strong or even stronger in denying the South Indian claim. It is from this *a priori* position that he considers the question of the tomb. While he could easily dismiss the local traditions about the South Indian apostolate as they are not found recorded unless very late [26], he could not take such a short cut in the matter of the tomb as it is acknowledged as an ancient monument. We shall see later on that the traditions are not so simple as he presumes. [27] But in the view of the author the tomb constitutes a challenge to his accepted position, and he desperately fights against it with an obstinacy and tenacity which only tend to obscure his vast scholarship and knowledge and the scientific value, if there is any, of his work on this question. [28]

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25. Figredo 21.
26. T. K. Joseph believes that the *Rabban song,* which, according to him, is the only written record of the tradition, was not extant before 1892.
27. See ch.2.
28. At least some of his argumentation in his *Six Thomases*... appear to be rather puerile.

What T. K. Joseph wants to establish in his work is that the tomb in Mylapore is the burial place of a Muslim holy man, his chief authority for this assertion being Marco Polo's text[29] which text he interprets in his own way. He adduces four main arguments for this interpretation of the text: 1) the North-South direction of the tomb, which cannot be the case of the tomb of a Jew, Christian, or Hindu [30]; 2) a partial tradition among the South-Indians that the holy man buried in that tomb was not strictly a martyr but one killed unawares by a low-caste Hindu, while the general tradition in the West at least is that St. Thomas Apostle died a martyr's death, which tradition for T. K. Joseph seems to be accepted truth; 3) the fact that relics were found in this tomb when it was opened by the Portuguese in 1523 [31], while the entire relics are known to have been removed from India to Edessa and later to Ortona in Italy where now it rests; 4) lastly the tomb is known to have been claimed by Mohammedans as their own and actually at the first visits of the Portuguese to the tomb it was taken care of by a Mohammedan. Of these arguments the first seems not to have any value at all, especially the case cannot be clearly proved, and we do not know the circumstances in which St. Thomas was buried. As for the tradition in the South about the accidental death of the saint we have to see later on how the complete tradition views it. However we may remark that the western tradition need not be necessarily

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29. MARCO POLO after speaking of the *Gavis,* a certain people on the Maabar Coast who murdered Messer Thomas, the Apostle, and who did by no means dare to enter the place where the Apostle's body was placed, describes the pilgrimages and miracles. "It is a place where go in pilgrimage numerous pilgrims both Christians and Saracens. For you must know that the Saracens of that country have great faith in St. Thomas; they say that he was a Saracen; they believe that he had been a great prophet and call him 'avariun' which means to say 'saint'. ...The Christians who go there in pilgrimage carry away some earth from the place where the body of the saint was transfixed". This earth was used by them as an efficacious remedy for all kinds of diseases! *Il Milione,* cap. 177; cf. also cap.175 and cap.194.
30. Generally the Christian tombs, as the churches, looked East. Cf. *Lexikon fiir Theologie und Kirche,* VII 826f.
31. See below ch. 4. T. K. J. apparently believes the relics to have been entire.

correct in designating St. Thomas as a martyr just as it need not necessarily be correct when it says the same about other Apostles. Even if we may admit a historical nucleus in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, that historical nucleus does not necessarily bring a belief beyond a general conviction of the apostolate of St. Thomas in India. About the relics and the Mohammedan claim we may speak later on after reviewing the history of the discovery and excavation of the tomb by the Portuguese.

Heras, although he is for the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, ascribes no value to the tomb. He, writing of the story of the finding of the tomb and its excavation, says, "these datails are quite enough for disclosing the untruthfulness of the discovery".[32] He believes that the true tomb of the Apostle would some day be found in Malabar. This strange attitude of his seems to have proceeded from his prejudices against the Portuguese and his scanty knowledge of the 16th century and later Portuguese documents. This was not his field of historical research and he took up this question only casually.

Brown [33], who has touched upon this question recently, although uncertain in some of his statements apparently because of his almost uncritical acceptance of Heras, still takes a balanced view of the question of the tomb. The answers suggested by him to some of T. K. Joseph's objections cannot but shed some new light in the matter. Perhaps, we should think, had he known more about the Portuguese documents he would have avoided making such categorical statements as, "It is clear that the identification of the Mylapore tomb as the burial place of St. Thomas Apostle [34] and the ascription of special sanctity to various places in the locality – St. Thomas's Mount and the Little Mount – were entirely the work of the Portuguese, whose known attitude towards the saints, and

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32. Cf. *Journal of Bombay Historical Society*, 2 (1929) 284-89.
33. Cf. Schurhammer's review of his book, in *Archivum Historicum S. J.*, 27 (1958) 752.
34. In making this statement he seems to contradict the conclusion he had been arriving at in the previous pages.

eager desire to find apostolic relics do not induce confidence in their historical judgment or critical examination of the facts. All later Portuguese writings on the subject seem to be based on a deposition made on oath by one Diogo Fernandez in 1543".[35]

These authors manifestly show their ignorance of many of the Portuguese documents. They need not be blamed for this as there exists no collection of such documents accessible to the public especially to the English speaking public. Let us hope that the forthcoming publication of all the documents on the question of St. Thomas' apostolate in India by G. Schurhammer will supply this highly felt need.[36]

3. Pre-Portuguese Documents about the Buiral Place of St. Thomas

According to the *Acts of Thomas* already before 200 A. D. the bones of the Apostle must have been removed to the West: long after the martyrdom and burial of St. Thomas a son of Mazdai the ruler of the place where he was martyred falls sick; he then gets the tomb of the Apostle opened to heal his son with the relics, but the bones were not found, "for one of the brethren had taken them away secretly and conveyed them to the West".[37] The details such as the king's son falling sick, the consequent opening of the tomb and the discovery that the bones were missing may all be circumstances coined by the author to adorn the mere fact that the bones had been already removed to the West and deposited there (probably in Edessa). If the description is thus viewed there is no difficulty in a part of the bones being left back in the original tomb and that should be the natural thing to be expected. St. Ephrem recognises the relics,

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35. Brown 12 57, n. 2. How ill-conceived these views are will be clear from the following pages.
36. The learned historian is preparing a collection of all the documents which have any bearing on the question from the first century till the 18th century. He had been kind enough to allow us to make a free use of the prepared manuscripts. Without the help of these manuscripts the writing of part one of this book would have been almost impossible for us. A good portion of his manuscripts is digested and published in his monumental work, *Franz Xaver*, Vol. II, Freiburg 1963, pp. 552-579.
37. Cf. sup. p. 3 & n. 3; p. 4, n. 6.

so much venerated at his time in Edessa, as having been carried there from India by some merchants. To them a Pontiff assigned a feast[38] and a king built a shrine.[39]

St. John Chrysostom merely says that the site of St. Thomas' tomb is as much known as the sites of tombs of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John but he does not give any definite indication as its location.[40] The 5th century *Martyrologium Hieronimanum* assigns July 3 as the commemoration day in Edessa of the translation of the body of St. Thomas, who suffered in India.[41]

Gregory of Tours (594 A. D.) gives an account of the monastery of St. Thomas in India based on the report he had heard from a monk called Theodor who had visited that monsatery. [42] The 6th century *Passio Thomae* says that the body of St. Thomas after his martyrdom was buried in honour, and great prodigies took place at the tomb. At the request of the Syrians, the Roman Emperor Alexander [sic] who had defeated the Xarse [43] of Persia, ordered the body to be brought from India to Edessa and kept in "locello argenteo quod pendit ex catenis argenteis".

Pseudo-Sophronius (7th century) seems to be the first to indicate the place-name 'Calamina' where St. Thomas was martyred and buried. [44] Isidore of Seville (+ 636 A. D.) and many others after him echo this tradition. [45] The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ab. 892 A. D.) says that in the year 883 Sigheln and Aethelstan conveyed to Rome the alms, which the king had vowed [to send] thither, and also to India to St. Thomas and to St. Bartholomew, when they sat down against the army at London..." [46] William of Malmesbury (+1143 A. D.)

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38. "celebrated a solemn feast to honour it."
39. BICKEL, Gustave, *Carmina Nisibina,* No. 42.
40. PG 63, c., 170.
41. Cf. MEDLYCOTT 50ff.
42. PL 71, c., 733.
43. Xeres=Ardashir king of Persia, cf. MEDLYCOTT 101.
44. Cf. MEDLYCOTT 151ff.
45. PL 83, c.152.
46. Cf. MEDLYCOTT 80ff.

says in his chronicle *De gestis regum Anglorum, liber* 5, that king Alfred sent Bishop Sighelm of Sherborne across the sea to Rome and to St. Thomas to India, that he happily arrived in India and returned with precious stones and odoriferous essences of that country and with a relic of the Holy Cross, sent by Pope Martinus (+884 A. D.) to the king.[47]

Jeshu' Yab, bishop of Sobaor Nisbis (1187–1222 A. D.) attests that the body of St. Thomas Apostle is in India, [48] while Solomon, his contemporary specifies the place "...at Mayluph, a city in the land of the Indians".[49] At the end of the century Marco Polo visited India and wrote (1293 A. D.): "It is in this province (Malabar) which is styled the Greater India, at the gulf between Ceylon and the main land that the body of Messer St. Thomas lies at a certain town having no great population; it is a place not very accessible".[50]

The Arab historian 'Amr ibn Matta wrote in 1340: "Thomas' tomb is on the island of Meilan in India, on the right hand of the altar in his monastery".[51] Mufazzal ibn Abil-Fazail (1358 A. D.), a Mohammedan historian, in his history of the Mamlouk Sutlans wrote: "From there [Ceylon] the pilgrims go to visit the monastery of Mar Touma, which possesses the eternally living hand of one of the disciples of Our Lord, the Messiah: in the monastery there is a vaulted niche, in which is found the hand, and an oil flowing from the hand.

"The pious visitors cannot terminate their pilgrimage before they have visited four [consecrated] places and it is in this that the complete pilgrimage consists: the four ceremonies consist in visiting the tomb of Ratan Moammar as-Saheb..., the monastery of Mar Touma, who was one of the Apostles,

47. Cf. ibd., p. 83f.
48. ASSEMANUS, *Bibl. Orient.*, III, 1, 306.
49. SOLOMON OF BASRAH, *The Book of the Bee,* ed. by E. A. W. BUDGE =*Anecdota Oxoniensa,* Semitic Series, Oxford 1889, p. 105. Cf. also MEDLYCOTT 37.
50. *Il Milione,* cap. 175. Cf. sup. n. 29.
51. ASSEMANUS, *Bibl. Orient.*, III 34.

(the tomb of) Sultan Mahmoud, who conquered the countries of Hindustan .." [52]

Marignoli (1349 A. D.) [53] , Monte Corvino (1291 A. D.) [54], Bl. Oderic (1325 A. D.) [55], Nicolo Conti (1440 A. D.) [56], all refer to the church of St. Thomas in Mylapore. When the four Chaldean bishops write from Malabar in 1504 to their Patriarch they are quite sure of the place, which for generations was known to them as the house of St. Thomas, the Apostle. [57]

The foregoing is not a complete list of references to the tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle, but it would suffice to give an idea of the continuity of these references. Almost in every century we have one or more testimonies to the existence of the tomb in India. The burial place of St. Thomas, the Apostle, who, according to the earliest documents, worked and died in India, was well known at the time of St. John Chrysostom. For the centuries following it is in India. By the 7th century it is in Qualimaya or Calamina in India. In the 12th to 14th centuries it is in Calamina or Myluph or in Meilan. [58] From that time onwards there remains no more doubt about the site of the church and tomb of the Apostle Thomas and this is identified with our Mylapore. It is remarkable that once the identity of the place is established we find that it is no other than Mylapore and no other place has put forward any serious claim of possessing the grave of St. Thomas the Apostle. Still we have to admit much work is ahead before we can substantiate all the references from the beginning till the 16th century with Mylapore.

If the references mentioned here are not enough to prove beyond doubt the identification of the burial place of the Apostle we think they are as many at least to disprove any

52. *Patrologia Orientalis,* 20 (1929) 192-93.
53. WYNGAERT 544f.
54. Ibd. p. 345.
55. Ibd. p. 439-42.
56. Cf. TISSERANT-HAMBYE 23 and n. 3.
57. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 72
58. Hosten considers that these latter names, Myluph and Meilan, evidently indicate Mylapore; so too Calamina. Cf. HOSTEN 303f. 305-314.

contention that the identification of the tomb was a work of the Portuguese in the 16th century. We are quite justified in saying with Figredo that the Portuguese did not discover the tomb. It was known to exist and they were informed about it by European travellers, Armenian merchants and the Christians of Malabar.[59] Hence, Barros is right when he says: "When the Portuguese reached India in 1498 the Christians of that country were unanimous on the point that the Apostle St. Thomas suffered martyrdom at Mailapore".[60]

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59. FIGREDO 19f.
60. BARROS 1, 9, 1, 303. The point will be clearer when we treat below about what the Portuguese knew about the tomb.

CHAPTER 2

THE PORTUGUESE 'DISCOVER' THE TOMB

In the first chapter we have tried to trace briefly the story of the tomb of Mylapore before the Portuguese had anything to do with it. We have shown that the tomb existed, that it was known to other people before the Portuguese came to know of it. Here we proceed to investigate first how the Portuguese came into the picture and secondly what they 'discovered' in and around Mylapore.

1. Portuguese Knowledge of the Tomb

The Portuguese, as far as we can trace it, began to take direct and keen interest in the tomb not before 1517, when a group of them visited it and reported to the officials all that they saw and heard. Here we try to gather all the information we have about the attitude of the Portuguese to and their knowledge of the tomb before that year.

In the West there was the firm opinion prevalent that St. Thomas, the Apostle preached in India and died and was buried there. From the 7th century onwards Calamina in India was believed to be the place of his burial. The travellers and pilgrims brought home after their visits more information about the site and tomb. We do not possess any clear indication to show how far the Portuguese explorers were influenced by the thoughts of St. Thomas and his Christians. When one traces the history of the search for Prester John and his Christians he does not meet with any clear allusion to the Christians of St. Thomas. Vasco da Gama and his men came to India in search of Christians and spices and returned home [1] with the satisfaction created by the wrong impression of

1. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 31f. 46-51.

having met the Christians. But we do not yet know what Christians they were in search of and what Christians, they thought, they met. In Portugal these "Christians" were taken for those converted by St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew both of whom were known to have preached in India.[2]

Cabral and his men had to correct the mistake in Gama's report but they had the fortune actually to meet on Indian soil the true Christians of St. Thomas and they even took two of them to Portugal. [3] From this time on the knowledge of the Portuguese about the whole question of the apostolate of St. Thomas and about his burial place began to take a more and more accurate and definite shape. Apparently it was Joseph the Indian, who gave some definite information to king Manuel of Portugal about the tomb and later on to the Venetians. What he said in Venice is recorded by the *Peasi Novamente Retrovati...* [4] : "In the kingdom of Narsindo there is a church of St. Thomas. It is in Mylapore situated on a promontory in the sea in the Orissa gulf. It is as big as the Venetian church of St. Zouane and Paulo. In this church is placed the body of St. Thomas, who works many miracles, and both Christians and gentiles have great veneration for him."[5]

King Manuel's letter to the sovereigns of Castille in 1505 echoes Joseph's report. The king, after alluding to the expedition of Cabral in 1500, speaks about the Christians of St. Thomas in the parts of Cochin and about the tomb of St. Thomas. According to the information received by him, the body of the Apostle lay buried 140 leagues from Cochin on the coast in a town called Mailapur with only a few inhabitants. It, on account of the miracles worked there, was frequented by Christians and by people of all nations. He goes on writing the news of the arrival in Portugal of two priests of the St. Thomas Christians. He also knew about white Christians from Machina, who came on pilgrimage to

2. Ibd., p. 48f.
3. Ibd., p. 57.
4. Ibd., p. 59.
5. *Paesi* 164f.

the Apostle's tomb. These Christians of Machina are the same as the Malsines from Catajo mentioned by Joseph in Venice. [6]

Thomé Lopes, who accompanied V. da Gama on his second journey to India in 1503 says that, among other events reported by them, the Christians who came to meet Gama told the Portuguese how they were conducting a big pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas who was buried near their country, and who worked many miracles. [7]

The four Chaldean bishops, who arrived in India in 1503/4 and who had intimate contacts with the Portuguese, reported to their Patriarch: "...the House of the holy Apostle Thomas has begun to be inhabited by some Christians who are thinking of its restoration. But it lies at a distance of about 25 days' journey from the said Chistians, and it lies on the sea shore in a town called Mailapur in the province of Silan, [8] which is one of the provinces of India."[9] Probably the visit of Varthema to the Choromandel Coast took place just about this time.[10] He reports: On the Choromandel at Nagapatanam[11] he met a few Christians who told him that the body of St. Thomas was lying buried 22 miles from there and that it was under the custody of some Christians. They said that the Christians could no longer live in that region since the arrival of the king of Portugal, because he had killed many Moors in that region, and all were in a panic at the thought of the Portuguese king. The Christians were being driven away and killed. This was done in secret lest this news might reach the ears of the king of Narsinga, a friend of the Christians ever since the occurrence of a miracle. The miracle was this: the Christians had been involved in a quarrel with the Muslims for 45 years and many had been killed and wounded. One of the Christians thus wounded was miracu-

6. Cortesão 322f; *Paesi,* ibd.
7. Cf. Mundadan, *The Arrival* 63.
8. The Choromandel is often called by the Chaldeans the province of *Silan* (Ceylon). This perhaps was the old name when there were Christians on the island of Ceylon.
9. Schurhammer 5.
10. His report of the tomb is in Ramusio, f. 177.
11. About Nagapatanam, cf. Barbosa II 126.

lously cured by touching the tomb of St. Thomas. This made Narsinga a friend of the Christians.[12]

It appears strange that all these years we do not find any of the Portuguese interested in visiting the tomb. It is only in 1507 that Dom Francisco D'Almeida, the Viceroy of India (1505–1509), sent four men to the Choromandel coast to obtain information about the trade which was being carried on between the East coast of India and Malacca. The Viceroy told them especially to gather all possible information about the house of the Apostle St. Thomas, which, according to what the Christians of Malabar had told the Portuguese, stood on that coast. Of these four men two died in their explorative journey and the other two returned with a report of what they saw and heard. They were sent to Portugal to report to the king their experience.[13] We do not know whether they actually visited the tomb or got much information of it.

The next time we hear something about the tomb is from Andrea Corsali in 1515.[14] While describing Malabar and its Christians he says: "The most important church of theirs is on the Choromandel; in 1514 it was visited by Pieró d'Andrea Strizzi[15] according to whom St. Thomas was buried in that church; there could still be seen an old stone sepulchre; nearby was another tomb of an Ethiopian, a Christian of the Prester John, who had accompanied the Apostle. In the church there were carvings with inscriptions which he could not understand; there was a kind of a foot-print on a very big stone which foot-print is said to have been miraculously made by St. Thomas". The author himself hoped to go there sometime later and then to give more details and clarification.

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12. This is the only instance that we hear about a recent fight between the Christians and Mohammedans. All others record that the Christians left the place much earlier owing to wars or famines or persecutions. Cf. ch. 4. Perhaps the old quarrel was renewed when the Christians, apparently (from the 4 bishops' letter) tried to settle down again in Mylapore.
13. CORREA I 739.
14. Andrea Corsali's report is in RAMUSIO, f. 192v-195v. He wrote his account from Cochin on January 6, 1515.
15. Nothing is known about him besides this.

Father Alvaro Penteado, who arrived in Cochin and visited the Christians of Cranganore some time in 1516, learned from them the following details about the tomb. It was at that time in a deserted state and the church had collapsed. There stood only the tomb of the Apostle and another of an Abyssinian there. The tomb of the Apostle lay flat, while that of the Abyssinian had a monument over it. There were no Christians in that locality; the inhabitants were all pagans except the people in two houses, Moors, who called themselves the "negroes of Thomas". People go there carrying crosses and give alms which are just enough to maintain one man. Penteado counsels the king to rebuild the house and assign it to some religious.[16] It was probably this and other later reports of Penteado that moved the king to make further inquiries and undertake the repair works which we see later. The visits of the Portuguese in 1517 and afterwards, and especially the settlement there of the war-veterans helped much the plans of the king.

From all this, the point already suggested, that the Portuguese had no part at all in identifying the tomb of the Apostle, is amply justified. Although the king had shown interest in the matter from the early years of the arrival of the Portuguese in India, they do not appear to be much concerned about it. Even after the visit in 1517 it took almost four years for them to engage in any serious work there and that only after strong insistence on the part of the king. Having thus briefly indicated all the motives that could in any way affect the approach of the Portuguese to the tomb we enter upon the story of the tomb from 1517 till the mid-century, during which period not only the tomb but the whole town of Mylapore changed their outward appearance. The first thing we have to do is to give an idea of the documents which help us to reconstruct the whole story. After this we shall describe what the Portuguese found in 1517 and later on in and around Mylapore.

2. The Documents

If documents for the period before 1517 are few and

16. PENTEADO 550

jejune, there exists abundant documentation for the period after that year. We may divide them in two categories: primary and secondary documents.[17]

Under the first category come the following documents:

1. The letter of Manuel Gomez, one of the Portuguese visitors to tomb in 1517. He composed this letter in Mylapore itself.[18]
2. The report of the inquiry of 1533.[19]
3. The letter of the citizens of Mylapore (now called San Tomé) to the Portuguese king in 1538.
4. To this list may be added the letters of Miguel Vaz and Francis Xavier (DI I 81; EX I 299 320 335).

The first and the second of this list are of particular interest in our study.

Under the second category may be named the accounts of:

1. Lopez de Castanheda who wrote in 1551 (CONSTANHEDA I 80 126-127).
2. João de Barros, 1552-1563 (BARROS 1, 9, 1; 3, 2, 1; 3, 7, 11).
3. Gaspar Correa 1560-1563 (CORREA II 721-26; II 786-89; III 419-425).
4. Francisco d'Andrada, 1540 (ANDRADA I 104-107).
These accounts treat the story more or less exhaustively; still one or another point may receive further illumination from the following documents also.
5. Letter of Gaspar Barzaeus, S. I., 1553 (DI II 578-583).

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17. This classification of documents is equivalent to Garraghan's (G. J. GARRAGHAN, S. J., *A Guide to Historical Method,* New York 1951, 3rd Printing) 'immediate' or 'primary' and 'mediate' or 'secondary' sources.
18. GOMEZ, M., Letter, 1519.
19. The report of this inquiry exists in two exemplars: one copied by Fr. Cyprian in the middle of the 16th cent. (*Goa* 31, ff. 18-25) in which both the testimonies of Abuna and D. Fernandez are given; another copied by bishop André, O. F. M. of the Cochin diocese in 1589-90 (*Goa* 49, ff. 125-31v) which adds some later events to the original. The first text (A) is the better one and we follow it generally; the other text (B) is published by FIGUEIREDO which we use occasionally for some clarifications.

6. Amador Correa, S. I., 1564 (SRD IX 298-301).
7. M. Nunes Barreto, S. I., 1567 (*Goa* 11, ff.317f.).
8. Hieronymus Osorius, 1571 (OSORIUS, lib. III, f.107 ff.).
9. Francisco Dionysio, 1578 (*Informação...*)
10. Antonio de Monserrate, c. 1579 (*Informacion...*).
11. Donation of the Little Mount, 1579 (*Goa* 13, ff.35f).
12. Ruy Vicente, S. I., 1581 (*Goa* 13, ff.54v-55).
13. Duarte Leitão, S. I., 1581 (*Goa* 47, f.215).
14. Alessandro Valignano, S. I., 1583 (*Historia* 77f. 83).
15. G. P. Maffei, S. I., 1588 (*Historiarum...*, 49-51).
16. Jan Huygen van Linschoten, 1594 (*Itinerario* 58-62).
17. Fr. André de Santa Maria, O. F. M., 1598-99 (*Goa* 32, ff. 654v-655).
18. André Boves, S. I., 1599 (*Goa* 14, ff.381v-382).
19. Lucena, S. I., 1600 (*Historia...*, 1. 3, cc.3-5).
20. Fr. André de Santa Maria, O. F. M., 1601 (*Goa* 49, ff. 126v-28v).
21. Francisco Roz, S. I., 1601 (*Goa* 15, f.30v.).
22. Diogo de Couto, 1603-1611 (*Da Asia* 10, 5; 12, 3, 4).
23. Fr. Antonio de Gouvea, O. S. A., 1603 (*Jornada*, f. 77f.);
24. Francisco Roz, S. I., 1604 (*Relação*).

Concerning the documents indicated above we have to make a few general remarks here. Particular remarks will be found in appropriate places. In general these documents are faithful records of what the Portuguese saw and heard. Still they are not free from some prejudged ideas of the writers. Many of them sometimes give their own interpretation to the actual findings, and sometimes we find it somewhat difficult to distinguish this biassed interpretation from fact. This is especially true when they record the local traditions. Thus we note a certain growth in the traditions keeping pace with the increase in the findings. One of the obvious examples of the influence of *a priori* ideas is to be found in the interpretation of the inscriptions.

It is certain that the 1533 inquiry was based on a *questionnaire* prepared in Portugal and sent to India for this purpose. The *questionnaire* was probably prepared by those who knew the western tradition about the apostolate and martyrdom of St. Thomas. Hence it is quite possible that the answers of the respondents were suggested by the questions themselves. Another factor to be mentioned in this connection is that the 16th century Portuguese authors lacked the modern techniques of a critical method of approach to those problems which they had to deal in connection with the findings. That this is especially manifested by their somewhat naïve and credulous attitude towards the alleged miracles, legends and pious stories. In spite of all this we are convinced that what they record deserves credence as a whole; the general undesirable influences can be eliminated by a sound and critical mind.

As for the subject matter of these documents the following should especially be mentioned:

1. the "discovery" of the tomb in 1517;

2. the local traditions about St. Thomas, his work and martyrdom and burial;

3. further visits by the Portuguese and the excavation of the tomb;

4. the vicissitudes of the relics and later developments of the town of Mylapore.

3. The 'Discovery' of the Tomb and other Places in and around Mylapore.

Under this heading we intend to describe in detail the visit to the tomb paid by a few Portuguese in 1517 and what they found and heard there. We add what tradition has to say about each of the places and things which were found by them on this visit and also by other visitors and settlers later on.

The pre-Portuguese documents, we have examined, either speak of the *church* or *monastery* or *house* of St. Thomas; the

western tendency generally being to call it church and the eastern, to name it monastery or house. These and the Portuguese documents before 1517 lack details about the house and places connected with it.[20] The visitors of 1517 gathered more detailed information about the places and things connected by tradition with the activity of the Apostle. Further visits, settlements and inquiries illustrate these details.

i. The first visitors, 1517

How the portuguese happened to visit the tomb is described by Gaspar Correa. Two Portuguese, Diogo Fernandez and Bastião Fernandez, returning from Malacca with merchants, in native ships, happened to land in Paleacate[21] and stayed with some Armenian (Chaldean) Christians. These Christians invited them to join them on a pilgrimage to a house five leagues from there which was built by a holy man.[22] Accordingly all set out on the pilgrimage. Diogo Fernandes one of these first Portuguese men to visit the tomb and the chief witness of the 1533 inquiry, merely says that he, Diogo Fernandes in company with Bastião Fernandez, Coje Escandel[23] an Armenian and many other Armenians arrived in S. Tomé in March 1517. The journey was undertaken at the invitation of the Armenians who promised to show them the House of the Apostle St. Thomas. From these two accounts it would appear that only two Portuguese took part in the pilgrimage. But Manuel Gomez in his letter which he wrote from the very house of the Apostle, gives many others who took part in a pilgrimage on June 15, 1517. Johan Feraz, Alvaro Rodrigues, Diogo Fernandez, Antonio Neto, Gil Fernandez and Manuel Gomez set out from Paleacate on June 15, 1517. Bastião Fernandez is not among this group. From all this we have to conclude that there took place two visits to the tomb from March to June. In this treatise we deal with these visits together.[24]

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20. Two exceptions may be the descriptions of Marco Polo and A. Corsali.
21. Sup. n. 17.
22. Only CORREA says that it was built by a holy man. Cf. inf. n. 103.
23. His name appears in these forms: 'Coje Escandel', 'Coja Esquandel', and 'Coje Escander'.
24. GOMEZ I 296; FERNANDEZ, f. 19; BARROS 3, 7, 11, 223f; CORREA II 722.

ii The Mohammedan Custodian

Mylapore was 6 leagues[25] from Paleacate. The holy house there, was taken care of by an old man. There are minor differences in the Portuguese accounts relating to this man. Gomez gives the following description: In the house there was a man looking like our hermits. He, his grandfather, great grandfather and many of his ancestors had been in charge of the house. The ancestors of his father were all Christians openly but his father was a Christian in secret. As for himself he was neither a Christian nor wanted to be one. He used to clean the house and light a candle in it when visitors came to it.

According to Diogo Fernandez the custodian was above 60 years of age. His parents and grand-parents were all pagans and he himself was a pagan but he had become a Mohammedan two years previously. But at the same time he gave the Portuguese to understand that he was descended from the Christians of St. Thomas. He had recovered his lost eye-sight just a few days previously by praying to the Apostle. His duty was to light the House of the Apostle.

In the opinion of Barbosa, who might have heard the story from those who had been to the tomb in 1517, the custodian was a poor Muslim who begged alms for the house. With what money he got as alms he kept a lamp burning at night and also maintained himself. Correa begins by calling him a very old pagan. He had been blind formerly and it was only a few days previously that he had got back his eye-sight at the intercession of the Apostle. He served the holy house cleaning it and lighting up a lamp which was inside the rails of the small chapel of the saint. This pagan speaking to the Armenians told them that his father and grand-parents were pagans, all of whom had died at very old ages. He himself was above sixty years old and all his parents and grand-parents were in the habit of sweeping the house and lighting the lamp. Because he had become a Moor people there would not allow him to enter the house and he lost his eye-sight and got it back by recommending

25. Gomez has '6' days journey: a confusion for 6 leagues.

himself to the saint. It was more than 20 years that he had been living in the house.[26] Thus it is clear that although Correa at first calls him a pagan he was at that time a Muslim.[27] The Portuguese inhabitants of Mylapore in their letter to the king written in 1538 tell him that the Moor was still alive and was 90 years of age.[28] Barros follows Diogo Fernandez's version but adds that the custodian was a Mohammedan ten years previously and that his ancestors were all Christians.[29]

iii. The Town

According to the unanimous testimony of the authors the town was very ancient and once very prosperous and beautiful, so much so that the name of the most beautiful bird, the peacock, was given to it. The town was formerly situated some 12 leagues in the interior but at the arrival of the Portuguese the sea was only a stone's cast from the house of the Apostle, the land inbetween having been eaten up by the sea.[30] At that time Mylapore was a sea-port but had no sand bar,[31] but the whole town lay in ruins. Out of some 2400 pagodas which had stood there formerly, there were only ten to be seen then. Not only were many beautiful buildings destroyed but four entire towns in the neighbourhood of Mylapore were completely reduced to ruins.[32]

The reasons for this ruinous state are differently stated by the authors. According to Gomez the encroachment of the sea and the inundation were the cause of the ruin of the once prosperous town of Mylapore.[33] Barros, for whom the encroachment of the sea occurred in fulfilment of a prophecy by the Apostle [34], says that the whole town had been des-

26. Cf. BARBOSA II 126-29; GOMEZ 298; FERNANDEZ, f. 19v; CORREA II 724.
27. Cf. also CORREA II 725ff.
28. INHABITANTS, f. 2.
29. BARROS 3, 7, 11, 225.
30. GOMEZ 297.
31. MONSERRATE, f. 150.
32. FERNANDEZ, f. 24v. Cf. also BARBOSA II 126f; BARROS 3, 7, 11, 224f. and 3, 2, 1, 107.
33. GOMEZ, ibd.
34. Cf. below ch. 3 about St. Thomas' prophecy.

troyed by the wars during the times of Chijs, who had their principal abode in this place.[35] Barreto is of opinion that the old prosperous city was then under the sea. The fishermen could indicate different points in the sea where formerly stood some important buildings such as the house of the king, the passage of the king etc. To him it appeared that this destroyed city under water was the famous Calamina sanctified by the martyrdom of the Apostle. [36] In this town some 1500 years ago the Apostle arrived and stayed. [37] And in it the holy house was to be found.

iv. Rival Claims

At the time of the Portuguese arrival the house seems to have been claimed by Christians, Muslims and Hindus alike. Barbosa says that both Muslims and pagans had devotion to the tomb, each claiming it to be its own.[38] All are agreed that the pagans showed great devotion to the house and held it in great veneration. The Muslim custodian told the Portuguese visitors that the pagans, on the feast days of their idols used to carry their idols in great solemnity and at the sight of the holy house they would lower their idols to the ground three times and pay their respects to the house. [39]

As for the Mohammedan claim, we do not have any particulars except what we know about the Muslim custodian and his ancestors who were all keepers of the house. But it would appear that the Muslim whom the Portuguese found as the custodian was the only one in their family to become a Muslim. His ancestors were either pagans or Christians. [40]

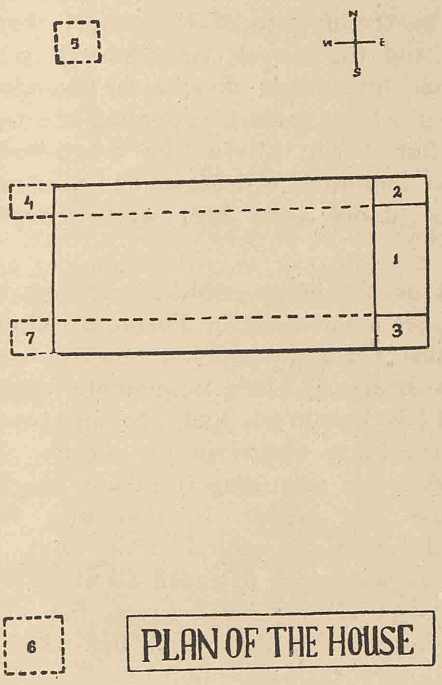
v. The House

According to the unanimous tradition of the natives it was 1460 or 1470 years then after the holy house in Mylapore was built. It was miraculously built by the Apostle

35. Barros 3, 2, 1, 107. *Chijs*=the Chinese.
36. Barreto, f. 317f.
37. Fernandez, f. 22.
38. Barboza II 129.
39. Correa II 724.
40. Sup. p. 28 f.

himself. [41] According to Correa the house was called by the natives "the house of the holy man". [42]

All around the house was a plot of ground well fenced with very high brushwood. [43] The documents call the house indifferently 'house' or 'church'. [44] It was very big and lay in a ruinous state.[45]



1. Main chapel.
2. Grave of the Apostle.
3. Tomb of Tane Modaliar (or of St Mathias).
4. Tomb of disciple I (chapel of the Magi).
5. Tomb of disciple II (chapel of St Antony).
6. Tombs of: disciple III Abyssinian, D. Jorge, Pilgrims, (chapel of St John).
7. (chapel of Conceição).

41. Cf. inf. ch. 3. n. 54.
42. Very often the devotees call the patron of a church 'holy man' and sometimes they do not even know what the saint's name was actually
43. GOMEZ 297; FERNANDEZ, f. 19.
44. Francisco dal Bachier wrote in 1518 that in the land Ziramandle (Choromandel) the body of the Ap. St. Thomas lay buried in 'a house made in the from of a church' in front of an altar on the ground. Cf. *Atti della Academia Nazionale dei Lincei*, 6 (1951) 243.
45. Cf. Correa II 722 etc.

Gomez gives us the following description of the house. "It is made in the fashion of our churches and lie East-West; it has three doors: one at the entrance, another in the middle and the third in the principal chapel. All the doors are lined with sheets of iron and diamond-shaped studs of iron; the doors are of wood worked out with skilful workmanship".[46] The house was 17 ells long and 11 broad, according to D. Fernandez.[47] Correa says more precisely that from the principal doors to the entrace of the chapel there was a distance of 12 ells and the chapel itself was 5 ells. It had two side doors and three naves divided by wooden pillars of fine workmanship. These pillars supported the top beam which was also of fine work. Above the wood-work there were walls of mortar reinforced with stones and reaching the tiled roof. Outside the doors were kept water troughs for holy water.[48]

This is the main plan of the house, which, according to all authors, was made in the fashion of the Portuguese churches except for the fact that there was nothing but crosses inside the church, and no images.[49] There is mention of three chapels, the central one 5 ells East-West, and two side ones on the left and right of the main chapel in the centre. It is however not clear whether the side chapels were inside the church corresponding to the side naves. In that case the central chapel was situated inside the central nave. But it is possible also that the central chapel extended all along the breadth of the church through all the three naves, the side chapels being constructed just outside the church but adjoining the main chapel.[50]

The central chapel had a tower built on the top of the level of the church walls and was 30 ells high from floor to top.[51] The chapel was square below (probably till the

46. GOMEZ 296f.
47. FERNANDEZ, f. 19; one ell=45 inches.
48. See ch. 7, section: *Church-going and prayers.*
49. Cf. Goes I 170; BARBOSA II 129; CORREA, ibd.
50. However cf. inf. n. 54.
51. Fernandez says that the tower was as high as the walls of the church. Hence the pillars dividing the naves together with the rein-

level of the body of the church) and round at the top (probably at the level where the tower began). The tower was built of the same material as the walls of the church above the wooden work. Round the tower were painted crosses and peacocks.[52] On the summit of the tower was a square cornice with another round one above the square one. The round cornice should have had a weather-cock or a cross on it as a cavity was to be found in it.[53]

In the main chapel there was an altar of just the same size. On the Gospel side there was an adjoining small chapel with wooden rails round but without an altar inside. Other rails there were at the nave but these rails had no door.[54] On the Epistle side there was another chapel, small and open.[55]

As regards the interior of the church there were crosses on the altars and wooden grating and peacocks as devices. The pillars, the wood work, the doors, were all apparently of the same kind of wood. The portals too; they were very big with many crosses carved on them.[56] Above the principal door was a big slab fixed to the wall with a nail in the middle. It was of red wood as that of brazil or sandal on which were carved three crosses, the central one being at a higher level than the side ones.[57]

At the time of the visit of the Portuguese the whole church was in ruins and all its surroundings covered with thickets, for it was very old and for many years there were no Christians residing there. Some parts had fallen down. Only the chapels and the tower stood undamaged, and the

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forced mortar walls reaching the roof must have been 15 ells (a little more than 56ft.) high.

52. Gomez says that there were five peacocks painted in the main chapel, GOMEZ 297.
53. Barbosa wrote in 1518 that there was a cross on the summit of the vault (probably tower), BARBOSA II 129.
54. From this description it would appear that the side chapels were inside the side naves.
55. For the whole of this description of the church, cf. CORREA II 722-24.
56. Correa reproduces an example of the cross, ibd., 723.
57. CORREA, ibd; BARBOSA and others, such as CORSALI, testify to crosses on the altar.

main chapel was the same which could be seen in 1543.[58] According to D. Fernandez the central chapel with its tower was the one built by the Apostle.[59] From this statement it would appear that the side chapels and naves were later additions.

vi. The grave of the Apostle and other tombs

According to what the Portuguese heard from the natives the body of St. Thomas, who died on a mountain at a distance from the house, was brought to the house and lay buried at that time in the chapel on the righthand (on the Gospel side).[60] In the chapel on the Epistle side lay buried a disciple of the Apostle. Both these chapels do not seem to have been larger than five and a half ells, just large enough to enclose the bodies.[61] As to the identity of the disciple buried in the lefthand chapel (on the righthand of the person looking), the authors seem to diverge in opinion. According to Gomez, it was "St. Mathias, a companion of the Apostle". For D. Fernandez and Correa he was the king of the place, a converted Christian.[62]

There were in and around the house several other tombs and monuments. One of them was on the lefthand side of the main entrance to the church (we are not sure whether inside or outside the church). Outside a little away from the church but well within the courtyard, was buried in a chapel another disciple whom Gomez calls "an Abyssinian", who had served the Apostle and his companion but who did not like to be put inside with them. On this spot the Portuguese built the chapel of St. Antony and later on, the big church enclosed it.[63] Some three and a half of the length

58. GOMEZ 297; BARBOSA II 129; CORREA, ibd; INHABITANTS, f. IV and 2.
59. FERNANDEZ, f. 19.
60. GOMEZ 297. FERNANDEZ, f. 19v. The latter calls it the monument and grave of the Apostle and says that it stood outside (the church but adjoining it).
61. GOMEZ 297.
62. GOMEZ, ibd; FERNANDEZ, f.19v; CORREA, ibd.
63. Only in text B. (FIGUEIREDO I 2) about the chapel of St. Antony. Probably the chapel was not built before the 1533 inquiry. For other details, cf. FERNANDEZ, f.19v; GOMEZ, ibd.

of the range of an arrow shot, to the South of the house, were another chapel and tomb. In that chapel, six months previously Dom Jorge the Hungarian had been buried. This was the place of pilgrims and Dom Jorge had desired that he be buried there.[64] At the time of the 1533 inquiry the the chapel of St. John had been standing there.[65]

We may conclude this section with a summary account of the tombs given by D. Fernandez and Correa. According to Fernandez the three disciples the Apostle brought with him from outside lay buried, one in the chapel of St. John, another in one of the 20 tombs around and inside the house, and the third near the house in the chapel of the Magian kings.[66] Correa gives this general and brief account: the three disciples who came with the Apostle from India [67], dwelt in the house with the Apostle, and died, and were interred in the small houses outside. Now they are enclosed in the churches which stand around the house.[68]

vii. The Big Mount and the Little Mount[69]

The first Portuguese explorers seem not to have known much about these two places if we exclude what they had

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64. FERNANDEZ, f.119v. According to this text (A) at the pilgrims' place there was buried a disciple of St. Thomas. Jorge the Hungarian was also buried there at his wish. Besides there were graves of other pilgrims there. According to text B (FIGUEIREDO I 2) there is no mention about the graves of other pilgrims. Cf. also FERNANDEZ, f.23 23v.

65. FERNANDEZ, f.22.

66. FERNANDEZ, f.23. About this chapel we will speak in ch.4.

67. The west coast of India, or Malabar.

68. CORREA III 420 421. Thus we have in 1533 there 3 tombs of disciples: 1. where later St. John's chapel was built; 2. where later St. Antony's chapel was built; 3. where (in 1523/4) the Magi chapel was built.

69. The place has been called by different names: *Monte Pequeno (Little Mount* in opposition to *Big Mount), Calvario, N. sra do Saude* etc. *Chinna Malai* is the Tamil equivalent for Little Mount. We follow this more common appellation: Little Mount. Situated on the south bank of the Adyar river it is some three miles from the sepulchral church of St. Thomas in Mylapore, and is on the way to the *Big Mount.* Till the year 1547 it was firmly believed by all to be the place of martyrdom of the saint (and this is the constant tradition of the Christians of St. Thomas). Cf. CORREA III 421f.; BARBOSA II 128; FERNANDEZ, f.21; *Orientalia Christiana,* 32 (1933) 177f. Cf. also EX I 320, n.8.

heard from the Muslim custodian or others, i.e., the Apostle was martyred on a mountain at a distance from the house and his body was carried to the house and buried there. [70] To understand the traditions concerning the tomb it is necessary to give here a short description of both of these places. For all early Portuguese writers the Little Mount was the place of the Apostle's martydom while on the Big Mount there was a chapel built by the Apostle. This impression changed with the year 1547 when the "miraculous" cross was discovered on the Big Mount. Those who discovered this cross thought that it had been drenched with the blood of the dying Apostle.[71] This will be clear from the documents we are going to examine.

Diogo Fernandez gives us the following description of *the Big Mount*. The Apostle had an oratory on a high mountain some one and a half leagues from the house where now is the hermitage of Our Lady called *Conceição*. This oratory was as old as the house itself and at its foot the Apostle used to preach many a time. Correa says that at some distance from the house on a hill the saint had a small house where he used to pray. On that site the house of Our Lady of the Mount was built. There every night the light of a fire could be seen by mariners and at the sight of this fire they used to lower their sails and pay respects to the Mount. On this Mount was later discovered the miraculous cross.[72] Barreto after describing the natural beauty of the Mount which at the time of his writing (1567) was the site of the house of Our Lady of the Mount, says that on account of the natural beauty of the place and more on account of the common tradition that the Apostle had fixed his abode there and suffered his glorious martyrdom there,

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70. Gomez says that according to what the natives asserted he died on a mountain 6 leagues from the house, GOMEZ 298. This must be the earliest allusion to the Big Mount as the place of the martyrdom. But Fernandez who know the place better as he settled down in Mylapore, is sure that the place of death was one and a half leagues away from the house. FERNANDEZ, f.19v.

71. Cf. sup. n. 62. Cf. ch. 3, about the death of the Apostle.

72. FERNANDEZ, f. 23; CORREA III 421. Correa writes after 1547 but his memoirs and sources must be pre-1547. Barreto (*Goa* II, f. 317f.) records the later tradition as his visit took place c.1567.

this mount calls forth great devotion. Many crosses and especially the miraculous cross were discovered there.[73]

The Little Mount was situated half a league from the Big Mount and was a small barren hill. There was a cave on one side of it near which the Apostle was murdered. Before he died he struck on the top of the hill with a stick and a small fountain appeared. This fountain dried up at certain times. Near the fountain the Apostle had left the prints of his foot and knee. D. Fernandez who gave this testimony, saw that foot-print in the Holy House.[74]

According to Monserrate the cave was three quarters of a league from the house and could contain some twenty men and had the height of a moderately tall man. The Apostle prayed there; half a league farther, on the Big Mount he died. A devout Portuguese built some houses on the Little Mount and remained there by himself.[75]

Diogo de Couto, who probably knew both series of these documents, solves the discrepancy of the traditions about the place of martyrdom in the following way. The Apostle was wounded in the cave on the Little Mount but in his death agony, he got out of the cave and dragged himself to the Big Mount where was the principal oratory, and where also presumably were his disciples. There, wounded mortally, as he was, he clasped a stone cross and recommended his soul to his Master.[76]

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73. BARRETO, f. 317 f.

74. FERNANDEZ, f. 23v.

75. MONSERRATE, f. 50v. About the donation of this Mount and the chapel by this devout Portuguese, Nuno Alvarez de Faria, to the Society of Jesus in 1579, cf. *Goa* 13, f. 35f. 54vff. and *Goa* 47, f. 215. In 1581 when the last document was written the place was called *Calvary*, the reasons for this appellation being, according to the document, the existence of the cross there and the first mass being said there on the feast of Holy Cross in May.

76. COUTO 7, 10, 5, 467-70.

CHAPTER 3

THE TRADITIONS ABOUT THE APOSTOLATE OF ST. THOMAS IN INDIA AND THE TOMB OF MYLAPORE

It is to the merit of the Portuguese that they gathered almost exhaustively the local traditions about the tomb of St. Thomas, and also to some extent those about the Indian apostolate of the saint. From the time of their discovery of the tomb they were extremely careful to record whatever they were told by the people of the place. However it must be said that the inquiry of 1533 made officially at the order of the Portuguese king [1] brought to light and put into record whatever the natives knew by their tradition about the tomb and St. Thomas, the Apostle. Of course a few details were added later on to this, especially in connection with the discovery of the "miraculous cross" and the Big Mount, but these details are rather interpretations of the Portuguese themselves than actual tradition among the natives. We have already remarked that the Portuguese were not immune from introversion in interpreting what the natives told them. [2] However the main points which follow seem to be rather reliable. The traditions gathered by the Portuguese may be said to be threefold, according to their sources: 1. the Malabar tradition (what appears to have been told them by the people of Malabar, especially the Christians of St. Thomas); 2. the Chaldean tradition (what had been gathered from Chaldeans and Chaldean books); 3. the Mylapore tradition (what the

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. About this inquiry, see ch. 4. Cf. sup. p. 25f.

2. Couto 7, 10, 5, 467-70. Cf. also inf. on the death of the Apostle.

people of the Choromandel Coast told the Portuguese). But it is often difficult to distinguish the purely Malabar tradition from the Chaldean one. Many of the traditions which the Jesuits found among the Thomas Christians were in books of Chaldean origin. The Abuna who gives testimony in 1533 openly declared that what he attested was heard in his own country and in Malabar.[3] Hence we may conveniently treat these two traditions together and the Mylapore tradition separately as this latter seems to be easily distinguishable from the former two.

Another remark we have to make here is that the purely Malabar tradition about St. Thomas and the tomb does not appear frequently in the Portuguese documents of the first half of the century. During the 30 or 40 years after the discovery of the tomb by the Portuguese, they record mainly the Mylapore tradition. The reason for this is that the witnesses questioned in the 1533 official inquiry and at random before and after that inquiry were mainly inhabitants of the Choromandel Coast where the Malabar tradition seems to echo very faintly. We do not hear of any such interlocution or inquiry conducted in Malabar which, if instituted, would have given an occasion to the Christians of St. Thomas to narrate their tradition, and our knowledge about the subject would have been much more definite. What we know about their traditions is derived from the efforts of a few individual missionaries. Such attempts seem to have been rather exceptional during the first half of the century. For the suceess of such an attempt it was necessary to penetrate deep into the life, customs and records of the community. To do this required a fair knowledge of Malayalam, their mother tongue, and Syriac, their liturgical, and in most cases, their literary language. Except Penteado in 1517, no body seems to have made any deep study of their life, customs etc. of interest to us during the first half of the century. In the second half of the century the Jesuits, especially Dionysio and Monserrate, succeeded to some extent to make a more penetrative study and the

3 . Abuna, f. 18.

accounts given by these two priests are interesting.[4] Still it seems that they too lacked a working knowledge of Syriac to scrutinize the liturgical and literary books of the people. This task was reserved to Fr. Roz S. J., who later became the first Latin prelate of the Thomas Christians after the Synod of Diamper.

The later chroniclers will be found attempting to combine the Mylapore and Malabar traditions. Already Barros tried such a combination but he does not seem to have succeeded as most of his sources were apparently the Portuguese reports of the first half of the century. His personal interview with some of the St. Thomas Christian students in Portugal did not help him much to get the real tradition of the St. Thomas Christians, the obvious reason being that the students were too young to know all the traditions of their fore-fathers.[5] On the other hand the accounts of Maffei (1588) and M. de Faria y Sousa (1674) are clearly indicative of such a conbination.[6]

I. The Chaldeo-Malabar Tradition about the Tomb

Here we intend to record only what the Portuguese sources have to say about the Malabar and Chaldean traditions. There are a few documents claimed to be of purely indigenous origin, i. e., those written by the people of the place whether the Christians of St. Thomas or others. A short review of these documents will be given as an appendix to this chapter.

1. The sources from which the Portuguese derived their informations

In 1564 the St. Thomas Christians celebrated a big votive feast in honour of the Apostle and conducted a grand pilgrimage to Cranganore from Parur where they assembled. In this pilgrimage the Portuguese bishop of Cochin also took part,

4. M. N. Carneiro before them, made a partial penetration. Cf. DI III, Doc. 119 & 120.
5. Cf. Barros 3, 7, 11, 234.
6. Maffei 49-51. Faria y Sousa I 223f.

his intention being to gain their confidences and to bring them under his obedience.[7] Amador Correa who describes the whole affair says that on their return from Cranganore to Parur the women and children were singing the praises of St. Thomas and his history in Malayalam in such a devout manner that the bishop was very pleased with it.

That the Christians of St. Thomas possessed such folk-songs commemorating the life, deeds and praises of St. Thomas is attested to by many authors. In 1578 Francisco Dionysio, S. I., writing about the Apostle and the community founded by him, introduces his narration with these words: "What is written below is known from the information supplied by old people; it is the common and unanimous belief of all; they hold it as a well handed-down tradition; they have put these things in their books and *their songs*".[8] Maffei, after having describred the Apostle's journey, miracles, death etc., says: "All these were told to the Portuguese by the Indians not only from oral tradition but also from written annals. The Malabar children are wont to sing in folk-songs the praises and the martyrdom of Thomas."[9]

Thus there were three main sources from which the Portuguese could draw up their report about the Malabar tradition: the oral tradition, the songs, and the books. Allusion to Chaldean books which contained the apostolate, death etc. of the Apostle and the history of the community of St. Thomas Christians is to be found increasingly from the time, when Roz, S. J. began to take interest in them.[10] He declared in his *Relação*: what he says about thc apostles (and about the Christians in general) were "according to what we found

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7. Cf. SRD IX 138ff.; DI VI 427f. 413.
8. DIONYSIO 395.
9. MAFFEI 49.
10. Fernão Guerreiro, S. J. speaks of the many memoirs of different Portuguese authors about the tomb and St. Thomas. He relies for his report on Fr. Roz, the then (1607) bishop of the Thomas Christians, who "is well read in Chaldean and Syriac". The bishop was continuosly occupied in studying these books of the Christians in order to purge them from Nestorian tenets. What Guerreiro himself narrates about the Apostle's works etc., was found in one of the many such old books. Cf. GUERREIORO 141.

written in Chaldean books".[11] He also knew the oral tradition but his main source was these books which he had perused so many times. Fernão Guerreiro got his information (1607) about the Apostle similarly from one of the very old Chaldean books scrutinised by Roz.[12]

The Chaldeo-Malabar tradition was unanimous about the apostolate of St. Thomas in Malabar and the veracity of the tomb of Mylapore. We have already said about this general conviction the Portuguese found at their arrival.[13] Fr. Dionysio says that the Christians of Malabar were called St. Thomas Christians because their first origins were from the glorious Apostle. For Joam de Lucena the existence of the Christians of *Serra* was evidence enough for the apostolate of St. Thomas in India.[14]

2. The contents of the Chaldeo-Malabar tradition

i. *The itinerary of the Apostle.* On this subject we are in a better position to distinguish the purely Malabar tradition from that of Chaldea. The Abuna, who was one of the witnesses examined in the 1533 inquiry, and whom Barros and Correa follow, generally represents the Chaldean version although he declares that he was repeating what he had heard in Babylon and Malabar. Roz who knew the Chaldean books, which generally gave the Chaldean and the local tradition, is influenced by both sources. The Chaldean tendency is to attribute to the apostolate of St. Thomas all the fields where this Church had influence at one time or other. We reproduce here the witness of the Abuna. The Apostle St. Thomas was sent by order of Christ to the parts of India etc. He was accompanied by two other Apostles, St. Bartholomew and Judas Tadeus. Thomas with J. Tadeus went first to Babylon, and passing Baçora[15] went over to

11. Roz, f. 86.
12. Cf. also Couto 12, 3, 4, 270f. In the beginning of the 18th cent. (1712/13) a German Protestant missionary, B. Ziegenbalg writes that he read fron an Armenian (Syriac) book the coming of the Apostle in India, cf. Ziegenbalg 349.
13. Sup. p. 30.
14. Dionysio 394; Lucena 162. Cf. also Monserrate, f. 149.
15. Correa IiI 494 says Baçora near Ormuz.

Qualexquadaqua[16] where J. Tadeus settled himself, converted many into Christianity and built houses of prayer. At the time Abuna was giving the testimony this place belonged to the Muslims and Arabs and there were no Christians nor any house of prayer there. St. Bartholomew passed over to Persia[17] and lay buried in Tarão[18] in a monastery in Tabris, the land of Xequismael[19]; there were still many Christians and houses of prayer there. St. Thomas leaving Judas Tadeus went to Socotora[20] and then to Mylapore and China; in Cabalia[21] he converted many and built a house of prayer. From there he returned to Mylapore and lived on a hill one and a half leages away from the place where afterwards was built his house.[22]

Amador Correa who described the 1564 feast[23] of the Thomas Christians, says that this feast was in commemoration of the day on which St. Thomas came to the end of his journey in a ship, 2 leagues away from Cranganore. Roz who knew the Chaldean tradition from the Chaldean books and the locacal tradition, oral or written, tells us that St. Thomas sold himself to a lord, ambassador of the king of Bisnaga in order to come to India and preach the Gospel. He preached and baptized many in Cambaya and the lands of Mogor, Socotora, Malavar[24] and Bisnaga reaching

16. *Qualexquadaqua* may be the village 'kalish' in the province of Bagdad. Cf. RITTER, *Geographiches Lexikon* (Leipzig 1895), or the province 'Chalis', North-East of Bagdad. Cf. MEYER'S *Handatlas* (Leipzig 1900), map 82. Barros calls the place *Cabeçada despone* (does he mean Seleucia Ctesiphon?), 3, 7, 11, 232.
17. CORREA says instead of Persia, *Armenia*, III 424.
18. Tarão=Dara, Cf. LTK, 2 (1958) 10 and DHGE, 14 (1957) 83f.
19. Xequismael=Sheik Ismail, king of Persia (1502-1524); Tabris=N. W. Persia.
20. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 26.
21. *Cabalia=Kambalih* (Peking)
22. ABUNA, f. 18. It is interesting to note that there is no mention of Apostle's work on the Malabar Coast. We shall see later, that there is a theory that all the Christians of Malabar were immigrants from the Choromandel Coast and apparently the source of that theory is the Chaldean tradition.
23. Sup. p. 40f.
24. This seems to be the only place where Roz at least indirectly admits the existence of Christians who were of Malabar soil. Otherwise he is all for the emigration theory mentioned in note 22. See ch. 5.

even China and great China according to the Chaldean breviary of St. Thomas [25]. There are vestiges in those places even to-day of Christians. The apostle also preached to the cafres.[26]

ii. *Apostolate.* St. Thomas preached the gospel and baptized people in all the places he went and founded churches. According to a stone inscription which the Christians of St. Thomas read and interpreted for Roz, the Apostle converted 3 principal kings of India: that of Bisnaga called by them Xoren Perumal, that of Pandi called Pandi Perumal and that of all Malabar called Xaran Perumal [27]. Fr. Guerreiro found in a Chaldean book that the Apostle had converted six kings and three emperors: the emperors correspond to Roz's three principal kings. The Pandi kingdom, according to Guerreiro, corresponded to the then existing kingdom of Cape Comorin.

The same source further attested that on the Choromondel Coast there had been many churches in older times, all founded by the Apostle. He began eight archbishoprics in those parts where he preached. The names of those archbishoprics, as they were written in Chaldean, were difficult to be identified. Only the following could be clearly identified: Hindu, i.e., Malabar [28], Socotora, Cambaia, Mogor, China, and Mahachina which should be, according to the author, Cataio.[29]

iii. *The miracles.* Many of the miracles which we see in the Mylapore tradition which are described as worked by the Apostle on the Choromondel Coast, are presented by

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25. Office of July 3.
26. Roz, f. 86. Couto heard from the '*Cortali*' Christians of Parur tuat Mogodor Patana was the place where the Apostle fiirst landed. Cf. 12, 3, 4, 274 276. The place of landing of the Apostle in the general Malabar tradition is Maliankara. Cranganore, being in the vicinity and a more known place, is generally identified with it. In 1953 a shrine was built in Cranganore to accomodate the important relic of St. hhomas, given as a gift to the community of St. thomas Christians by the bishop of Ortona, and brought to Malabar by His Eminence Eugene Cardinal Tisserant in that year.
27. Roz, ibd. Cf. also Mundadan, *The Arrival* 7f.
28. See below ch. 6, II.
29. Guerreiro 142. Cf. Couto 7, 105, 278.

the Malabar tradition as happened on the Malabar Coast itself in connection with the foundation of the churches there. Such are the miracles of the log, fanam, of the dead boy etc.[30] Three other alleged miracles are that of the miraculous arm, ths Cochin leg, and of the hand. They are not so commonly found in the early Portnguese reports. We shall describe the alleged miracles of the log, fanam, rice, the dead boy in the next section on the tradition of Mylapore and that of the arm of the Apostle in connection with the burial of the Apostle.

The earliest reference to the *miracle of the hand* in Portuguese sources, as far as we could make out, is in Couto. It was the feast in honour of the wedding of the son of the king of Mogoder Patanam. The Apostle was also present. A minister of the king seeing the Apostle in ecstacy gave him a slap. The Apostle foredoomed a temporal punishment for the sacriligious act of the man in order that he might avoid an eternal one. The man went out to wash his hands and when he was outside he saw a tiger. The tiger bit off his sacriligious hand. The man bleeding returned to the house followed by a dog which brought in the hand. The Apostle having pity on the man took the hand from the mouth of the dog and applied it to the arm and fixed it as it was before. [31]

About the *Cochin leg*[32] no trace could be found in the 16th c. Portuguese documents. We give the following description as found in a later work. A certain pagan on the Choromondel Coast kicked the Apostle. He and all his posterity were punished with a grave disease. These unhappy men carried their legs swollen, full of certain knots and loathsome corrugations, filled with pus. Their bodies cloated and tumours covered the whole of their leg down to the feet;

30. Cf. CASTANHEDA I 126f. He describes (implying) that the first three of these miracles happened in quilon in connection with the building of the church there

31. COUTO 12, 3, 4, 276. There are different versions of the miracle and Fr. Vincenzo Maria di S. Catherina de Siena who worked in Malabar in the middle of the 17th cent. heard a different version. Cf. VINCENZO 132f.

32. Elephantasism, cf PM I 123–30.

this rendered their movement very painfull. All his posterity did not inherit this disease in equal measure, some having it on both legs, while others on the right or left leg. But all felt the puishment keenly. Their generation have so much multiplied and spread that in Malabar they could be found everywhere.[33]

Ziegenbalg who wrote in 1713 heard about the tradition but in a different version. According to what he heard the Christians of St. Thomas had this specific mark, viz., their right legs were thicker than the left legs. The reason for this was because their ancestors, when asked by some pilgrims to show the places sanctified by the life of the Apostle, were so negligent that they showed the directions with their left legs. But Ziegenbalg had not seen any Christsan with such legs.[34]

iv. *The death of the Apottle.* Barbosa got the following information about the death of the Apostle from the Christians of Quilon. Persecuted in Quilon by the pagans he departed for Mylapore. There also he was not left in peace and he had to retire to a wilderness. One day a hunter while hunting peacocks at this locality saw a group of peacocks with the chief peacock seated on a flat stone there. The hunter shot an arrow and the chief of the peacocks being wounded flew away. In the air it was transformed into a human being and fell down dead. The governor of the town being informed of this prodigy came and immediately recognised it as the body of the Apostle. The saint after having been wounded left his foot prints on the stone on which he had sat.[35] Castanheda who also apparently knows the Quilon tradition very well gives the same version of the death of the Apostle.[36]

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33. Vincenzo 137.
34. Ziegenbalg 242.
35. Barbosa II 126. Dames, the editor of Barbosa's book, says that Barbosa's is the only version that speaks of the assumption of a peacock's appearance by the saint. He enumerates there the other versions: of Marco Polo, Odoric, Monte Corvino and Conti. Cf. ibd. n. 2.
36. Castanheda I 126f.

The Chaldean Abuna told the inquirers of 1533 that the Apostle was murdered with a lance by a low caste.[37] Barros has the fallowing version. The Apostle was murdered while preaching to the people near a tank. At the instigation of the Brahmins he was stoned by some people and he fell down. As he lay there almost dead a Brahmin struck him with a lance and the saint breathed the last.[38] According to Dionysio the Apostle was martyred with a lance while praying on a mountain about a league from the town and this was done at the order of the king of the place.[39] Roz read from a stone cross inscription that the Apostle died on the 21st of December, in the 30th year of the promulgation of the Gospel.[40]

v. *The Burial.* The body of the saint was recognised and all thought of him as a holy man. Hence they brought the body to the church and buried him there together with the stone which had his foot-prints on it. But the right arm resisted burial and after many unsuccessful attempts to push it down into the grave men who buried the Apostle gave up the attempt. But on one occasion when the Chinese tried to cut it off to be taken to their country as a relic it sank into the tomb and the Chinese never again made the attempt to cut it off. Thus the Apostle lay buried inconspicuously in the church which his disciples and followers built for him.[41] Dionysio did not know whether by a miracle or due to industry that the arm remained outside the grave unburied. He could only say that the people had covered the arm with a silk cloth and in their great devotion and for their spiritual consolation went to kiss this hand.[42] When the Christians

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37. ABUNA, f. 18.
38. BARROS 3, 7, 11, 233.
39. DIONYSIO 359.
40. ROZ 86. Probably he means the miraculous cross inscription, about which see below.
41. BARBOSA, ibd
42. What 'an Indian prelate", John by name, told in Rome in 1122 (as recorded by Abbot Odo of Rheims), are echo of the aocount of these alleged miracles. Cf. P. DEVOS, S. J., *Le miracle posthume de S. Thomas l'Apotre=Analecta Bollandiana,* 66 (1948) 231-75. Cf. also sup. p. 17.

were persecuted by the pagan kings for their being Christians and for showing reverence to the saint's body, (for this second reason, acording to the Christians), the saint withdrew his arm into the tomb and the Christians consequently left the place, and migrated to the Malabar mountains.[43] Monserrate suggests that the arm refused to be buried beeause it had touched the Sacred Side of Our Lord.[44] The Mogul king hearing about this prodigy came with an army to cut it away but the arm withdrew itself into the tomb. Hence the Christians were severely persecuted by the king.[45]

The obvious supposition in all this tradition is that the relics of St. Tomas were never transferred from the place of his burial. This need not necessarily be so much from the contents of the tradition itself as from the view of the Portuguese interpretors who for sometime seem to be careful to record that the relics they found in the tomb were entire and genuine. The Malabar tradition itself has nothing to say about what happend to the relics after the alleged persecution or war during which the Christians left the place. However it is interesting to note that the Chaldean Abuna testifies that he had never heard of any translation of the relics from Mylapore to any other place.[46] This shows that he had not known much of the early Syrian tradition which definitely knows the translation of the relics to Edessa.

II The Mylapore Tradition about the Tomb

Here we pass on to the traditions found among the inhabitants of Choromandel who were mainly Hindus. The main documents for us in this case are the original report of the inquiry of 1533 and other accounts more or less based on this inquiry.

1. The Source of the Tradition

Again here, the first question to be asked is what the main sources were from which the Portuguese drew their

43. Dionysio 396f.
44. Jn. 20, 27f.
45. Monserrate, f. 151. Cf. also Goes I 170 and 256–60.
46. Abuna, f. 18v.

information. The most important element in this case appears to be the oral tradition then current among the natives. However, written accounts were also existent, as will be clear from what we say below.

Diogo Fernandez who seems to be the main witness of the inquiry of 1533 and who from 1517 spent many years in Mylapore and heard and saw many things about the Apostle and his tomb, has said that his testimony was based on the information he gathered all those years from the old inhabitants of the locality: Brahamins as well as other honourable people. They on their part furnished their information from their oral and written traditions, which "they have in their ancient writings".[47]

According to Barros the witnesses in the inquiry included Muslims, pagans and Christians both native and European.[48] Correa's account of the inquiry is also interesting in this connection. Miguel Ferreira who had the charge was very diligent in the inquiry into the matter. He sought out the oldest people of the land: Muslims and pagans, natives and foreigners who all testified on oath according to their custom and usage and all said in substance the same thing as if they were speaking with one mouth. What they witnessed they had heard from their fore-fathers and ancestors. Most of the witnesses were between 80 and 90 years of age.[49]

João de Lucena after having brought in the testimony of the Fathers and the very existence of the Christians of the Serra in proof of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas makes this remark: "There is much in the Badaga language[50] preserved in their archives, in the kingdom of the Narsinga; so too in old romances which they are accustomed to sing, keeping the succession of memories and ancient things. From all these our men were convinced not only of the sojourn and preaching of the Apostle but also of the details of his

47. FERNANDEZ, f. 22.
48. BARROS 3, 7, 11, 223.
49. CORREA III 419f.
50. The Telugu language.

miracles, martyrdom and tomb. These convictions are written down by such people as Barros . ." [51]

2. The Contents of the Mylapore Tradition

The general content of the tradition is that the Apostle Thomas who was called by the natives 'the holy man' arrived in Mylapore some 1400 or 1500 years before the time of the inquiry, lived there some years, preached and worked miracles and built a holy house which was called by the natives 'the house of the holy man' and after his death (which is generally taken as martyrdom) was interred in that house and lay there buried till that time. Now we follow some details of tradition indicating mainly those elements which are in some way or other different from the Chaldeo-Malabar tradition described above.

i. *The itinerary of the Apostle.* It is interesting to note that while the Chaldeo-Malabar tradition is rich in the description of the intinerary, the Mylapore tradition has very little to say about it. So too it is silent about the Apostle's work elsewhere. It is mainly concerned with the miraculous building of the house by the Apostle and his martyrdom and burial.

ii. *The miracles.* There are three main miracles which are described as having taken place in connection with the building of the house or the church of the Apostle. They are the miracles of the log, that of the dead boy and that of *fanam* or rice.[52] These are well narrated in the original report of the inquiry. We follow it here adding details from other documents whenever necessary.

a) The miracle of the log: While the Apostle was in prayerful retirement in an oratory at a stone's cast from the house,[53] a log of wood of extraordinary size arrived at the beach some 12 leagues away from the place where he prayed. This log was so big that the efforts of the king

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51. LUCENA 163.
52. CASTANHEDA and BARBOSA locate some of these miracles in Quilon. BARBOSA II 98ff;sup. p. 45f.
53. Cf. sup. p. 34f.

of the place and his people failed to carry it to land. The Apostle went to the king and offered to carry it to land on condition that the king would give him the log and permit him to use it to build a church in the place which he would carry it in. The king consented, perhaps thinking that it would be an impossible task for the saint to carry it in. Here D. Fernandez quotes a document supposed to have contained the written permission of the king which said: "Where this holy man brought in the log of wood there he shall build a house whether there stood in that place my own houses or temples or any other houses". Accordingly the Apostle proceeded to the place where lay the log on which was found an inscription: "Of this wood St. Thomas shall build a house". The Apostle having made a sign of the cross tied his cincture to the log and easily carried it some 12 leagues and brought it to a place where there stood the house of a high priest and friend of the king. There he began the work of building his house.[54]

b) The Miracle of the dead boy: The said high priest was very angry at this act of the Apostle and in envy and passion killed his own boy and complained to the king that the Apostle having destroyed his house had killed his boy. St. Thomas, in order to prove his innocence, brought the dead boy back to life and asked him to tell the truth. The boy testified that it was his own father who killed him and not the saint. The boy, when asked by the Apostle whether he would like to live in this world or in the other, answered that he would, in the other. Immediately he having received baptism died. The king witnessing the miracle gave the Apostle the place where he had brought in the log to build his house. Barros and Correa would state that the

54. FERNANDEZ, f. 22 and 22v; BARROS 3, 7, 11, 231; CORREA III 420f. According to Barreto the church was built by the Portuguese but the chapel (according to certain tradition) was built by the Apostle from a wood called *St. Thomas wood*, cf. *Goa* 11, 317f. According to Monesrrate the whole chapel and the main doors of the church were of an incrorruptible wood which the Apostle carried over the land miraculously. This wood had a speciality, viz., that in the month of December (in which month also the miracle of the cross took place) water oozed out from it and this sight was seen by Fathers of the Society of Jesus, cf. MONSERRATE, f. 150v.

king was converted by the miracle. In any case the Apostle was free to build a church in the place pre-determined by him.[55]

c) The miracle of the fanam or rice: The Apostle getting the necessary permission to build the house set to conduct it with the help of the masons and carpenters of the place. These workers were paid their wages with the saw-dust but when they received it they found it changed into gold coins. [56] Another version of the same miracle which already Gomez in 1517 records is that the apostle paid the workers in sand which turned out to be rice.[57]

All are agreed that the Apostle himself built the whole or part of the house in this miraculous way and with the log of wood he miraculously brought to land.[58]

iii. *The death of the Apostle.* On the subject of the death of the Apostle we have to distinguish two things: the *place* where he died and the *manner* in which he died. As for the place we have already seen[59] how there appear two different versions in connection with the Little Mount and the Big Mount and how some later authors tried to combine both the traditions. As to the manner of his death there appear more than one version and also some attempt at a combination of all the different versions. Already earlier, while dealing with the Chaldeo-Malabar tradition we have seen the purely local tradition in Quilon which was perhaps influenced by the local tradition of Mylapore which paints the Apostle as shot by mistake by a hunter and other versions such as that of the Chaldean Abuna which depicts the death of the Apostle as a deliberate murder. Barros' account seems to be an attempt to combine both versions. [60] Here we may give other accounts more or less similar, which the Portuguese heard on the Choromandel Coast.

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55. FERNANDEZ, f. 22v–23; BARROS, ibd; CORREA III 421.
56. FERNANDEZ, f.23.
57. GOMEZ 298; CORREA III 420. Cf. also CASTANHEDA and BARBOSA, ibd.
58. Sup. p. 30f.
59. Sup. p. 36f.
60. Sup. p. 47.

Gomez' account is much similar to that of Barbosa. For, he says that the Apostle was wounded by an arrow and took to flight in the form of a peacock leaving his foot-print of fresh blood on a rock and that there was a stone in the house with the print of his left foot.[61] According to D. Fernandez the Apostle stayed with his three disciples for some time in Mylapore, for how long he could not make out. He was murdered on the Little Mount in a cave. Wounded as he was he knelt down to pray and while in prayer he left the mark of his knee there. So too he left there his foot-print. While he was thus praying he saw his murderers lying down on the ground in fear. He asked them to take courage and to go to his house and tell his disciples to come and take him to the chapel and bury him in the chapel which had been already built. This they did, and he was buried in the chapel by his disciples. [62] About the burial not many details are given.

Diogo Couto who, as we saw, tried to combine the traditions about the place of the Apostle's death, gives more details about the manner of the death of the Apostle. The envious Brahmins who had been discredited before the king by the virtue of St. Thomas, went to kill him. Hearing that he was in the cave near the Little Mount (which at the time of the Apostle was called *Antenodur*), they stood near the slope of the mountain, where there was a narrow opening to let in a little light, and looking through it they found the Apostle on his knees with eyes closed, in a rapture so profund that he appeared to be dead. The Brahmins thrusting a lance through the opening wounded him mortally. It is not proved where exactly the place was but all authorities are in accord in saying that it was on the slope of a mountain. The wound was about half a span deep. When the saint sighed, all the murderers ran away and he in his death agony got out of the cave and dragged himself to the Big Mount, and there he died.[63]

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61. Gomez 298. Hence it is conjectured that Barbosa got this information about the death of the Apostle from the first visitors to the tomb in 1517. Cf. sup. n. 35.
62. Fernandez, f.23.
63. Couto 7, 10, 5, 469. Cf. also sup. p. 37.

iv. *The relics.* According to the natives his body was never taken out of the tomb nor his relics tampered with except by the Portuguese.[64] Barzaeus who knew the tradition that the Apostle's body had b een translated to Edessa, wrote in 1553 that the people of the land held the contrary. And their opinion seemed to have been confirmed by the discovery of a big body which sent forth odour.[65] Barreto records the reply of the people of the place to the alleged tradition of the body being tranferred to Edessa: it was true that in olden times people came from Armenia asking for the body of the Apostle, but the people of the place gave them the body of a disciple of the Apostle and thus deceived them.[66] Lucena solves the difficulty arising from the existence of the body of the Apostle once in Edessa and later in Ortona by the suggestion that the Chaldean prelates who were the superiors of the Christians of St. Thomas might have taken a part of the relics to Edessa.[67]

v. *An Alleged Persecution.* In the Chaldeo–Malabar tradition we have seen in connection with the miracle of the unburied arm of the Apostle, that the Christians had to leave the place either owing to persecution or some wars.[68] We shall see some other details of this exodus and an alleged persecution in chapter five.

vi. *Possessions of the St. Thomas Church.* Gomez knew from the natives already in 1517 that the house had big possesssions in land both in the interior and by the sea-side which were all donated by the patrons of the house. These lands were expropriated by the king of the place when the Christians defeated in war, had left the place.[69] Some of the inscriptions (of which we will speak immediately) are concerned mainly with the possessions of the church.

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64. FERNADEZ, f. 23 v.
65. DI II 578ff. It may be observed here that the Portuguese ever since the excavation of the tomb and discovery of the relics are apparently reluctant to admit that the body had been transferred from the tomb earlier. This attitude changed only slowly.
66. BARRETO, f. 317f.
67. LUCENA 175f.
68. Sup. p. 47f.
69. GOMEZ 298.

vii. *The inscriptions.* We treat about these inscriptions in this place just because the interpretation of them brings to mind rather what people of the time knew from tradition than their literal implication. D. Fernandez, the principal witness of the inquiry of 1533 enumerates a number of inscriptions he had seen and had read with the help of the natives of the place.

We have already spoken of a document according to which the king allowed the Apostle to build the house. The stone on which this was written, was very large and the witness was of opinion that it was very necessary for the house to recover the document, as it included many privileges granted to it. The small tomb stone over the grave of the king had the following inscription: "Here lies Tane Modaliar" which means Thomas, the servant of God[70] who had helped to build the church. This king was not a Christian when he made these donations. The documents which the king had made after his conversion were supposed to be in the possession of the Brahmins and other natives who refused to show them to the Portuguese.[71]

Father Cyprian, S. J., who had copied the document concerning the inquiry of 1533 adds to it as his own remarks the interpretation of the inscriptions found on the tomb stone probably of the king's tomb. The incsription mentions the date and locus. The king by a solemn oath gave to the Christians of St. Thomas, living in the town of Mylapore, tithes from all income derived both from sea and land in order to build the church. This grant was to continue till sun and moon lasted and he imprecated the severest punishment on any of his posterity who refused to give that grant. The king was called Ari Ara Lai.[72]

The inscription on the door of the church was made by the Armenian Coja Esquandel who accompanied the first Portuguese visitors of 1517. D. Fernandez saw him inscribing

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70. *Mudaliar,* an honorific plural of *mudali*=chief. It is also a caste title. Cf. YULE & BURNELL 568.
71. FERNANDEZ, f.23v 24.
72. FEANANDEZ, f.25.

it and it was confined to the name of the Armenian and that was all. This was the custom of all Armenians when they visited the house for the first time. Another inscription in the language of the place found on a beam of red wood adjoining a small cross inside the church reads: "Lord, accept this alms of Joane your servant and receive me when you appear in your holy glory". This beam, the natives told the witness, was broken and a Malabar Christian pilgrim substituted another. The inscription supposed to have been made by the Apostle himself was not to be seen.[73]

Another inscription worthy of note is the so-called Buca Raja document or copper plate grant. The document was made by king Buca Raja of Bisnaga some 347 years before Lucena wrote his account. This document granted to the church of St. Thomas in Mylapore as donation the whole town of Mylapore and other neighbouring places extending some four leagues. It was in the poesession of a Brahmin who kept it in great secrecy. In 1563 Father Antonio Penteado, vicar of the house, managed to get it from the Brahmin.[74] An expert Brahmin was brought from Conjevaram to read the incription the words of which were very difficult to decipher. The document consisted of three copper leaves, each written on only one face, the other face exhibiting the design of a cross and a peacock apparently the coat of arms of the city of Mylapore or of the king.[75]

The Brahmin gave the following interpretation of the writing: In the name of God who made the heavens and the earth, whose beginning or end no one knows, to whom I recommend myself, under whose hand stand the sun as well as the moon and the stars. Then follows the text of the donation of the said lands. The donation was to be perpetual, as long as the sun and moon endured, and a solemn invocation of great reward was made on all those who kept this promise, and of severe punishment on all those who

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73. FERNANDEZ, f.24.
74. About this, cf. COUTO 7, 10, 5, 481f.
75. Because, according to Couto, the Apostle had no special seal of his own, ibd. 483.

broke it. Thus the grant was made for all times. Lucena adds that the mode, the style and the antiquity of the letters were proofs of its genuineness. Hence Father A. Penteado had it entrusted to the visitor of the bishop of Cochin so that the viceroy, D. Afonso de Noronha (1550–54) might treat with the king of Bisnaga through letters and ambassadors to examine the authenticity of the document and when these were proved, to restore those possessions to the church of the Apostle.[76]

Although we shall have to treat later on about the miraculous cross, we may indicate here some of the interpretations given by the natives which represented more the oral tradition than the real content of the writing itself. Thirty years after the revelation of the law of the Christians in the world the Apostle died on the 21st of December in Mylapore. Then there was the knowledge of God, and change of the law and destruction of the demons. God was born from Virgin Mary, lived under her obedience 30 years and was the Eternal God. God taught the 12 Apostles his law and one of them came to Mylapore with a staff in his hand and built a church and the king of Malabar, and that of Choromandel and of Pandi, and others of different nations and sects decided in good will and agreed among themselves to subject themselves to the law of St. Thomas, and became penitent and saintly.[77] This is the version given by Lucena. Couto gives more details, and he knew the differences in the reports given by different Portuguese writers. He gives some details of the miracles of the Apostle, and the log of wood which the saint brought to land is said to have been called *Bagad*. The Incarnation and the arrival of the Apostle happpened during the reign of the king Sagad who reigned 30 years. Among those who followed the law of the Apostle were the king of three realms: Cheralacone, Indalcone, and Cuspandiad;

76. Lucena's description is corrupted owing to some anachronisms. Couto knew about such anachronisms among some authors. Cf. LUCENA 172f. COUTO ibd. 481ff. Cf. also DI IV 339. We do not have any guarantee for the genuineness of the document. Probably the whole attempt was a trick played by the Brahmins to get money from the Portuguese.

77. LUCENA 164.

the king Alexander of Ertinabarad with his daughter Catherine and many other virgins. The Apostle died at Antenodur.[78] From this the inference of the Portuguese was that all these kings were converted to Christainity.[79]

There is no doubt that thsse interpretations are very fantastic and it is difficult to ascertain what actually the Brahmin told the Portuguese and what the later Portuguese commentators added as product of their own imagination. There is difficulty also in distinguishing how much the original interpretation of the Brahmin was influenced by the local oral tradition and how much by the probable suggestions of the Portuguese themselves who knew at this time much of the western tradition about the Apostle. Other remarks may be found below where we treat the discovery of the cross separately.

viii. *The Prophecy.* The earliest version of a prophecy said to have been prevalent among the natives of the Choromandel seems to be that which is recorded by Fernandez: When the Portuguese settled down in Mylapore, says he, the natives were very glad because they could thereby find protection againt robbers who had been constantly troubling them. They saw in the arrival of the Portuguese the fulfilment of a prophecy made by their ancestors that there would come a time when a white people would come and give the black man food to eat and clothes to wear and that when the sea approached the house then would be the end of the world.[80]

For Barros the approach of the sea (which at the time of the Apostle was 12 leagues away from the town of Mylapore but at the time of the Portuguese arrival in India only a stone's cast from the house of the Apostle) was in fulfilment of a similar prophecy by the Apostle himself who foretold that at the time when the sea reached the town a white people from the West, who believed in the Lord,

78. Cf. also sup. p. 54f.
79. Couto, ibd. 478f.
80. Fernandez, f. 24v.

Whom he had been preaching, would come and inhabit the place.[81]

In Quilon Monserrate heard that St. Thomas had set up a stone half a league from the sea and said that when the sea touched that stone, white Christian people would come who would make them follow the law he had preached to them. The writer then comments that the stone stood there very much worn, and half a league away from it the sea was full of stones, which showed that the sea had encroached on this half a league of land only recently.[82]

ix. *Pilgrimage.* We have seen that near the house of the Apostle there was a place reserved for pilgrims.[83] Many documents speak of the pilgrimage conducted by Christians of Malabar and of other places to Mylapore. According to Correa people came there from other lands to pray and some of them died there and were buried behind the church (probably in the place reserved for the pilgrims as in the case we have seen, of Dom Jorge the Hungarian).[84]

Concluding this section on the Mylapore tradition about the tomb, we have to remark that the whole tradition is not a little obscured and its interpretation made difficult by the many legendary accounts and fantastic explanations of some of the inscriptions. To some extent it is also difficult to distinguish what the natives must have said volantarily and what they might have said at the suggestion of the Portuguese. But the main thing seems to stand out in relief, namely "the holy man" who for the Chaldeans, the St. Thomas Christians, and the Portuguese, was undoubtedly St. Thomas the Apostle, died near the town of Mylapore and his body was buried in the right-hand chapel of the house and this the Portuguese visited in 1517.

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81. BARROS 3, 2, 1, 107.
82. MONSERRATE, f.149.
83. Sup. p. 35f.
84. CORREA III 420.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 3

The Local Documents Concerning the Thomas Tradition

Here we are concerned with the tradition among the Chsistians of St. Thomas as it is found in some local sources written or oral. This was represented to be devoid of any influence from the 16th century, and from the time of the later Portuguese accounts already analysed by us in the preceding pages. We say that they are claimed to be independent but we are not in a position to prove how far, especially because the datings of these sources have not yet been established beyond doubt. These sources include many written and unwritten songs, oral and written traditions connected with certain families, churches and other places; a few archeological findings. We do not intend to go through these sources in detail but only merely indicate them and give the summary of their contents.[85]

1. The Songs

The *Thomas Rabban Pattu*,[86] and *Margam Kali Pattu* [87] are the best known of them. Many other songs attached to

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85. For a summary study of these sources, cf. HAMBYE 368-372.

86. *Pattu*=song. The *Rabban song* was published by F. X. ROCCA: *La leggenda di S. Thomaso Apostolo=Orientalia Christiana*, 32 (1933) 168-179. The document is claimed to have been originally written by a disciple of St. Thomas, Apostle. The text we actually possess is asserted to be a redaction of this original in modern language by Thomas Ramban Maliekal, the 48th priest of this family whose compound in Niranam can be seen still today. The date of this later redaction is differently given: 1101, 1601 etc. Other remarks may be found in HAMBYE 396. Cf. also THOMAS, P. J., 61 ff.: *Rabban Pattu;* 57ff.: *Margam Kali Pattu;* HOSTEN *The Song.*

87. *The Song of the Way*, i. e., a description of the introduction of the *marga* or the *Christian Way of Worship* into Kerala. It may be

important churches and often used on wedding feasts and other ceremonies are still preserved in Malabar, some of them being even performed dy Hindu singers.[88] There can be no doubt (from the review we have made above, of the sources of the Malabar tradition as the Portuguese found it [89]) that the Christians of St. Thomas were in possession of such songs from early times. Some of them might have been in all probability manuscripts handed down from family to family.

2. Other written accounts

We have seen above that besides songs, the annals of both Christians and gentiles also commemorated the life, work, death etc. of the Apostle in India. We actually possess some such Hindu accounts. The most important of them are the *Keralolpathies* which deal with the origins of Kerala or Malabar.[90] The Tamilnad account about Kandappa Raja may also be mentioned in this place as it also echoes some of the Malabar tradition about St. Thomas.[91]

We may now give the substance of the *Rabban song* which is a better representation than all other accounts, and see how far the oral tradition current among the Christians of St. Thomas and the archeological findings, corroborate it.

Thomas the Apostle coming from Arabia landed in Maliankara[92] in the year 50 A. D. in the month of *Dhanu* [93]. After a short stay there he proceeded to Mailapuram and

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observed here that conversion into Christianity (and apparently to any new religion) is called in Malayalam "margam kuduka" (to join the way). The song in question is composed to accompany some sacred dance. Possibly this song is a Christian imitation of the *Yathrakali*, i. e., the journey song of the Namputhiris (or Malabar Brahmins). Cf. ibd. 369.

88. E.g., the *Veeradian Pattu.*

89. Cf. sup. p. 41f.

90. *Keralolpathies* are treatises on the origins of Kerala or Malabar as the word signifies. There are different versions and recensions and it is difficult to assign any definite date to any of them. Some valuable information may be found about them in an article (Malayalam) by Dr. P. J. Thomas, *Baudhanaya Perumal=Bhasha Poshini* (a Malayalam periodical) 1919-20 Cf. also PM I 37-42.

91. Cf. HOSTEN 25ff.

92. Cf. sup. n. 26.

93. *Dhanu* is December-January.

China. Coming to Mailapuram port he sailed to Maliankara, being invited by the king of Tiruvanchikulam[94] and founded there seven churches: in Cranganore (where he arrived in 51 A. D. and baptized the king, 3000 pagans and 40 Jews), in Kollam, Chayal, Niranam (to which place the cross was transferred from the infidel village of Truckpaleshwaram), Kokamangalam, Kottakkayal (Parur) and Palayur.[95]

In 59, in the month of *Kanni*[96], he is called back to Mailapuram by king Choran who imprisons the Apostle because he had given away to the poor the money the king had entrusted him with, for building a palace for him. But the king's brother died at that time and was brought back to life and he revealed to Choran the beauty of the heavenly palace. Thomas thereupon was set free and the king together with 700 pagans received baptism.

After a stay of two and a half years in Mailapuram the Apostle returned to Malabar via Malayattur[97] and visited the old stations: Cranganore, Kottakayal, Kokamangalam, Kollam, Niranam, and Chayal, remaining in each place a year and conferring on the faithful the sacrament of confirmation.[98] In Chayal the Apostle took leave of the Christians telling them that they would not see him again. Then, in the year 69, he departed from there to the land of the Tamils.[99] Arrived at this point of the story, the poem enumerates the miracles worked by the Apostle: he raised to life 19 dead, drove the devil out of 260 persons, cured 230 lepers, gave sight to 250 blind persons, gave to 220 paralytics the use of their hands, and speech to 20 dumb and restored to health 250 persons given up by physicians. The total number of persons converted by him were 17550 of whom 6850 were Brahmins, 2800 Kshatryas, 3750 Vaisyas and 4250 Sudras, and so he conquered for the true way the high castes. During

94. Cranganore, cf. MUNDADAN *The Arrival* 12f.
95. These are the seven churches well known in tradition.
96. *Kanny*=September-October.
97. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 11 and n. 77.
98. It is dificult to explain this passage unless we admit that the text is redacted after the arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar.
99. Chayal was on one of the routes from Malabar to the Eastern coast as Malayattur was on another.

his visits to Malabar the Apostle had seen to the proper functioning of the church after him ordaining priests and consecrating bishops. Kepa and Paul are said to have been consecrated bishops. Kepa was from the Cranganore royal family and he was set over Kerala. He took part in the burial of the Apostle.

Back in Mailapuram the Apostle in the year 72, on the 3rd day of the month of *Karkadam*,[100] on his way to the Little Mount met some Chennambranmar Brahmins going for a sacrifice to the temple of Kali. They wanted him to take part in their worship, but he with the sign of the cross destroyed the temple and the Brahmins in their fury pierced him with a lance. In prayer the Apostle expired on a rock in the forest near the shore of the sea and his soul flew up to heaven in the form of a white dove accompanied by angels, and in a vision he promised his help to all that were going to pray at his tomb.

This tradition is clearly influenced by the account of the *Acts*[101] and also by the Chaldean tradition.[102] How far it is influenced by the Portuguese accounts is not quite clear. Some of the elements such as the mention of the sacrament of confirmation may be considered details admitted into the account from Portuguese sources. May be these elements were added by the last redacter of the poem at the end of the 16th century or so. But it must be admitted that the strongest element in the poem is undoubtedly of local origin and this is corraborated by the oral tradition.

3. Theoral tradition

We may just quote the words of a writer well experienced in the traditions of the Christians of St. Thomas. "Convince the Nazaranees (Christians of St. Thomas) if you can, that the Apostle St. Thomas was never in their midst. The educated among them may listen to your arguments with patience but not without their final protest. The mob will

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100. The 3rd of July. Cf. sup. p. 15.
101. The mention of the king's palace etc.
102. Mention of China as one of the fields of the apostolate.

get angry with you or will put you down for a lunatic, if not for a heretic. So strong is their belief in the apostolate of St. Thomas in their midst.

"To the traveller or historian they will point out with their fingers saying: Here St. Thomas landed; here he preached for the first time; here he confounded the Brahmins; this is the tank wherein he performed his miracles; this is the spot where a cross erected close to or over the ruins of a Hindu temple; these and these families trace their origin to the first converts of the Apostle, and they have retained even now their former surnames; that place over there is still a curse for Brahmins because of its special connections with St. Thomas; there rested his mortal remains etc.

"As a typical example let us take the historic place of Palayur...in the area of Chaughat. The church there which has undergone several changes, occupies the site where once stood a Hindu temple. The circular flat stone that covered the well of sacred water in the temple could still be seen there. Close by is a tank where tradition says, St. Thomas met Brahmins making their ceremonial ablutions, throwing up water to the skies. St. Thomas challenged the Brahmins to keep water suspended in the air in proof of the truth of their religion. At their failure he did this miraculous thing and on seeing this many were converted at the spot. The whole locality is dotted with fonndations of deserted houses. Namputhiri Brahmins to this day neither eat nor drink anything in this locality. The whole area is part of Chaughat which is a corrupt form of *Chapakad* meaning *cursed forest.* Tradition has it that when the Apostle had converted a good many Namputhiri Brahmins the rest cursed the place saying "*Inyathe kuli Vammanad*" (=the next bath will be at Vammanad). This has become a proverb in Malabar and the tradition is confirmed by the Namputhiri Brahmin custom of not tasting anything in this Chapakad area.

"Near the site of the church at Palayur there is a compound known as Kalath. At Vammanad still exists a Nampothiri Brahmin family of the same name Kalath which, with some others such as Kandimundan and Chengalam is considered as not originally belonging to Vammanad and also

low in the estimation of the other Namputhiri Brahmin families of the place. On the death of its last member which took place only very recently the Kalath family became extinct. The last member of that family had with him a manuscript document containing accounts connected with his family. Several Christians tried their best to have a look into that document but the owner on no account would permit them with the implication that such a thing would belittle the honour of his family in the eyes of others. All these are taken to mean that the Kalath family is one of those families that emigrated from Palayur and that the document contains the account of the conversion of the Namputhiri Brahmins of Palayur. The Namputhiri Brahmins of the neighbouring locality still keep vivid recollections of the miracle St. Thomas performed at Palayur. Some of them are not reluctant to narrate it to sincere inquirers. But they attribute it to sorcery.

"Similar traditions are connected with Cranganore, Quilon, Chayal, Kokkamangalam, Niranam and Parur, the six others of the seven traditional churches said to be founded by the Apostle."[103]

Traditions connected with some of the families are also interesting. Some families like the Kaly, Kalliankave, Maliekal, etc, traditionaly trace back their origin to some Namputhiri families which are supposed to have been converted by St. Thomas.[104] Two families: Sankarapuri and Pakalomattam claim to be priestly families, i.e., families from which the first priests were ordained by the Apostle and in which there existed a continuous line of priests even to the present day. We can still hear some priests, especially among the Jacobites, saying: "I am the 90th, I am the 100th successor of such a priest who was ordained by Mar Thomas".[105]

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103. All this information is taken from a manuscript work of Fr. Placid on the history of the St. Thomas Christians. Some other points (especially concerning the traditions) are indebted to this manuscript.
104. You can still hear old people narrate stories tracing the origins of their families to one or other Brahmin family.
105. See, e.g., the *Rabban song*, the modern redacter of which claims to be the 48th successor of the first priest of his family who was consecrated by the Apostle himself. Sup. n. 76.

The feast of July 3 is known among the Thomas Christians as *Thorana*, a corruption of the Syriac word *Dhukharana* meaning commemoration. The interesting thing about it is that till very recently, if not even to-day, the day was celebrated in some places as *Chatham* or *Srardham*, i.e., an annual funeral meal in honour of a deceased ancestor – definitely a Christianised Hindu custom.

We have to admit that these traditions were much more popular a few decades ago than now. The present generation does not seem to be very much interested in these traditions.

4. Tradition as reflected in the social life

Keen observers of the community of the St. Thomas Christians note that their social life and customs are in a few things similar to the practices of the Namputhiri Brahmins. If this is true now to some extent, it was all the more true years and centuries ago. The Synod of Diamper, and the period under the Latin jurisdiction after the synod, had stopped many such customs; still some traces can be found even today.[106] We must remember that the bulk of the community are claimed by the tradition to be converts from the Namputhiri Brahmins.

5. Archeological findings

Very little has been done in this field. A few findings that have been made seem to corroborate the local traditions. The vestiges of old temples etc. found in Palayur and near the other traditional churches are examples. A few ancient crosses have been also unearthed, e.g., that at Arthad and Alangad.[107] The effigy of a king supposed to be of a Christian king unearthed near Kottayam in 1889, is brought forward as a vindication of the tradition which says that St. Thomas converted kings also. The effigy is a bronze statuette of noble personage wearing a pectoral cross and holding a staff surmounted by a cross.[108]

106. Cf. HAMBYE 370. Cf. ch. 6 below on the social life of Thomas Christians.

107. Cf. HAMBYE 370f.; HOSTEN 327-364.

108. Cf. T. K. JOSEPH 47-51. A remodelling of the statuette of the king is also given there, facing p. 48.

In conclusion we may remark that before we can come to any definite conclusions from these traditions and archeological findings much work has to be done in order to judge them correctly. At present such a study seems to be only in the initial stage. We believe that that will contribute largely to eliminate much of the obscurities found in the whole question of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas.

CHAPTER 4

THE EXCAVATION OF THE TOMB BY THE PORTUGUESE

Having examined to some extent the Indian tradition about St. Thomas, his apostolate and his tomb, in its various forms we have to resume our story of the tomb, since its "discovery" by the Portuguese till about the middle of the 16th century.

1. The Portuguese Activity in Mylapore from 1517 to 1523

We have seen above[1] that in 1517 two groups of Portuguese had visited the tomb. The first group which included D. Fernandez appears to be more important for the rest of the story, as, apparently, it is this group which first reported to the Portuguese authorities about the tomb, their report being the basis for the later inquiries. Diogo Fernandez says that he and his companions went from Mylapore to Paleacate, seven leagues from Mylapore, and from there embarked for India (i.e., the west coast of India).[2] Correa sɐɥ more details: the Portuguese wrote down everything they saw and heard and returned to Malacca and from there came to India and reported everything to the Governor Diogo Lopez de Sequeira.[3] The Governor was about to leave for Portugal as his term had ended, and hence he entrusted his successor Dom Duarte Meneses[4] with the task of gathering further informations about tomb.[5]

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1. Sup. p. 18ff,
2. FERNANDEZ, f. 20.
3. Governor, 1518–22.
4. Governer, 1522-24.
5. CORREA II 725. So far Correa gives us the correct chronology. Then he mixes things up. Dom Duarte took charge as Governor at the end of 1521 and hence his appointment of M. Frias for the Choro-

This was at the end of 1521, or the beginning of 1522. In the meanwhile some other Portuguese also visited the tomb. According to Barros, two years after the first visit in 1517 Antonio Lobo Falcão, João Falcão and João Moreno went to Mylapore to riside there. They, while going about seeing the church, came to know that a short time previously was interred there a Hungarian knight called Jorge who had left his country with the desire of seeing the house of the Apostle.[6] Gaspar Correa says that he himself in company with Pero Lopes de Sampayo and others visited the house in 1521.[7] He describes the thrilling experience he and his companions had at the house.[8]

Appointed by the new Governor Meneses, Manuel Frias[9] proceeded to the Choromandel Coast as factor and captain of the Fishery and the Choromandel Coasts. He had the especial commission to inquire into the affairs of the tomb. According to Barros, Dom Meneses sent Frias to the Choromandel Coast to enquire into the matter, prompted by the reports he had received from the Portuguese visitors as well as by the intructions he had received from the king of Portugal.[10]

M. Frias found everything as it was reported and went back to the Governor and submitted his account. The Governor

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mandel and the events followed could not be earlier than the end of 1521 or the beginning of 1522. But Correa appears to say that the appointment and the following events happened in the first half of 1521 when he himself made a visit to the tomb. Either his memory failed him as to the year of his visit or he mixed his visit with the events of 1522 and 1523 without care for strict chronology. Here we are better guided by D. Fernandez's chronology, which Barros also follows. This chronological error of Correa gave occasion to some authors (e. g., T. K. Joseph), to speak of two excavations of the tomb. It must be noted that Correa does not speak of an excavation of the Apostle's tomb in 1521. Cf. also inf. n. 20.

6. Barros 3, 7, 11, 225f. Correa alone says that this Jorge was an English man, but that may be due to confusion of a copyist between *Hungro* (Hungarian) and *Ingres* (English). Correa II 724. Some copyists worte his name Domingo instead of Dom Jorge

7. But cf. sup. n. 5.

8. Correa II 725f.

9. Frias is the name given by all except by the text B of Fernandez which gives the name as Faria, cf. Figueiredo 3.

10. Cf. Barros 3, 7, 11, 226.

sent Alvaro Penteado[11] with wim in order to make the necessary repairs and put the house in order get it ready for divine worship and also to gather further information. The Father was pleased to find everything as it was reported and started big projects to repair the house and build a monastery for the friars.[12] To these the factor objected saying that he was to do nothing but what the Governor had ordered him to do.[13] Hence the priest became angry and without doing anything went by land to the Governor who too protested against his ideas. The Father then left for Portugal in order to give an account of the house to the king, [14] leaving behind in Mylapore as chaplain an old priest Pero Fernandez, and also another Portuguese Diogo Lourenço. [15]

In 1523 Manuel Frias after consulting again the Governor returned with the mason, Vicente Fernandez, and Father Antonio Gil who was to superintend the work. He was given just enough money to repair the fallen part of the chapel, this in order not to prejudice the pagans of the place who, if they saw the beginning of a bigger project, would suspect that the Portuguese were building a fortress there.[16]

2. The Excavation of the Tomb

The work to be undertaken was to build a supporting wall for the vault and tower of the central chapel, for the walls were worn out at the bottom. While digging a foundation for it, it was found necessary to tamper with the tomb of the king, on the right hand chapel. Consequently the tomb was opened[17] and the bones were collected. The tomb was made of bricks, the inside being plastered, and this

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11. About this priest, see MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 82 83 90ff. 94 104
12. Cf. ibd., p. 94, about the suggestions Penteado made to the king concerning Mylapore.
13. The project proposed then was very limited, viz., it was just to repair the fallen parts of the main chapel.
14. CORREA II 725. But the chronology is according to FERNANDEZ.
15. In text B of FERNANDEZ alone the name appears as Diogo Francisco, cf. FIGUEIREDO, 3.
16. BARROS 3, 7, 11, 226.
17. Already people had tampered with this tomb and some other places of the church with the hope of finding some treasure in them, cf. FERNANDEZ, f. 19v.

plastering was apparently recent. In the tomb was found a part of the skeleton of the king whom the saint had converted, who, according to the natives was called Tane Mudaliar; and inside the grave was also found a slab with an inscirption.[18] The skeleton was collected piece by piece by the priest and put into a China coffer with locks; the slab also was kept carefully. In 1542 this slab was in the chapel of the sepulchre (probably of the Apostle).[19] The supporting wall was made and no more work was undertaken for the time being and the chapel on the epistle side was made into a sacristy.[20]

According to Fernandez while the work for the wall proceeded it was found necessary to unduly handle with the Apostle's tomb also. It was on June 2, 1523 that this need was felt.[21] Aecordingly, Father Gil got the necessary permission from Frias and decided to dig up the tomb. For this he sought the help of Fr. Pero Fernandez (who was 70 years

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18. Cf. sup. p. 55

19. FERNANDEZ, f. 20-20v; CORREA II 726.

20. Ibd. Here we give Correa's description: He without mentioning the chapel says that in order to build a supporting wall for the vault and the tower, as the wall of the chapel was rotten at the bottom, they dug up a foundation on the sides of the chapel. They then hit upon a grave made of bricks, the inside being plastered and this plastering apparently had been done recently. In that grave was found a part of the skeleton of the king whom the saint had converted, who according to the natives, was called Tani Modalyar i. e., servant of God. Under the grave was a slab with the inscription which meant: "I give the tenth part of rents from merchandise both on land and sea to this house, and I order all who succeed me and who descend from me to give it likewise as long as sun and moon last with many maledictions to those who do not do this". The skeleton was collected by the priest in a china coffer .....and the wall was made and no more work was undertaken, but only this to support the tower; on the epistle side a sacristy was made; and a few gaps and breaks were repaired; all to support the wood work which was all from a signle wood - its colour was of dry date tree - without any holes and not eaten up in any part by worms but wholy incorrupt.
From this narration of Correa it would appear that this work was ended without tampering with the tomb of the Apostle. But he returns to the building of this supporting wall when he speaks of the new church built by the Portuguese in the place of the old. He says that in connection with the building of this wall it was found necessary to tamper with the tomb of the Apostle, although the decision was not to touch the main chapel and the tomb of the Apostle. CORREA II 787. Thus he apparently agrees with Fernandez; only, he lacks the correct chronology and sequence.

21. FERNANDEZ, f. 20v. According to text B, July 2, cf. FIGUEIREDO 4f.

of age), Diogo Fernandez, Bras Fernandez and Diogo Francisco.[22] But Diogo Fernandez told the priest that he would not dig it up. The priest pretended to do it with the help of the natives. This the Portuguese did not like and offered to help the priest themselves. After going to confession they began digging up the grave on a Saturday afternoon of June 1523. When they removed some 10 span-depth of earth they hit upon the grave which lay 15 spans deep with a decorated wall around and consisted in bulk three spans each of loose earth and brick work. [23] Last of all there was a concrete hard to break and under this were two stone slabs fitting the grave exactly. These slabs contained no inscriptions and were kept in the chapel of the Apostle.[24]

As it was already late in the evening the work was discontinued for that day and resumed on the next day. After removing some four span-depth of loose earth found under the slabs, the tomb was seen filled with sand and quick lime. When this mixture of sand and lime was also removed they found some skull-bones, bones of the spine, and then also of the legs, arms and other parts of the body. A *calam* (earthern vessel) which would contain some 6 *canadas*[25] filled with earth was also found along with the bones. In the middle of the cave was seen a piece of iron in the shape of an olive leaf, (presumably a part of the point of a lance), with a bit of the wooden shaft adhering to it, near a part of the skeleton corresponding to the thigh of the body.[26]

At last they took out all the bones wich were in a very decayed state and Fr. A. Gil placed them in a small box[27] but they could not fill it completely. The greater part

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22. FERNANDEZ, f. 20v.
23. This is Barro's version. In text B of D. FERNANDEZ, there is a slight difference in detail.
24. FERNANDEZ, f. 20v-21; BARROS 3, 7, 11, 227. CORREA II 788.
25. One *canada* = about a quart
26. Acc. the to BARROS a bit of wood with a tail of iron, apparently the remnant of a staff, was also found besides the iron of the lance with its wooden eye-socket.
27. The text B of FERNANDEZ, gives the measure of the box later on: one span large and half span high, see below.

of the bones and the grave was below the foundation level of the chapel. The Father sent for M. Frias who was residing at Paleacate; he came with a China casket with two locks. The priest put all the bones in this receptacle, and after a solemn procession of all the Portuguese present, placed the relics on the altar until the time when a room was made ready to lock it up in.[28]

3. The vicissitudes of the relics

Father Alvaro Penteado who had been to Portugal returned to India with new commissions from the king and arrived at Mylapore as its Vicar. He, pretending that the relics were not safe in the place where they were kept at that time, broke the lock, took out the bones and placing them in a wooden box buried them in a place unknown to all except one Rodrigo Alvares. In the year 1530[29] Nuno da Cunha being Governor[30], Miguel Ferreira was appointed captain of the Choromandel Coast and Ugo Nicolo,[31] Vicar of the House of the Apostle. Then D. Fernandez approached the new Vicar for a further scrutiny of the relics. Accordingly the above mentioned Alvares who was the confidant of A. Penteado was asked to indicate the place where the relics had been hidden. He swore that it was buried underneath the altar of the Apostle. There they dug and found the box completely rotten and the relics of the Apostle placed in a small box, one span broad and half a span high.

The other bones (of the king etc.) were put in a bigger coffer within which the small coffer of the Apostle was placed, and the coffer was locked. The key of this coffer was taken by M. Ferreira and both the coffer and the key of the chapel were handed over to the Vicar. And the bones

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28. For the whole description of the excavation and discoveries of the relics so far narrated, cf. FERNANDEZ, f. 20f; BARROS ibd., 277-229; CORREA II 787-89. According to the letter of the inhabitants (1538) the relics were in a coffer in the place where the tomb was. See INHABITANTS, f. 3
29. Text B of D. Fernandez gives 1525 as the year but this is improbable.
30. Governor from the end of 1529 till 1538.
31. According to text B Francisco Nicolao and M. Faria

were in that place when the inquiry of 1533 was made.[32] The relics seem to have remained there without further disturbance till 1559, in which year there was an invasion of the city of Mylapore by the kings of Vijayanagar in retaliation of some wrongs done by the Portuguese inhabitants.[33]

4. The Portuguese Church

As described above the first thing the Portuguese undertook in relation to the house was to erect a wall to support the main chapel with its tower on top. But not long afterwards it was decided to pull down the whole structure of the church and rebuild it. When actually it was decided upon and when the work began and ended, are not quite clear from the early documents. Correa seems to give us the clue when he says: in the ships which arrived in India after August 1523 the reply of the Portuguese king concerning the house of the Apostle was brought to the Governor D. Menesis. The king's reply was based on the report of Penteado who was at that time in Portugal. The king ordered an inquiry to be made regarding the repair and upkeep of the house. Accordingly the charge was given by the Governor to Manuel de Frias.[34] Most probably it was at this time that the decision was taken to rebuild the church or at least to execute a plan which had been perhaps already made.

Correa, without indicating any further precise date, describes the rebuilding of the church, his mind being apparently somewhat confused as to the sequence of events. Manuel Frias entrusted Father A. Gil with money for the

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32. CORREA says that it was after the inquiry, which he put in 1531, that Ugo Nicolay was sent there as Vicar. He adds that the place where the relics had been deposited by U. Nicolay was known only to one man who must not reveal it except to his confessor at the hour of death. The motive was that the relics might not be disturbed in any event. Probably this is confusion. Further he informs us that when the old house was demolished and the new built, the wood of the old one was distributed as relics, and with this all were satisfied. Cf. III 424f; II 789.

33. FERNANDEZ, f. 21v. FIGUEIREDO, doc. I 16; doc II 1-3; DI IV 368. For the rest of the vicissitudes of the relics, cf. FIGUEIREDO, doc. II.

34. As had been already pointed out many times, Correa is somewhat confused in his mind in the matter of chronology. Cf. CORREA II 778.

works of the holy house. The mastermason and Vicente Fernandez discussed the work to be done and decided upon pulling down the body of the church and building again a new one, as repair was impossible. Only the main chapel and the grave of the Apostle were to be kept intact as memorials. The tower was propped up with walls outside. The church, when built, was rather longer than the old one, but its breadth remained the same. At the left hand entrance a chapel to hold the baptismal font was built and inside it a staircase for the choir was set up. Over it was built a tower just high as the church. The church was supported with external abutments up to the vault and its top was lined with battlements. Above the principal door a window was put up for the choir to look through and above it there were necessary equipments to defend the door. All these gave the church the appearance of a fortress.[35]

Later on when the population increased (as more and more Portuguese continued to settle there) a portico as large as the church was built in front in order to accommodate the members of the Congregation who could find no room inside the church. The old fence around the church was strengthened. Inside the church, on the left side a chapel for the Magi kings and another for Conceição on the right. Everything was so strongly built that in case of a rebellion the church could be defended effectively and the church could serve the purpose of a fortress.[36]

This is the first church the Portuguese built in Mylapore. Sometime between this and 1543 they bulit another by its side.[37]

5. The Portuguese Settlement in Mylapore

Barros introduces his story of Mylapore with these words: "Meliapor, which now (at the time of his writing)

35. It may be because of this that Penteado says in his letter that the Portuguese built a fortress to defend themselves, so that there was nothing lacking for the lord of the country to intervene and destroy the whole thing. Cf. SRD II 358.
36. CORREA II 787.
37. Text A and B of FERNANDEZ.

is called by our men S. Thomé, is inhabited by our war-veterans, in magnificent dwellings. They were attracted to the place by the abundance of land that can be obtained there, by the prosperous trade which is being carried on there but above all by the memory of the Apostle St. Thomas; for, according to what the natives of the place say, and according to the monuments, he lived there, worked many miracles, and built a house with his own hands and in this house he lies buried.[38] In all probability there were no Portuguese settlers in Mylapore till 1519; in which year according to Barros, three Portuguese went to reside there.[39]

In 1522/3 when the excavations were made, Diogo Fernandez and Bras Fernandez were already inhabitants of the place.[40] The citizens of Mylapore wrote to the Portuguese king in 1538 that as soon as the house was ready people had begun settling there.[41] When Francis Xavier visited the tomb in 1545 there were about 100 Portuguese settlers in Mylapore. Already in 1533 at the time of the inquiry, according to Correa, it was well populated. We have already known from Barros that the Portuguese inhabitants had changed the name of the town into San Thomé. When exactly the change took place is not clear; most probably immediatley after the rebuilding of the church and the first organised settlement of the Portuguese there.

6. Portuguese Inquiry concerning the Tomb

Ever since the first batch of the Portuguese visitors submitted their report about the tomb, the Portuguese authorities seem to have been interested in gathering more and more information about it. Thus Dom Meneses sent first Manuel Frias and then Father Alvaro Penteado to verify the reports and gather further information. According to Barros, already in 1523 king John III of Portugal ordered an inquiry. Whatever was the fate of these inquiries the

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38. Babros 1, 9, 1, 303f. Cf also 3, 7, 11, 237.
39. Sup. p. 237.
40. Barros 3, 7, 11, 226.
41. Inhabitants, f. 3. Barros, ibd, 237.

official inquiry made in 1533[42] was the most important one, especially as regards the traditions of the tomb. We have on many occasions referred to it and amply used its report in explaining the traditions in this treatise.[43]

Correa has the following account of the conduct of the inquiry. Governor Nuno da Cunha sent to the Choromandel Coast Ambrosio do Rego[44] as captain with a special charge to make an inquiry ordered by the king concerning the house of St. Thomas. But the captain did very little as he was occupied with his own private affairs. He left the job to Miguel Ferreira who succeeded him. The new captain was an honourable knight who had been to Xequeismael as ambassador. He took great interest in the matter and searched out the oldest men on the land: Muslims and pagans, natives and foreigners. He thus gathered some thirty witnesses of whom ten or twelve were 80 to 90 years of age. The inquiry was based on some kind of a scheme prepared according to the tradition known in the West.[45]

In 1543 Father Gaspar Coelho[46] who arrived in Mylapore on May 22 of the same year decided on his own private initiative to record whatever Diogo Fernandez knew regarding the Apostle. But Fernandez had not much more to tell him than what the 1533 inquirers had heard from the natives and the Portuguese among whom he was the most prominent witness.[47]

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42. Correa apparently puts this inquiry as being made in 1531 while all other documents mention 1533.
43. The reports are contained in ABUNA and FERNANDEZ (the whole document), BARROS 3, 7. 11, 223–233, CORREA III 419–425. Of course the first of these documents especisly text A is the most important as it is a report by one of the witnesses of the inquiry itself.
44. About him, cf. CORREA III 419.
45. Ibd. 419f. BARROS ibd. 223.
46. Fr. G. Coelho was the Vicar of the house when St. Francis Xavier went there to visit the tomb in 1545 and stayed there four months before his journey to the Far East. The Vicar gave the saint lodging for all the four months he lived there and probably gave the relic of St. Thomas that the saint always carried with him together with other two treasures, viz., the autograph of St. Ignatius and the text of his own profession. Cf. S. GONÇALVES 181ff. Cf. also DI III 676–84; IV 286.
47. Apparently text B is the report of this inquiry as is indicated at the beginning of the text.

7. The Miraculous Cross

A stone cross which became famous as the "miraculous cross" of Mylapore was accidently discovered on the Big Mount in 1547.[48] It was after the discovery of this cross and at the sight of some extraordinary phenomena which occurred on it that opinion began to form about the death of the Apostle as having taken place on the Big Mount, and on that stone cross.[49]

Already in 1523 the Portuguese are said to have discovered the ruins of an old chapel lying East–West on the Big Mount, and in that year itself they had erected an oratory there (it was the year in which the old church of St. Thomas was built). In March 1547 while digging a foundation for a new church, other ruined foundations were seen and a stone cross was among the ruins with its face downwards. This was on March 23, 1547.[50] One side of the cross was inscribed with lettering which nobody could read.

The cross itself was 4 spans in height and 3 in breadth.[51] It had the shape of the crosses of the commanders of Avis.[52] The stone was blackish.[53]

The stone–cross was placed in the chapel built on the Big Mount, behind the altar as a background for the altar.[54]

The Inscription on the cross: The inscription was in very old characters and in different languages and it was

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48. This is the date given by the document and accepted by the bishop of Cochin 1601, from old persons and from some written sources. Cf. FIGUEIREDO, doc. III 1. According to Correa the discovery of the cross took place in 1546. CORREA III 421.
49. Sup. p. 53.
50. FIGUEIREDO, doc III 1.
51. MONSERRATE, f. 150v.
52. BARROS 1, 9, 1, 304. ROZ gives us this description of the crosses of the St. Thomas Christians which were all made on the model of the one left by St Thomas (the obvious allusion is to the miraculous cross): the four arms were in the form of 3 petals of 'lilio repando'. Cf. Roz, f. 91, Cf. also HOSTEN 150f.
53. GOUVEA, f. 77v.
54. BOVES, f. 382; cf. also LUCENA 164.

difficult to find some one who could read it. The king had insisted on finding out some one. Pero de Taide Inforno, the captain and G. Coelho tried their best to find somebody and at last they found out a Brahmin who could. He at first refused to get upon the alter in order to read the inscription but at last he bowed to the insistence of the Vicar and others, got upon the altar and tried to read the inscription. He said that each of the letters has the place value of some 20 or so letters, a thing similar to the old hieroglyphics of the Egyptians. The Brahmin after having sworn to tell only the truth gave out his intepretation. We have already seen the interpretation above.[55]

The Miracle of the Cross

Already at the time of the discovery the Portuguese noticed some extraordinary phenomena. Correa says that on one side of the cross some nodes like petrified drops were found and the Portuguese scraped them off. But soon other nodes began to appear and they began to feel great devotion for the cross and kept it very devoutly in the chapel built. [56] In 1553 Barzaeus wrote that the cross had been found with drops of blood and he reproduced the drops in his picture of the cross. All the later authors seem to take this phenomenon as a sure sign of the Apostle's death on that stone cross and the drops as blood shed by him at the death. [57]

This belief increased when the cross placed behind the altar in the chapel of the Big Mount began to sweat water almost every year in the course of a few years, on the 18th of December.[58] We may describe here what is supposed to have happend in the year 1558.[59] In that year on the usual

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55. Sup. p. 57f. For the later and more scientific attempts, cf. FIGUEIREDO, doc. III 3, n. 9.
56. CORREA III 421.
57. DI II 578f.
58. The miracle did not happen every year but nearly every year. Apparently it occurred also on some days other than December 18. Cf. BARZAEUS 578f; OSORIUS 107; DIONYSIO 396; MONSERRATE, f. 150v.; BARRETO, f. 317f.; LUCENA 164; BOVES; f. 382; GOUVEA, f. 77ff.
59. Perhaps this is the first time the miracle happened The description given here is from GOUVEA, f. 77f. For other descriptions consult the authors indiacted in note above.

day, i.e., on the feast of the Expectation of Our Lady (18th December) when the singing of the Gospel of the mass started, the stone began to turn black and to distil water in such a large quantity that those who so desired soaked their linen and rosaries in it; and the Vicar, G. Coelho, who was saying mass, after the communion of the mass was over, dipped a purificator into the water and placed it in the chalice. The next day he found it as if it were soaked with blood and showed it to the people. This time the miracle continued for four hours and at the end the stone turned to a very white and resplendent colour, and this fact gladdened all present. Then the stone drying itself slowly lost the brightness it had acquired and turned to its own natural blackish colour.[60] Thereafter, every year and on the same day,[61] when the Gospel of the mass began, the miracle was repeated. The sweat begins from the top and spreads downwards and so much quantity of water was collected on the lower border that there was a decree from the bishops of Cochin (to whose diocese the church belonged) given during their visits, ordering the church authorities to gather all the water in order to be later given to the sick.[62]

60. DIONYSIO says that the cross assumed three different colours during the miracle, DIONYSIO 395.

61. But cf. sup. n. 58.

62. About other crosses on the Big Mount and the Little Mount, in the church of Mylapore, in Malabar all of which were more or less on the same model as the miraculous cross, cf. BARRETO, f. 317f; MONSERRATE, f. 150v; BOVES, f. 382; GOUVEA, f. 77f.; ROZ, f. 91. About the termination of the miracle of the cross, see Guy TACHARD S. J. 152-59; and Bishop José Caetano Penheiro S. J.; HOSTEN 152-59; PAULINUS, *India Orientalis* 130-1.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we would like to make a few remarks about the general question of the apostolate af St. Thomas in India and try to answer one or two objections raised against the authenticity of the tomb.

As to the possibility of St. Thomas preaching in India, whether in North or South India, nobody can have any serious doubt. It is repugnant to think that Christianity was preached from the beginning only in the Roman empire and all the twelve Apostles went westwards to the parts of the Raman empire. At the dawn of Christianity there were trade routes connecting the West and the East, routes very well frequented. The land routes reached parts of N. India while the sea routes reached the coasts of Malabar and other parts of South India. Hence no one can sensibly deny the possibility of one or another of the twelve Apostles having reached India and preached Christianity there.

Now towards the end of the second century or the beginning of the third century we have the testimony of the apocryphal *Acts of Judas Thomas* about the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas. As it had been already suggested, this romantic account was probably based on a historical nucleus, representing the first and second century oral tradition. From the 4th century on we have the unanimous tradition about the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, and this tradition is possibly (if not probably) based on a double, independent, origin.

The next step is to fix what part of India is meant by this tradition. The *Acts* apparently points to the North-West India. But this does not necessarily mean that the original content of the tradition, which probably is the historical nucleus of the *Acts*, also pointed towards the same direction. For the early Christianisation of North India we

do not possess any actual evidence as we have for that of South India. The South Indian claim to the apostolate of St. Thomas is supported by two monuments. One is the community of Thomas Christians who claim their origin as Christians from the Apostle Thomas, as had been demonstrated in the previous pages and also as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. The second monument is the tomb of Mylapore concerning which we have seen so much in this first part of the book. As it had been noted above, almost in every century (from the time of the *Acts of Judas Thomas*) there is groping for the tomb of the Apostle in "India". As time went on there was progress in identifying it first with Calamina and then with Myluph and so on. The clear *terminus ad quem* of this progress is the tomb in Mylapore, which is definitely identified as the tomb of the Apostle by the thirteenth century. It is remarkable that no other place inside or outside India ever claimed so definitely the possession of the tomb.

Whatever be the conclusion from these facts as to certainty, or high probability, or probability, of the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, and as to the origination from the Apostle of the Christians of St. Thomas, we should think that we are entitled to say at least this much: in the light of these facts the position of those who deny the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas is much more difficult to demonstrate than that of those who assert it.

Against the authenticity of the tomb we have to solve two problems indicated on page seven above: the alleged claim of the Mohammedans to the tomb and the discovery of the relics by the Portuguese. It is true that the Portuguese (as earlier Marco Polo) found that not only Christians but Mohammedans and Hindus were devoted to the tomb and both even claimed it to be their own. The devotion of the Hindus, we should think, is no serious problem as they, whether they are caste-Hindus or not, are wont to revere holy men irrespective of religious differences. The more difficult problem is to answer the question how both Christians and Mohammedans revere the same tomb. If the tomb was known to be that of a Mohammedan sage, the Christians would never have gone there and showed respects to it. Hence the more reasonable

a priori inference would be that the tomb was known as that of a Christian saint. How then could the Mohammedans revere it? We do not know whether Mohammedans are wont to revere a saint known as a Christian. We may recall here another suggestion made by Brown.[1] He says that the ancestors of these Mohammedans might have been Christians and as such took up the habit of venerating the tomb. It may be remarked here that the Portuguese documents clearly state that the Mohammedan custodian of the tomb made the Portuguese understand that his progenitors were of the community of the Thomas Christians, if he himself was not one previously.[2]

As for the relics, it is very probable, as has been suggested earlier, that the early Portuguese explorers did not know anything about the alleged translation of the relics to Edessa and later to Ortona and hence they believed that they discovered the whole body of the Apostle in the tomb. But it is very clear that they did not actually discover the whole body from their own testimony.[3] However, their belief persisted. At the time of the inquiry of 1533 this belief was apparently contradicted by the western tradition which knew about the transference of the relics, and which was the basis for the questionnaire used in the inquiry.[4] The dilemma for the Portuguese was seen clearly. The Abuna and the natives came to their help. The former bluntly told before the inquisition that he had not heard either in his own country or in Malabar anything about the translation. The natives informed the inquirers that it was true that some time in the past there came people asking for the body of the Apostle but they were given the body of a disciple of the Apostle and were made to believe that that body was the body of the Apostle.

Later on, the Portuguese historians, unwilling to deny the authenticity of the body translated to Edessa and later deposited at Orthona, solved the problem by stating that part

1. BROWN 57.
2. Sup. p. 28f.
3. Sup. p. 73f.
4. Sup. p. 77.

of the relics was carried away to Edessa while part was left behind in the tomb in India.

Thus we have two solutions to the problem of the relics: one, that of the natives (not quite probable), and the other that of the Portuguese historians; this second solution seems to be supported by the discoveries. Here it may be noted further that Mufazzal Ibn Abil-Fazil wrote in 1351 that the eternally living hand of one of the Apostles was in a niche in the monastery of Mar Touma.[5] Is it possible that this hand was later interred in the tomb discovered and excavated by the Portuguese? The miracle of the arm referred to above[6] also may have something to contribute in identifying the relics found by the Portuguese in the tomb.

5. Sup. p. 16.
6. Sup. p. 47f.

PART - II

Other Traditions of the Christians of St. Thomas

INTRODUCTION

In the 16th century the Portuguese found the community of the Christians of St. Thomas living its life in a peculiar social and ecclesiastical environment, with their own peculiar customs and usages, possessing its own ancient traditions, which had been handed down by word of mouth or written records. This mode of existence of the community is the subject of the second part of this book. Here we try to examine what the Portuguese of the 16th century heard about the past history of those Christians and what the Portuguese saw of their social, socio-ecclesiastical and religious life. The main sources of information upon which this section is based are the Portnguese accounts about the Christians. As we already remarked above the association of the Portuguese with the life of these Christians during the first half of the century was infrequent and superficial.[1] In the second half, however, there was more direct social communication, especially by the contacts with the Jesuits. We are fortunate in possessing a few reports of these Jesuits who describe the life and customs of the Christians and their oral and written traditions in a more or less detailed manner.[2]

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1. Sup p. 39. One exception may be Alvaro Penteado, who during his stay in Cranganore around 1516 seems to have tried his best to know all about the Christians.

2. The accounts of M. N. Carneiro (DI III doc. 119 and 120), Dionysio, Monserrate, and the *Relação* of Roz are of immense help to us in the matter, cf. sup. p. 39f. One report written by M. N. Barreto, S. J., c. 1565 about the Thomas Christians is supposed to have been lost, cf. DI VI 428 429. A few details about the Christians are furnished by Valignano, S J. (VALIGNANO 336-341). Gouvea also deals with the traditions of the Christians: lib. 1, c. 18 (ecclesiastical customs), lib. 1, c. 19 (secular customs) are important for their social life, and socio-eccl. life. Their traditions about the past history are esp. given in lib. 1, cc. 1-4. Cf. GOUVEA, ff. 1-9; ff. 58-64. In other chapters also some interesting details are found.

We divide the second part under the following general headings: 1. origins and past history; 2. social and socio-ecclesiastical life; 3. liturgical and religious life. The source from which the Portuguese derived their information about the last three items were the very life of the community; as for the first two items they had the same sources as indicated above in connection with the traditions concerning St. Thomas: oral and written traditions, pagan writings and the Chaldean books.[3] We may observe here that, as the first two points are based on traditions of the St. Thomas Christians which the Portuguese found we cannot vouch for the truth of all that is to be said. A critical evaluation of the tradition is not the scope of our present study but it is only meant to record the main content of the tradition which seems to have prevailed in the 16th century. Just as in the case of the traditions on the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas, the Apostle there are here also some sources claimed to be of local origin. We shall indicate them and give a short summary as an appendix to chapter five.

3. Roz apparently bases his account of the apostolate of St. Thomas almost exclusively on the Chaldean books, literary or liturgical, Roz, f. 86. For the past history of the Christians, besides inscriptions and copper plate grants he takes into account also pagan sources as chronicles, and calendars, and makes his own conjectures. The reason is, the Christians did not possess books of ancient history but only traditions to which they clung tenaciously, ibd. 86v; cf. also *Controversia*, f. 4v 5 and passim. For Dyionisio, besides traditions of the old people and cathanars, the copper plates and other written accounts were also sources. Cf. Dionysio 395 398 403.

CHAPTER 5

THE ORIGINS AND THE PAST HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIANS OF ST. THOMAS

I Origins

The question of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas is really a question about the origins of the Christians of St. Thomas. We have seen this in the previous part especially in our discussion of the traditions and in our concluding remarks.[1] Here we have to consider some other aspects of the same question as presented by the tradition.

1. The Alleged Emigration of the Christians from Mylapore

As regards the first origins of the community there seems to be two tendencies: one, apparently under the influence of the Chaldean sources maintains that the community of Mylapore Christians founded by St. Thomas migrated to Malabar;[2] the other, more representative of the Malabar tradition maintains that the Malabar Christian community was founded in Malabar itself by the Apostle. The latter however admits the immigration of the Mylapore Christians into the Malabar coasts but this immigrant community is of minor importance when compared to the larger community already existing in Malabar.[3] With this in mind we proceed to examine some of the documents.

Already in 1517 Gomez and his company heard of the destruction of Mylapore due to some natural causes such

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1. Sup. p. 38ff. 81f.
2. ABUNA, CORREA who follows ABUNA, especially ROZ.
3. We have for this the strong local tradition and those authorities whose knowledge about the Christians was gained much more from local tradition than from Chaldean sources: DIONYSIO, MONSERRATE, COUTO and also to some extent BARROS.

as encroachment of the sea, and inundations, and the consequent depopulation of the town.[4] The Chaldean Abuna told the Portuguese that in course of time the land was destoryed and the Christians left that place and crossed over to India (i.e., West Coast of India). When Thomas of Cana, a merchant from the country of Canane, came to Mylapore on pilgrimage he found the town in ruins and hence passed over to Cranganore.[5] The information furnished by Diogo Fernandez is more detailed: According to the testimony of the people of the place, says he, the Christians converted by the Apostle Thomas, being persecuted by the pagans, all went up to live on a mountain one and a half leagues from the house. But the pagans came in crowds against them and expelled them from there too. Then they went to Quilon and Cranganore, and other parts of India. Before they left, the pagans told them that they could come to Mylapore on pilgrimage but not to settle down there.[6]

According to Barros the town of Mylapore was destroyed by the wars of the Chinese. In his record he gives his reason for the fact that many more Christians were living in the kingdoms of Cranganore and Diamper than on the Choromandel Coast, in spite of the fact that the body of the Apostle lay buried here. The reason is that the Christians of the Choromandel Coast were dispersed by the wars which destroyed the town of Mylapore, while the Christians of Malabar Coast in those kingdoms were more favoured, for the reason that they lived there in big communities with churches built at the time of the Apostle.[7] Thus, Barros shows the second tendency, i.e., to stress the Malabar tradition and this he does probably owing to the fact that he derived his information not only from the early Portuguese reports with the first tendency, but also directly from a St. Thomas Christian student who told him about the churches of Quilon and Cranganore.[8]

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4. Gomez 297.
5. Abuna, f. 18v.
6. Fernandez, f. 24v.
7. Barros 3, 7, 11. 234; and 3, 2, 1, 107.
8. Id. 3, 7, 11, 234.

Correa, who depends very much upon the Abuna's report says: In the war between the pagans and Christians the town was destroyed but the house of the Apostle remained entire. However the pagans forebade the Armenians to settle down there. He goes on to record the story of Thomas of Cana as found in the testimony of the Abuna.[9]

Dionysio and Monserrate do not even mention the emigration from Mylapore. For Dionysio the first origins of the community were from St. Thomas, the Apostle. Hence they are called the Christians of St. Thomas, and believe in the Apostle as their patron, and conduct pilgrimages to the place of his martyrdom, offer alms there and arrange many masses to be said.[10] Monserrate was cognisant of two opinions about the origins of the community. Acconding to one, the members of the community were the descendants of the people who were converted by the Apostle; according to the other, were descended from a certain Mar Thomé, a Syrian merchant. He himself attributed their descent to both.[11]

Roz, who can be said to be the champion of the first tendency, mentioned above,[12] gives the following version. Ever since the death of the Apostle the gentiles declined in prosperity and the Christians flourished and persevered in their faith. But owing to wars, famines and the preponder-

9. CORREA III 422-423.
10. DIONYSIO 394.
11. MONSERRATE, f. 149.
12. Roz, in taking up such a position seems to have been influenced by two facts: 1. the Chaldean books which were almost exclusively his source for the apostolate of St. Thomas in India and the beginnings of the St. Thomas Christians; 2. his fight round the time of his writing for getting established some of the titles, honours, privileges and rights of the See of Angamali of which he had been recently made bishop. One of the important points he wants to establish in this connection is that the See of Angamali was the most ancient See of India. He argues that the See of Mylapore which was founded by the Apostle Thomas himself, was transferred to Cranganore when the Christians left Mylapore and got themselves established in Cranganore, and the See of Angamali was the continuation of the Cranganore See. That this was a polemic purpose, is very clear from the process conducted in the year 1607 to settle the dispute between Roz and the bishop of Cochin. *Goa*, 65 contains the whole process from which we quote occasionally under the title *Controversia*.

ance of the pagans and Muslims, the Christians left Mylapore and dispersed in many groups in different parts of Malabar. It was some 1300 years ago that this emigration took place. [13] According to his narration of the story it would appear that these migrated Christians alone constituted the origins of St. Thomas Christians and that there were no other Christians on the Malabar Coast before that time. However it must be remembered that he indirectly admits the existence of Christians there prior to the Mylapore emigration when he treats of the activities of the Apostle on the Malabar Coast.[14] He is strongly against the idea that the origins of the Christians were solely or mainly from the Syrian merchant Thomas of Cana.[15]

Thus we see a unanimous tradition about the immigration of the Christians of Mylapore to the Malabar Coast, and an equally unanimous tradition which assigns the Apostle Thomas as the founder of the Christians of St. Thomas. The difference in the tradition concerns itself with two questions: what was the part the immigrant Christians played in the constitution of the original community of the Thomas Christians? And secondly what causes could be assinged to the emigration? The first we have already seen. As for the second difference, many causes are given for the emigration. Some authors mention only some natural calamities such as encroachment of the sea, innudations, earth-quakes, [16] famines. Others attributed it to war, while a third category combine the natural with the personal. We can visualise an evolution when Correa says that a war between the Christians and the pagans ousted the former from Mylapore, and

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13. Roz, f. 86. Cf. also *Goa*, 15, f. 30v and *Controversia*, f. 3 4 5 7v. etc.
14. Roz, f. 86 90v.
15. Ibd., f. 88. Roz enumerates here the four principal families which existed before the arrival of Thomas Cana: Cotur, Cataval (Catavil?) Onamthuruth and Narimatam. These famlies were very well known in Malabar at the time of his writing (1604) and they had helped much the pagans who had been converted to Ctristianity in the course of the centuries. Ibd., f. 88v., where the author refutes another writer who held to the other theory. Here we get a clue to what had been hinted at by MONSERRATE, sup. p. 258.
16. Cf. COUTO 12, 3, 5, 282.

when D. Fernandez asserts that it was the persecution by the pagans that paved the way for the exodus of the Christians. Roz also alludes to this antagonism when he speaks of the overwhelming preponderance of pagan and Muslim population. Gouvea is more definite: "Persecuted by the pagans, the Mylapore Christians fled to their brethren on the west coast".[17]

From all this what we may probably conclude is that there existed at one time or other a community of Christians on the Choromandel Coast,[18] which owing either to some natural calamities or to some antagonism of the other inhabitants of the place (this antagonism need not necessarily be a religious persecution) left that coast and incorporated themselves with the Christian community of Malabar.

2. The arrival of Thomas of Cana

We have already seen that a certain Syrian merchant named Thomas of Cana is connected with the origins or rather the early history of the community of St. Thomas Christians. This man, who apparently had a very great influence in the community, is one of the figures which, to some extent, obfuscate the tradition concerning the Apostle of the same name. However we shall see that the Malabar tradition, either as it is recorded by the Portuguese or by the local accounts, oral or written, is always careful to distinguish Thomas, the Apostle from Thomas of Cana.

Of the Portuguese reports about the matter Penteado's seems to be the earliest. He is writing to the king of Portugal about the origins of the Christians of St. Thomas both in Quilon and Cranganore. The first origins are from the Apostle Thomas. For the period after St. Thomas, as far as Cranganore is concerned, there came an Armenian merchant [19],

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17. GOUVEA, f. 3v. Cf also VALIGNANO 337.
18. Cf. sup. p. 80, n. 62. for the crosses discovered in Mylapore. All these point to the once flourishing community of Chrisians in and around Mylapore. This community need not have been necessarily composed of natives. Is it possible that the community of Christians who once lived in Ceylon also migrated to Malabar?
19. Penteodo merely calls him an Armenian merchant without giving his name. Others call him *Thomé of Canane* from the country of

advanced in age. As he had no hope of returning home he bought an unoccupied land with all its income from the king of the place, with property rights both of land and water within the bounds of this land, about which there is evidence today. He had two sons. His elder son inherited the income of the land which the merchant bequeathed to the church, at the time of his death. The second son was made a judge over his slaves whom the father had bought, freed and converted. Between these sons there arose disputes, and each gathered a faction around him. The elder son was defeated in a faction fight. He called in the Jews[20] to help him and the Jews expelled from their land not only those Christians under the second son, against whom they were called in, but also the other Christians who had solicited their help. Today these Jews are the masters over that land and serve the king of Cochin while to the Christians are reserved merely the honour and the title.[21]

We have already seen part of Abuna's account. Here we may quote all the details. A merchant from the country of Canane came to Mylapore on pilgrimage and finding all the houses there in ruins and being convinced that nothing could be done to restore them he passed over to Cranganore. There he bought some land and built on it a church which was there at the time the Abuna gave his testimony. The merchant died while living there and was buried in it. [22] Correa follows Abuna's version but adds that the Armenian merchant met in Cranganore a servant of the Apostle Thomas and lodged with him before buying his own plot of ground. [23]

Canane (Abuna), *Thomé Cana* (Correa), *Quinai Thomé* (Dionysio), *Mar Thomé* (Monserrate and Gouvea), *Thomé Cananeo* (Roz). The Malayalam form is generally *Canai Thomman* and is better expressed by Dionysio than others. *Mar Thomé* is from the Syriac.

20. In this connexion both Penteado and Roz, while speaking of the relatively high social position of the Christians of St. Thomas (Roz, f. 90v), give short accounts of the Jews and their opinions concerning the time and manner of their provenance.
21. The meaning of Penteado is not clear. Hence we quote the passage here: "e não somente deitarão da terra os adversos Chrystãos, mas os que hos chamarão, tem oje imda a pose e remdas, das quois elles fazem serviço a ell-rey de Cochin, e lhe não fiqua senão a omrra e mando". PENTEADO 547.
22. ABUNA, f. 18v–19.
23. CORREA III 423.

Dionysio puts the arrival of Thomas of Cana after that of Sapor and Prot. This statement does not agree with the general tradition.[24] He is described as a native of Babylon and a merchant. He embarked at Cranganore and began to trade. Being rich and influential he made friends with the king of the place who gave him a plot of land of about 500 square yards to erect a church in honour of St. Thomas. He united all the Christians who were already there and those whom he himself had made Christians. He obtained many donations from the king for the church and from that time on Christianity prospered. The merchant, Thomas, married a woman of that place, and became the peer of the Nairs, the aristocracy of the land, and a warlike people. Only the Nairs served the king because all other castes were low castes when compared with the Nairs. If a low-caste man happened to touch a Nair, the Nair would bathe to remove the pollution of the touch. They live on allowances from the kings. The Christians were the equals of the Nairs in status, and they too live on allowances made to them by the kings.[25] It would be 752 years since this Thomas came from Babylon. All this is known from an inscription on sheets of iron.[26] Then the author adds that only this was known with certainty about the origins of these Christians from the information gathered from books and from tradition handed down by old people and by *catanars*, i.e., their priests.[27]

Monserrate has the following version of the story: It is said that when Thomas of Cana came to India, he found Christians in Cranganore and Quilon, who were descended from the disciples of the Apostle St. Thomas. These Christians were only nominal Christians and they married promis-

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24. It may be that this is due to the influence of the *Thomas Cana plates* (see ch. 6), the date of which is generally given as c. 800 A. D. and the arrival of Sapor and Prot is ascribed by general tradition around 800, see below. Others also who depend upon these plates for the Thomas Cana story (e. g., Roz and Couto) are confused in their accounts.
25. Dionysio 397–8.
26. The allusion is probably to the *Thomas Cana copper plates.*
27. Dionysio 398.

cuously with the Nairs. The only distinguishing sign was that they had crosses on their doors and walls and were in the habit of giving their children Christian names. Thomas of Cana made them a united community, took care to preserve their superiority of caste, which means much in India. He had them and their wives baptised and soon he became their chief. The other details given by Monserrate tally with the accounts of other authorities.[28]

Roz introduces the story in connection with his account of the *Magoder Patanam*[29] near Parur. His main document for the story seems to be the Thomas Cana plate from which he quotes the following as an introduction. [The *ola*, [30] given by Xoran Perumal to Thomas Cana, has at the end:] Coquarangon[31] be prosperous and have long life and live 100,000 years; divine servant of God, strong, true, just, full of good works, prudent, mighty over all the earth, victorious, and glorious; prospering in the ministry of God live in Malabar in the great city of the great Idol (Magodover Patanam). Then Roz goes on with the story of Thomas of Cana.

The Xoran Perumal reigning at the time of Mercury of February, on the 7th day of March before the full moon, the same king residing in Carnelur,[32] there arrived in a ship Thomas of Cana, a chief man, determined to see the surroundings of the East. The king being informed of it, went out to meet him. Thomas disembarked and stood before the

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28. MONSERRATE, f. 149.
29. ROZ, f. 86v 87v. According to Couto (12, 3, 4 273 275 276 283) St. Thomas the Apostle first landed here, and then Thomas Cana also and lived here at first. The information was given to Couto by the Christians (*Cortali* Christians) of Parur with which the *Patanam* is almost identical, Cf. inf. n. 76.
30. The original meaning is palm leaf document. Here it signifies any document. The document in question is on copper plates.
31. It is difficult to make out whether this title and the following wishes are addressed to Thomas or to the king. Roz says that the title *Coquarangon* which was the proper name of the king, was bestowed upon Thomas as a sign of honour. According to T. K. Joseph, *Coquarangon* is probably a Portuguese corruption of *Co-Cherakon*=The Chera king. Cf. KSP I 194.
32. It is difficult to indentify this place.

king who spoke to him friendly and imposed on him the surname of *Coquarangon Cananeo*, after the king's own name. Thomas accepted this honour and went to settle down himself in his place. The king gave him for ever the town of *Magoder Patanam.*

Afterwards the king assigned to the new-comer a place covered with brushwood marking its boundaries and asked him to build a town there. Thomas wanted the place for himself and the king granted it to him. Thomas built there a church and his own house; the corner stone of both were laid by the king himself. The whole place was converted into a town which was given by the king to Thomas as an inheritance. On an opportune day the church was inaugurated and the said Thomas entered the church and made his prayers.[33]

Sometime after, Thomas went to the king and offered him presents and formally asked the king to give him and to his descendants the said land. The king accordingly measured 264 ells with an elephant and gave it to Thomas and his descendants, together with 62 houses which they had built in that place, with gardens and trees, with the circuits and ways and boundaries and the interior pathways. Roz continues to describe the priviliges and rights the king gave him, which we shall see later on.

All the documents recording this tradition agree on the great importance of the arrival of this Chaldean merchant. His arrival was a turning point in the history of the community, for it brought to them both material and spiritual progress. The spiritual revival had already been hinted at by Monserrate. Roz also speaks of the spiritual uplift accruing from this incident to the communities of Christians who after their emigration from Mylapore has settled down in

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33. This is the town of Cranganore, cf. *Controversia* f. 9 (The Christians St. Thomas with the help of Thomas Cana built the town of Cranganore and ths prelates lived there ordinarily); f. 9v (It was 700 years afterwards that an Armenian merchant by name Thomas Cananeo together with the Christians of St. Thomas built the town of Cranganore).

Cranganore and its vicinity, while other communities settled down elsewhere, devoid of any help, became paganised in the course of the centuries and got lost to the Christian faith. [34]

3. The Northists and the Southists

The origin of the division into two endogamous groups in the Thomas Christian community is constantly traced by tradition to the arrival in Malabar of Thomas Cana. In assigning the cause for that division there is much controversy among the St. Thomas Christians themselves, as questions of nobility and caste are involved in the matter.[35] We shall try to present the tradition as found in the Portuguese accounts.

Penteado (although he does not mention the actual division existing at the time of his writing) seems to allude to it and assign the origin of it when he speaks of the quarrel between the two sons of Thomas of Cana and the consequences of the quarrel.[36] Clear mention of the division is found only in later Portuguese documents. Barros (1553–63), Goes (1566), both of whom treat to some extent the origin and history of the Christians, have nothing to say about it. Correa and Abuna who knew the tradition of the arrival of

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34. About these communities, see below.

35. These groups are known in Malayalam as *Thekkumbhagar* (Southists) and *Vadakkumbhagar* (Northists). See TISSERANT-HAMBYE 8-10, for a summary of the tradition expounded by a local account and Gouvea. The Northist version is given on p. 9, n. 1. *Solane Ms.* 2748, f. 8v. of the British Museum is in support of the Northist version. Cf. also BROWN 175-76. The Southists generally claim that they are descendants of Thomas Cana and of others who came with him from abroad and have kept their blood pure without intermingling with the natives, while the Northists, according to them, whether they lived in Malabar before or after the arrival of Thomas Cana, had mixed with the natives. The substance of the Northist version is that the Southists were the descendents of the foreigners who were in Malabar (Cranganore), consequent to the arrival of Thomas Cana, and who entered into marriage relations with the children of a native woman (of the Mainatoo caste) who was a servant of Thomas of Cana. Other details of each version and the reciprocal imputations as legitimate and illegitimate children of Thomas of Cana might have been invented to express the odium and hatred each community bore against the other. The Southist claims and charges are expressed in the book of Joseph CHAZHIKADAN, *History of the Southists* (in Malayalam), Kottayam 1940, and they have been disputed from the Northist side by Joseph KURMANKAN, *The Sohthists and the Northists*, Aleppey 1944.

36. Sup. p. 93.

Thomas of Cana also do not mention it. Even Dionysio, who otherwise is well informed of the traditions of the Christians, omit the division.

Monserrate (1579) seems to be the first to give a clear and detailed account of this division. Thomas of Cana had two wives, one noble woman, and the other a slave though belonging to a good caste, (for it was the custom of the nobles, to sell away those children born on inauspicious days). The proof of this is: besides the tradition of the ancients, there is among the Christians a strong feeling about birth and caste, those descending from the slave being considered lower. And that both the wives were noble, at least Nair women, is proved by this custom existing in Malabar, that there is no pollution between the Christians of St. Thomas and the Nairs, nor penalty of death, if there is marriage or friendship, all of which arise, according to the custom of the country, for castes higher or lower than these two. What is more likely is that the Christian community originated from both, that is from the glorious Apostle St. Thomas and Thomas of Cana; and also from many Nairs who were daily converted to Christianity. They are a Christianity of 72,000 souls and they are reduced to these two clans by the lie of the land and not because they were descended from those women but because some lived on the southern and the others on the northern bank. [37]

Thus Monserrate gives first the local tradition about the division and then he gives his own opinion. He says that the division was topographical. However, he does not deny that there might have been the other cause also. It is not clear from the text whether he intends to state, as his opinion, that the one group had its origin from the Apostle and the other from Thomas of Cana. It is difficult to interpret his views in that light when he says that most likely the Christians had their origin from both the Apostle Thomas and Thomas of Cana.

Gouvea, while mentioning this division informs us that the division was not known among the Christians of

37. MONSERRATE, f. 149.

Travancore and Todamala.[38] Roz who strongly defends the importance of the Christians existing in Malabar before the arrival of Thomas of Cana, would assert that one group were the descendants of Thomas of Cana and the other, descendants of those Christians who lived there before the arrival of Thomas of Cana. [39] The descendants of Thomas of Cana, says he, always kept themselves without mixing with other Christians. And till that day there were two lineages among the Christians of Malabar: one descending from Thomas of Cana on the father's side (for the mother was a Malabar woman convert); the other on the father's as well as mother's side, descending from the Christians of St. Thomas.

Thus according to Roz only the latter group (obviously the Northists) are to be called the Christians of St. Thomas. These latter Christians were more careful than the others to increase the membership of the church and hence received into their community many pagans whom they baptized. Then the author indicates the cause of the antagonism between the two groups. Some of the people who had served the sons of Cana had some time or other gone over to the other Christians and received their protection (probably he means to say also that they became Christians). Hence the other party (sons of Thomas Cana), began to antagonize them (though they were rich and honourable), calling them negroes. This gave rise to much discord between these two groups and there were many quarrels. It was owing to this that in Carturte and Cotete [40] it was found necessary to build separate churches for the one and the other. In the year 1603 there had arisen among those of Udiamper and Candanate a big quarrel. The author observes: It was a strange thing to see the aversion which one party had for the other, without being able to forget the old things and the fables, which they hold in this matter. The Christians of St. Thomas (here so he calls them also) descending from Thomas Cana are few. They are in Udiamper and in the big

38. Gouvea, f. 4v. See below, about Todamala Christians.
39. Roz, f. 88. Roz also speaks of the imputations of each group to the other in having originated from the concubine of Thomas Cana, ibd. 88v.
40. Kaduthuruthy and Kottayam, are even now big centres of the Southists.

church of Carturte, and the big church of Cotete, and in Turigure.[41]

Thus tradition is unanimous in assigning the beginning of the division to the arrival of Thomas of Cana. But the grounds on which the division is based are differently estimated by persons of different tendencies; and all may be considered as different attempts at explaining the fact. The theory that one group originated from Thomas the Apostle and the other from Thomas of Cana appeared to be more reasonable to most of the Portuguese and it may be cherished by all who admit the Malabar apostolate of St. Thomas.

4. Sapor and Prot

If Thomas Cana and his activities are mainly connected with the church and the community of Cranganore, the Quilon church and the community are intimately attached to the memory of two men, Sapor and Prot,[42] generally presented as two saintly brothers, who came to India some time between 700 and 1000 A. D.[43] from the parts of Chaldea or Persia.

The earliest report about them seems to be the testimony of the Chaldean Abuna in 1533. About 700 years ago, (i.e, in the course of the 9th century), he said, two saintly brothers, natives of Armenia, came to Quilon and from there went to Cranganore and thence to Ceylon. One was named Xaor and the other Aproits. They brought from Ceylon big logs of wood belonging to a temple. They brought these to Quilon and made use of them in building a church in some ground they obtained from the king of the place. The church stood there when the Abuna gave his testimony.[44] According to Correa they preached and converted many to Christianity. On the

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41. Torure?
42. They are called Xaor and Aproito by Abuna, and Correa modifies the names into Apreto and Thor. For Gouvea they are Mar Xabro and Mar Aprott, and for Roz Saper and Aprot. A local document calls them Mar Saper and Mar Parut. We follow Sapor and Prot.
43. Malabar tradition: 823; Abuna: some 700 years before 1533; Dionysio: 800 or 900 years before 1578; Gouvea: 780 A. D.; Roz: 679 years before 1604.
44. Abuna, f. 19.

seaside there was a stone near which they used to pray.[45] On land they worked many miracles, died, and were buried in Quilon and their remains were still there.[46]

Dionysio heard from the Christians of St. Thomas that these men who came from Babylon, also belonged to those Christians who had persevered in the faith after their dispersion and confirmed them in the faith and converted others whereby the number of the Christians increased. It was some 800–1000 years previously that that had happened, and the first church they erected was a church in Quilon.[47]

Gouvea connects the so-called Christian dynasty with the prosperity of the Christians which followed the arrival of these two men.[48] As opposed to all other accounts, and the general tradition of the Christians, Roz alone mentions their first landing place in Malabar as Malianquara [49] (which for him meant "the land or port of Malabar") which lay in front of Paliport[50] to the northern side. According to the oral tradition which Roz heard among the Christians of St. Thomas,[51] these brothers brought to that place (Malianquara) a big log of wood to build a church. In comemmoration of this event the Christians used to assemble there from time to time with their prelates and to celebrate Mass in great solemnity. According to what Roz found in the Chaldean books, two brothers came to Quilon, built there a church and worked

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45. CORREA III 423; cf. also CASTANHEDA I 126-7; BARBOSA II 98.
46. Allusion probably to the communities dispersed from Mylapore, sup. p. 91.
47. DIONYSIO 396.
48. GOUVEA, f. 5.
49. An island at the Cranganore mouth of the Periyar near Pallipuram or Paliport. Roz gives the right equivalent of the Malayalam *Maliamkara* which some confuse with Malankara which in our opinion, is another name of Malabar. Maliankara in the general Malabar traditton is the landing place of St. Thomas Apostle, cf. sup. p. 61. Some also associate this place with the arrival of Thomas Cana.
50. *Paliport* or *North Pallipuram* is also known as *Chennota* or *Vaipicota*, cf. GOUVEA, f. 7. The Portuguese built there a small fort as an outpost of the bigger Cranganore fortress. It was here that the Jesuits started a seminary for the Christians of St. Thomas in 1857 and taught Syriac to them. GOUVEA, ibd. Cf. PM I 329-30.
51. ROZ, f. 89–82v.

some miracles. What these miracles were, was not mentioned in the books but tradition says thus: The brothers having no money to pay the workers, who had helped them to build the chruch, used to pay them sand as wages and this turned at once into rice. The rest of the story, Roz connects with Quilon.

The two brothers arrived in Quilon and built the church near the sea [52] in the 100th year after the foundation of Quilon. Then the author goes on to speak of the Quilon grant–plates and the privileges accorded to the Quilon church by the king of the place. Finally he adds that the bodies of the two brothers lay buried in the church they had built, in which there were inscriptions on stone, and that he himself had seen them. The characters appeared to him Abyssinian and not Chaldean or Malabarian. The two brothers were popularly known as *Quadixagal*,[53] i.e., saints, and their feast was celebrated on the 19th of May. But since their sanctity was not clearly certified to in any particular way, the Archbishop of Goa, during his visit to Malabar, changed the feast, fixing in its place the feast of SS. Gervase and Protase on the 19th of June according to the Roman calendar. These saints, whose names were similar to those of the said Chaldean brothers, were chosen in order not to displease the Christians.[54]

While concluding the accounts concerning Thomas of Cana and the saintly brothers, we may observe that these two events which themselves appear in confusion, one with the other in some details, make indefinite and vague the traditions concerning the Malabar apostolate of St. Thomas, the Apostle. However, it must be admitted that the Malabar tradition found in local written and oral accounts are much clearer in fixing dates and events. We do not deny the possibility that the authors of these accounts might have intentionally tried to present the events without confusion and anachronism; they need not necessarily represent the earliest accounts and traditions. However we should point out that some of the confusion

52. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 79f.
53. *Quadixagal*=*Quadisa* (in Syriac means saint)+*Kal* (Malayalam plural suffix).
54. Cf. *Synodo Diocesano,* act. VIII, decr. 25; cf. also act. III, decr. 9/10.

might have had risen from the very minds of the Portuguese interpreters themselves, as they were not always in a position to judge things objectively and in the proper perspective.

5. The Malabar Church and the Church of Chaldea

Thomas Cana, and more especialy, Sapor and Prot appear in the tradition as the links which brought the Chaldean Church into such direct and intimate communication with the Christianity of Malabar which intimacy the Portuguese witnessed on their arrival in Malabar.[55] Dionysio, after having narrated the stories of Thomas Cana and the two brothers, concludes: It is from this that this Chrisrianity has such affection and respect for the bishops who came from Babylon and Syria. They say that their Christianity had its beginning there (Babylon and Syria) [56], and by those who came from there, it was preserved and augmented in number of adherents.[57]

Monserrate who gives only the account of Thomas of Cana, agrees with Dionysio when he says that it was consequent on the arrival of Thomas Cana that the Christians of Malabar accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian Church, because Thomas saw to it that Syrian bishops came to Malabar, for whom the Christians had great respect since they came from among their progenitors. Another reason also is given by Monserrate for this attachment, namely, that the Christians knew that Christ Our Lord spoke Syriac in the dialect in which it was spoken after the Israelites returned from Babylon. The third reason is not quite clear: the Christians said that all the bishops and the priests, (the latter were called by them *cathenares* or *caxisas*) came from Jerusalem.[58] Roz says about the arrival of Thomas Cana: "...the Lord helped these Christians much through this Thomas". Then he adds that both before and after that incident they had been visited sometimes by

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55. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 24f.
56. In what sense these words are to be taken is not clear. Probably it is an allusion to the connection of the Chaldean Church to St. Thomas's apostolate. Cf. ibd., p. 20.
57. DIONYSIO 398.
58. MONSERRATE, f. 143.

Armenian pilgrims to the tomb of St. Thomas. Some of these pilgrims settled down in Mylapore and some in Malabar.[59]

While all these accounts would give credit to the initiative of the Chaldeans themselves (whether they were pilgrims or merchants or proper missionaries) for the biginning of the relation between the Church of Chaldea and the Christians of Malabar, Barbosa alone would credit the initiative of the Malabar Christians themselves.

While speaking of the Quilon church and the Christian community there, founded by the Apostle Thomas, he says: "Thus from the time of the Apostle the Christians lived in the kingdom of Quilon, with their church in their midst, levied duties on pepper, which that country possesses somewhat, and also other duties. These Christians, thus continuing without instruction and with no priests to baptise them, were for a long time Christians in nothing but name only. Then they gatherd together and took counsel one with another and determined to send forth some from among them into the world where the Sacrament of Baptism was known. With this intent five men set forth into the world at great cost, and came to stay in the land of Armenia where they found many Christians and a Patriarch who ruled them, who, understanding their object, sent with them a Bishop and five or six clerks to baptise them and say mass and instruct them, and this Bishop tarried with them for five or six years, and when he went back there came another, who stayed with them for as many years. Thus for a long time they continued to improve".[60] Most of the other accounts put this delegation or similar delegations long after the arrival of the Chaldeans and after regular contacts had been established with the Christian community of Malabar. It is likely that Barbosa, who apparently knows nothing of these two events, joined together things which were not connected in the tradition.

59. Roz, f. 88v.
60. Barbosa II 101-101.

II The Churches and Communities Of The Thomas Christians

According to what we have seen in the last section about the origin of the community there are in the tradition three elements which constitute the community of St. Thomas Christians: the people converted by the Apostle in Malabar, the immigrant Christians from Mylapore, and the Christians of Thomas of Cana, Mar Sapore and Mar Prot, the preponderence of each element being differently estimated by different versions. According to the same sources the community, except the endogamous groups of the Southists and Northist, formed one body. Still we can distinguish different communities among them in as much as they belonged to this place or that, to this church or that. The *seven churches* in the local sources is a clear indication of such a distinction.[61]

Roz distinguished five communities on the basis of the settlement of the Mylapore Christians in different places on the Malabar Coast after their dispersion: Cranganore, Quilon, Todamala, Bepur and Travancore Coast. Of these only the first two groups kept their faith in some way or other while the others got lost to Christianity in the course of time. According to Gouvea, it would appear, only the dechristianised communities migrated from Mylapore.[62] We have to add to this list of five another community namely that of Cape Comerin, which, owing to its isolation in the South, seems to have escaped the notice of many Portuguese. But Barbosa did notice them already before 1518.

1. The Cranganore and Quilon Churches and Communities

Roz and Gouvea maintain that the communities of Cranganore and Quilon preserved the faith; many other Portuguese writers assert that they alone formed the community

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61. Sup. p. 62.
62. Gouvea, f. 3v; Roz, f. 86.

of Christians of St. Thomas;[63] the other communities were of little or no interest to them. Perhaps they did not even know them because their origins and their relation to Christianity and Thomas Christians were very obscure.

At the outset we must remark that it is very difficult to assert how far the Cranganore Christian community can be distinguished from that of Quilon. The suggestion that Cranganore and Quilon formed two different dioceses is not sufficiently proved by documents or by tradition. In general we find two bases in the tradition for the distinction: one that of locality and the two churches; the other the relative influence of Thomas Cana, and Sapor and Prot on each community. With these observations we may proceed to say a few things about each community separately.

i. Cranganore

Where exactly the first church of this community stood or where the first nucleus of the community was formed is diffiicult to make out from tradition. According to Couto, Thomas the Apostle landed first in Magadover Patanam near Parur and not in Cranganore. He speaks of a church left by the Apostle in or near Parur but he says nothing about any church founded by the Apostle in Cranganore itself.[64] From this he seems to say that the church in or near Parur, of which there was only some faint memory among the Christians, was the first church of the Christians in Cranganore and its environs.[65]

According to Roz, for whom the question of the arrival of the Apostle is not important in this context, the nucleus of the Christians was formed by those coming from Mylapore and settling down in Cranganore.[66] But by Cranganore, he cannot be taken to mean the exact locality. What he wants

63. Apparently until the beginning of the present century all Christians were described in official documents as belonging to either Cranganore or Quilon. Cf. BROWN 168. Mar Jacob styled himself as the ruler of "the Quilon Christians", cf. his letter of 1524 to the king of Portugal, SCCHURHAMMER 10.
64. COUTO 12, 3, 4, 373ff.
65. See below,
66. Roz, f. 16.

to drive at is that the Cranganore See was the continuation of the Mylapore See, which according to him was the See of the Apostle.[67] In connection with the story of Thomas of Cana he asserts that Thomas of Cana himself was the founder of the town of Cranganore on land granted to him by the Xoran Perumal and on which he and all his Christians settled down. And the Cranganore church which stood at the time of the Portuguese, was built by him. From what he says about Magodover Patanam he also seems to conclude that the first church and the first community were settled there and also at Parur.[68] Even Thomas of Cana is said to have landed in that town and lived there sometime before he built the town of Cranganore and the churches and houses there.[69] With this in mind let us examine some of the documents.

Penteado speaks of a church to which Thomas Cana bequeathed his property in Cranganore but which church he means is not clear.[70] According to João Carcere the church, which stood in Cranganore at the time of his writing (1529), had been there from the time of the Apostle, and the pagans, willingly or not, paid their respects and offerings to it.[71] Accordiag to the Abuna of 1533, Dionysio and Monserrate, that church was built by Thomas of Cana.[72] Monserrate adds that this was the reason why the Christians of St. Thomas say that the churches of Cranganore and of Quilon were built by the hands of the Apostle (the allusion seems to be that Thomas Cana built the churches in honour of the Apostle).[73]

The details of Roz's account are interesting. As has already been hinted at, his information depends almost exclusively on the Thomas of Cana grant-plates. Here we may summarise his account.[74] The Cranganore church was built by Thomas of Cana on a plot of ground which he bought from the

67. cf. Sup. p. 90, n. 12.
68. See below.
69. Sup. p. 96.
70. Sup. p. 93.
71. SRD II 177.
72. Sup. p. 94f.
73. MONSERRATE, f. 149.
74. Roz, f. 86v ff.

Xoran Perumal. This place was then full of brushwood and was situated on the opposite bank of Paliport [75], and there, later on, was built the town of Cranganore. The *ola* (document) by which the plot of ground was granted by the said emperor to Thomas was drawn some 1200 years before the time of Roz's writing (1604) and hence it was clear that 1200 years had passed since the dedication of the church there (and naturally after the settling of Christians in Cranganore proper).

But much before this happened there was in the town of *Magoder Patanam* [76] (which seemingly can be identified more or less with *Parur Patanam*), another church and a big population of Christians. The time of the foundation of this church or the beginning of the community of these Christians could not be determined. The place where this church stood was called at the time of Roz *Paliparamb*, meaning church compound, and near it was another place called *Palimoe*, meaning the church corner.[77] For the same reason the island which stood in front of Parur Patanam was called *Paliparam*, i.e., the bank opposite to the church.[78] Diogo Couto's account is much the same as that of Roz's but he is definite that the first landing of the Apostle Thomas was in the *Magoder Patanam* and the old church there was founded by him. This information he got from the Christians of the province of Parur who, according to him, were called *Cortali*.[79]

In an old Chaldean book Roz read that there were in Cranganore 3 churches: one of St. Thomas, another of Our Lady, and a third one of St. Cyriac, a child martyr.[80]

ii. The Quilon church and community

Unlike the case of Cranganore, the details about Quilon affairs are clearer. The difference in tradition is only that one group of authors maintain that the church was built by the

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75. Sup. p. 101, n. 50.
76. *Mahadevar patanam* = the town of the great god.
77. Probably *Pallimula*.
78. It is doubtful whether the place name meant this.
79. Couto 12, 3, 4, 273ff. It is difficult to ascertain what is meant by *Cortali*. Is it *Kottakkal?*
80. Roz, f. 88v.

Apostle Thomas himself [81], while another, more important group say that it was built by the two saintly brothers Sapor and Prot.[82] The Quilon copper plates are, it appears, in agreement with the latter opinion. But this does not necessarily mean that there was no church or community of Christians before the time of the two brothers. The second group of authors are generally in agreement with the tradition that there existed in Quilon a community of Christians prior to the arrival of these two men.[83]

The details of the second group of authors we have seen in connection with the arrival of the two brothers. As for the other group, the details are generally similar to those connceted with the building of the house of Mylapore.[84] Only Barros, who received direct information from a Thomas Christian student in Portugal, has a few interesting details.[85] The churches of Cranganore and of Quilon were built by two disciples of Apostle Thomas left behind by him to complete this work, when he departed for Mylapore. Both these churches were held by the Christians in the highest veneration. The Quilon church stood at the site of a shrine of an Indian Sibyl who announced the birth of Christ. When Perimal, the king of Ceylon, heard of this prophecy he started on a voyage in order to join the other two Magi kings. He was the third. At the request of the Sibyl this king drew a picture of Our Lady, and it was put in the grave of this Sibyl.

Other details about the Christian community of Quilon, such as the privileges, the Christian dynasty etc., we shall see later on.

2. Backsliding Christian Communities

In the Portuguese reports, till very late in the 16th century, we do not find mention of such communities existing at that time. Some of them, however, would admit that the

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81. Barbosa II 98ff.; Castanheda I 126–7; Goes II 186; Barros 3, 7, 11, 235.
82. Abuna, Correa, Dionysio, (Monserrate), Roz, Gouvea, sup. pp. 101–4.
83. Roz, Gouvea, Dionysio, and Monserrate.
84. Barbosa, ibd.; Castanheda, ibd.
85. Barros, ibd.

whole community of the Christians of St. Thomas lived once upon a time, a somewhat paganised life.[86] Due attention to communities who were actually existing at the time, and who were believed to have been dechristianised in the course of time, seems to have been paid only around the time of the Syond of Diamper. There is mention of this in that syond [87] and Archbishop Meneses himself had made some arrangements to approach them and convert them. According to Roz and Gouvea they were descendants of the Mylapore Christians who after their expulsion from that town settled down in the places where they were found then.[88] However their relation with the Christians of St. Thomas is very doubtful. Whether they were once Christians is also far from being clear.

i. The Todamala community

According to Roz, one of the groups of the Christians dispersed from Mylapore were the ancestors of a sect of people found on the Todamala, some 18 leagues East of Calicut, in the interior. They were called *Sorders* which meant pilgrims and ancient people.[89] In 1609 Roz, who was then the bishop of the Christians of St. Thomas, sent there two Malabar priests, George and Augustine. In the next year went Jacob Fenicio, S. J. [90], who found these people incapable of grasping what he told them. Besides they lived in places very inaccessible and hence he left them and went to the community on the Travancore Coast. [91]

ii. The Bepur community

Another such group was found in Bepur [92] and they claimed to be Christians by caste and descendants of the Christians of St. Thomas. They were called *Tardaiqual naique-*

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86. MONSERRATE, cf. sup. p. 94f. Cf. BARBOSA II 100.
87. Cf. *Synodo Diocesano,* Act, VIII, decr. 6 and GOUVEA, f. 4.
88. Sup. p. 105.
89. The notion of pilgrims associated with the theory that the Christians migrated from Mylapore, might have given the idea that they were Christians. About the Todas of the Ootty mountains, see THURSTON VII 166–167.
90. Father Fenicio worked for a long time in the Muthedath parish. See SCHURHAMMER, *The Mission* 11f.
91. ROZ, f. 86; *Controversia,* f. 4. Cf. also MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 121f.
92. At the mounth of the Beypur river, South of Calicut.

mar [93]. No mention of any attempt at converting them is found.[94]

iii. The community of the Travancore Coast

Still another community lived on the Travancore Coast [95] without baptism and church. About thirty years before Roz's writing a Thomas Christian priest (*cassanar*), Matheus by name, [96] moved by zeal and fervour, had gone to them, baptised some 300 souls and built a temporary church for them. When Meneses visited Malabar in 1599, he arranged that a Jesuits priest should be sent there as vicar. He baptised all of them and administered to their spiritual needs. At the time of Roz's writing all of them, discarding their superstitions, lived as good Christians. Father Fenicio, S. J., after his unsuccessful attempt to convert the Todas, went there and worked among them.[97]

3. The Christian Community and the Church of Cape Comerin

Of the 16th century Portuguese accounts *The Book of Barbosa* alone records the existence of such a church.[98] Here we quote the whole passage as found in the English edition of Dames: "At this Cape Comory there is an ancient church of Christians which was founded by the Armenians, who still direct it, and perform in it the Divine services of Christians, and have crosses on the altars. All mariners pay it a tribute and the Portuguese celebrate mass there when they pass. There are there many tombs, amongst which there is one which has written on it the Latin epitaph: 'Hic jacet Catulus Gulli qui obiit anno..." [99]

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93. See ch. 6 on the appellations of the Christians of St. Thomas.
94. Roz, f. 86.
95. It may be that what is found in *Controversia*, f. 4. is about them.
96. May be Mathew Dias about whom see MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 122
97. Roz, f. 96. *Controversia*, f. 7v. 43v.
98. BARBOSA II 103 n. 9. DAMES, the critical editor of Barbosa's book thinks that this passage is an interpolation, because it is found only in the Munich Ms. But about the existence of the church we have other testimonies. In 1552 Balthasar Nunes, S. J. speaks of it, cf. DI II 562.
99. BARBOSA II 103.

There is a stone inscription found in Muttam near Cape Comorin containing a royal edict of 1494 which sanctioned some dues to a church existing there. We reproduce the interpretation of the edict as given by the *Travancore Archeological Series.* [100]

"The king of Travancore of the time, perhaps Unni Kerala-Tiruvadi, granted some tax-exemptions to the residents of Kumari-muttam, and also authorised the levy of a light cess from the fishermen and on the transport boats (called *uru* and *samban*) that passed the Kovilkulam haven in Kumari-muttam, carrying paddy and other cargo to and fro along the coast. Items: a sort of tax on each net of the varieties known as...a toll of one *panam;* a royalty of a small quantity of paddy...; a similar seignorage from the day's haul of fish in the same village; a commission of one *panam* on *samban;* certain imposts...From this aggregate income, lights had to be kept burning in the church *(palli)* of the village.

Barbosa's observation in regard to the collection of some light toll from mariners probably echoes the provision of this edict.[101]

There is another stone inscription of the same place containing another royal edict of the Quilon era 701 (A. D. 1525/26) but this does not seem to have any relation to this church and to the Christians who might have been living there.[102]

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100. Vol. VI, part. II, pp. 176–181.

101. Also other princes of Malabar had the custom of providing oil for lamps in the churches. An anonymous document of the close of the 18th century says that the Parur prince provided oil for burning lamps in the Parur church, *Noticias*, f. 6v.

102. Here is the text in English: On the 20th day of the month of Panguni in the Kollam year 701 (1526 A. D.); king (*tampiranar*) Siraival Muttatambiranar was pleased (to order) to Mutta-Kankan and Ilaiya-Kankan and others among the subjects living at the port of Muttam (thus):-
(We) having been pleased to put a stop to riotous quarrels, injustice, tyranny, blackmail (coersion), and confiscation of fish, they shall (hereafter) live (here) as (in) an asylum for the oppressed. *Trav. Arch. Series,* ibd. p. 181. From the text it is clear that protection is given to fisher people. But no passage implies that these fishermen were Christians. Hence Mr. Mackezie's interpretation (NAGAM AIYA I 195f. 148): "A royal writ for redressing the grievances of the Christian Paravas, which was sent to the senior and junior Kangan

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5

Malabar Sources On the Past History

Having delineated what the Portuguese heard about the origins and the history of the St. Thomas Christians, we are in a better possition to appreciate the accounts contained in two or three sources claimed to be local. We have already

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(the headman and his assistant among the the Hindu fishermen) who resided in the haven at Kumari-Muttam, commanding them that they should not thereafter molest or harass in any way the Christians who where exempted from paying the taxes due to the village community of the heathens, such as *idangai* and *valangai-panam, pedaipanam...*" is incorrect.

Evidently Mackenzie connects this edict with that of 1494 but such a connection is in no way clear from the text. A. S. Ramanatha Ayyar, B. A., who has edited both these edicts in the *Trav. Arch. Series* says about the second edict: "The purport of the inscription seems to be that Siraivay-Muttavar, the Travancore king Udaiya Marthandavarman, removed certain disabilities which the fisherfolk were labouring under, such as injustice...and promised them direct protection so that they might thereafter live in security". It is probably on the basis of the interpretation of Mackenzie that a strange passage and a note appear in the published text of a conference given by Schurhammer at Arthunkal on December 31, 1956: "The Thomas Christians of Mattancherry and Porakad were merchants, but along the coast from Cochin to Porakad there were only tiny ports, and not many Christians could have been living by trade alone. It is quite probable that the poorer Christians living closest to the beach lived by fishing even in these days (16th and pre-16th centuries)", SCHURHAMMER, *The Mission,* p. 2f. It is in support of this passage that the Thomas Christians on the coast might have lived by fishing, that the note 1 on p. 3 is added: "Fishing seems to have been a thriving profession along the coast of South India from ancient times. In pre-Portuguese times the Syrian Christians (Thomas Christians) living closest to the coast led a sea-faring life, possessing their own merchant vessels, and exercising the profession of fishing (See BARBOSA, I, 159 and the Edict of the King of Venattukara to the fisher Christians of Cape Comorin dated 1494 & 1526, in *Travancore State Manual* I, 291; II, 145 & ss.)". We may remark in the first place that neither the passage nor the note were in the original conference as we have assured ourselves from Schurhammer; they are additions of the Indian editor. Secondly as it has been pointed out early the correct text of the edict does not give any impression which the editor attributes to them. Even Mackenzie, whose interpretation of the second edict is incorrect, does not say Thomas Christians but Parava Christians. As for Barbosa I 159, we found nothing in his writings relevant to the question. Besides we have no allusion in any document of the time about any group of Thomas Christians being given to fishing as a profession.

seen in the Thoma Rabban song, the apostolate of St. Thomas and the beginning of the community with seven churches, priests and bishops. [103] As for the tradition about the rest of the pre-sixteenth century history of the community we summarise two accounts: that of the Jacobite priest called Matnew who wrote in 1730 [104], and that of an anonymous author dated circa 1780 [105]. Although both these accounts belong to such late dates, still their style and contents represent much more the local tradition than the Portuguese reports.

It seems to be more convenient to give the summary of the first account and then indicate some variant details found in the other.

After the death of Thomas the Apostle, the Malabar Church was left without a preacher and leader, and after 93 years there were no priests at all. At that time a pagan magician called Manikabashar appeared; he went to Mylapore and worked wonders by his magic; seduced many Christians from the true faith. Those who remained faithful took refuge in Malabar and were kindly received by the believing brethren there. After that the 160 Christian families were for several long periods left without priests and leaders; divisions also sprang up among them at different times for various reasons. Some of them left the orthodox faith but others persevered, 96 families lapsed while 64 persevered. [106]

In a vision one night the Metropolitan of Edessa saw the sad plight of the Malabar Christians and the next day

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103. Sup. p. 61 ff.

104. The original Syriac text with a Latin translation is published by GIAMIL in his *Genuinae Relationes*, 562–564.

105. *Noticias de Reyno do Malabar*, a manuscript kept in the National Archives of Lisbon, BNL, FG 536, f. 1–29. It tries to trace the history of the Thomas Christians and also of the Latin Christians of Malabar from the origins to the time of the writing (end of the 18th century). There are two other documents in the same archives (BNL, FG 33, f. 1–32v; FG 36, f. 1–12v), which are extracts or adaptations from the FG 536, f, 1–29. None of the documents indicates the author of the work. It is presumed that the author is Kariatil who visited Portugal and Rome about this time and returned to India consecrated Archbishop. The authorship of this manuscript is established in our article: *Archbishop Mar Kariatil's Literary Efforts in Portuguese* = *Indian Church History Review*, 2 (1968) 7–14.

106. This is how the local tradition explains the emigration from Mylapore.

narrated his vision to the Catholicos of the East. The latter, on hearing his dream, sent messengers to all the churches, monasteries and towns under his jurisdiction and summoned all the Christians before him. Great multitudes, with their respective bishops and merchants gathered near the Catholicos who addressed them and told them of the vision. One of the faithful, a certain merchant Thomas of Jerusrlem told the Catholicos that they had heard about Malabar and India from strangers. The Cathalicos ordered him to visit Malabar and report to him. Thomas, accordingly, departed and arrived in Maliamkara, where he saw the Christians of St. Thomas. They narrated to him everything. After consoling them he returned home and reported to the Catholicos everything about themselves. The Catholicos was ready to sacrifice even his life for the Christians of Malabar. Thomas returned to Malabar with the bishop who had had the vision, priests and deacons, men, women and children from Jerusalem, Bagdad and Ninveh. They all landed at Maliamkara in 345 A. D.

The native Christians joyfully received them and after having taken council with one another, all proceeded together to "Sharkun", the king of all Malabar. The latter complied with all their wishes, gave them as much land as they wanted; and conferred upon them royal honours and inscribed the grant and the honours on copper plates which were still preserved among the Christians at the time of this writing. Then they returned and built a church and a town. The church was erected in the land of Kuramaklur [107], which was given by the king to them. The newly built town stretched from East and 472 families dwelt in it with authority.

From that time onwards Syrian Fathers used to come to the town by order of the Catholicos of the East, because it was from him that the Syrians used to go to other parts of the world until they were superseded. These Syrian Fathers governed the dioceses of India and Malabar. In 813 the Syrian Fathers, Mar Saper and Mar Parut, accompanied by the illustrious Sabrisho came to India and reached Kullam. They went to the emperor, the Shakirbirti, and obtained land

107. Cranganore.

from him on which they erected a church and a town in the district of Kullam; and to Kullam, Syrian bishops and Metropolitans used to come by order of the Catholicos who sent them.

The rest of the account traces the story from the time of the arrival of the Portuguese up to the time of the writing of the record.

According to the second account the Apostle had ordained priests from the four principal families (Sankuri, Palamitam, Kali, Kaliave), whom he had baptised. For this reason the ancestors of these families received much honour from the Christians. The schismatic bishop at the time of the writing and all his predecessors belonged to the family of Sankuri, which family, at that time, was about to become extinct owing to lack of male heirs. The Archdeacon of the time belonged to the Palamitam family.

The community persevered in the faith for seven entire centuries from 52 onwards. Then there was a hiatus in the succession of the bishops and the faith of the community declined. To remedy this a rich and generous merchant and zealous Catholic, by name Knai-Thoma tried his best. He, returning to his home-country, Babylon, brought with him a bishop and two priests of laudable manners and much erudition in the languages of Syriac and Chaldean. They worked with zeal; consequently the old virtues and fervour of the Christian religion flourished; and they, as the first, helped the nation in all that pertained to ecclesiastical discipline and science. Hence the nation considered always those of Babylon as their benefactors. In the following centuries, in default of native bishops, the Babylon bishops governed the churches of Malabar. In the 14th century, again, there was a break in the succession of bishops and owing to this religion became weak in Malabar. Some God-fearing men proceeded to Bobylon in the same century, resolving to promote the glory of God. They brought two bishops with them, one of whom was sent to China, while the other remained in Malabar. The account confuses this bishop with Mar Abrahm and carries on the history from the time of Mar Abram.

The churches of the Christians were called at the time of the writing, "seventytwo". The reason for this was that the four original churches founded by the Apostle Thomas, (viz., Collam, Palur, Cotecal, Coccomangalam, [108] in which were preserved three crosses made by the same Apostle,) multiplied into seventytwo till the time of the coming of the Babylonians.

In conclusion we repeat that it is very difficult to enter into a critical evalutation of these traditions as they are confused by the accretion of legendary elements and anachronical details; nor is it our scope to make such a critical evaluation. However, it must be remarked that in spite of the defects, some of the central points can be perceived in relief: the origins from the Apostle Thomas, the migration of the Mylapore Christians and their merger into the Malabar community, the enrichment of the community by the Chaldean Church, etc.

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108. The general tradition of the Thomas Christians mentions seven churches, cf. sup. p. 62.

CHAPTER 6

THE SOCIAL AND SOCIO - ECCLESIASICAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIANS

One of the gravest problems facing India and all mission countries today is the problem of adaptation. In India a movement is in progress to adapt Christianity to the cultural and social set-up of the country. Perhaps in this movement little notice has yet been given to the community of the St. Thomas Christians, a community which had adjusted itself to the environment in which it had been living for centuries. The present movement towards an adaptive Christianity in India would appear, to some at least, somewhat a mechanical undertaking. Even a superficial student of the history of the St. Thomas Christians wonders at the spontaneity with which this community adjusted itself to its milieu at least as far as their social life is concerned. [1] Of course this natural impulse led to some abuses and the Synod of Diamper was right in correcting a few customary practices [2] . But the synod went further and in a way stifled the spontaneity itself; so much so it may be said that from the end of the 16th century, the community gradually became less and less adaptive. It would make an interesting study to trace the history of the community from the point of its adaptation, and analysing the elements which constituted the adaptation. Here we are only interested in recording what the Portuguese mainly saw as regards the social and socio-ecclesiastical set-up of the community.

I The Social Life Of the Community

The social life of the Community may be treated under the following beadings: (1) their occupations; (2) their day

1. Cf. BROWN 3 169.
2. E.g., *Synodo Diocesano,* Act, III decr. 13; IV sec 1, decr. 6 9 10; sec 2, decr. 14 15; VIII decr. 32; and many decrees in Act IX.

to day life; (3) their community organization; (4) their alleged kings; (5) their privileges.

1. The Occupations of the Christians

In the Portuguese reports and accounts we do not find any direct descriptions of the occupations of the community. We have to depend upon allusions found here and there. Thus we find three prtncipal ones in which they were engaged: agricultare, trade and military service.

i. Agriculture

That the Christians of St. Thomas were predominantly agriculturists is attested to by many documents. Pepper-growing was almost a monopoly of theirs. Mar Jacob wrote to the king of Portugal in 1524: "The Christians whom I am ruling got all the pepper from the hands of the farmers who collect it" [3]. Four years later Carcere said that all the pepper was in the hands of the Thomas Christians and that most of the pepper which was exported to Portugal was given by them. [4] They might have been equally competent in other branches of agriculture, such as paddy-growing and coconut-growing, although we do not find clear mention of these in the documents. At present they are predominant in all kinds of agricultural activities. [5]

ii. Trade

Their trade does not appear to have been very prosperous at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. The obvious reason is that the Muslims controlled the main trade-routes between the countries of the Middle East and the Far East. Even in the broker business in pepper the Muslim agents were supreme so that for many years after the arrival of the Portuguese it was the Muslims who supplied them pepper. A few Christians, however, seem to have been associated with the Muslims in the business, for Mar Jacob says in the same letter that the Muslim agents proved their calumny about the Portuguese by suborning some bad Christians who enjoyed favour with them in trade. But in Quilon the Christians from the beginning directly dealt with the Portuguese.

3. SCHURHAMMER 11.
4. SRD II 175. Cf. also DI I 100, n. 19; Q. No. 511.
5. They are considered specialists in this field, cf. BROWN 168.

We hear of one Mathias of Quilon who helped them to load their ship. He had been to Cochin several times, in all probability in connection with pepper business. He seems to have been a great merchant. [6] Probably there were others also in the business and some of them even settled down in Mattancherry in the vicinity of Cochin. This must explain why in Cochin, where there were no Thomas Christians formerly, a small group of them began to be formed gradually and even a church was built there for them. [7]

In the overseas trade at least a few of the Christians took part. Vasco da Gama on his first vogage to India is reported to have met in Melinde some ships of the Christians from Malabar. [8] No other trace about Christian overseas trade is to be seen in any other document.

iii. Military service

Just as the Nairs, their equals in the Malabar society, the Thomas Christians were excellent soldiers. [9] Mar Jacob attested to this fact when he wrote: "And further I have won all these Christians for thy service, so that when thou shalt be in need of them, thou shalt find in it over 25,000 warriors". [10] In the letter of the four Chaldean bishops who arrived in India in 1504 it is stated that in the beginning of the 16th century there were in Malabar 30,000 families of Christians.[11] Hence it may be concluded that all able-bodied adults were soldiers and hence all males were trained for military service. Gouvea has said that the Christians supplied the Raja of Cochin with an army of 50,000 gunsmen and so the severance of their military band would weaken that king very greatly. In another place he says that even though the Christians of St. Thomas ate meat very rarely, they were robust, fat and strong men and the best soldiers on the battle-field in all Malabar. If

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6. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 62 77.
7. See *Controversia*, f. 12 3v 4v 5 6 6v-7 8 10; Roz 95v.
8. MUNDADAN, ibd., p. 52.
9. We are not quite sure whether Cnristian soldiers were also called Nairs. In some documents it would appear that "Nairs" were equivalent to soldiers and we know that Christians were also among these soldiers. E.g., cf. D. GONÇALVES 1-10; *Goa* 47, 263v-364; DI III 806f.
10. MUNDADAN, ibd., p. 99.
11. Ibd., p. 72.

the native lords took them to the battle-field on them rested the main strength of their army. "They are fine gunsmen and so well trained in shooting that they rarely miss aim, and from early age they are brought up gun-in-hand, and thus turn out splendid hunters". According to him they all went about with swords and shields, and some with guns and lances, which they left at home only when going to church. [12]

Monserrate has the following about the occupation of the Christians in general: "Generally they deal in merchandise for which there are among them different usurious contracts and they have always something to give in loan. Some of them serve the gentile kings as soldiers and live by it. Others are oilmen and make oil from different things".[13]

iv. The women and their occupation

While men were thus occupied in military service, the women remained at home according to the custom of the nobler castes and did the household work. We may quote Monserrate: "These people are of high rank and greatly reputed, well formed and of good behaviour. The men are warriors; the women being honourable and rich, do the household works".[14]

2. Day to Day Life of the Thomas Christians

In their ordinary life and their life cycle the Christians differed very little from the noble castes. They had their homes usually around a church but those who lived in the remote forests lived in houses very much apart from one another so that the Portuguese called these houses and surroundings villas [15] .

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12. GOUVEA, f. 49. 61v. Cf. also VALIGNANO 308.
13. MONSERRATE, f. 150.
14. MONSERRATE, f. 149. Women of the higher caste were not free until recently to move about. Even now it is very rare that a Thomas Christian woman visits the houses of others unless they are nearest relatives. Now it is not rare for a woman to go to the church alone. The early practice is well described by an anonymous document of the end of the 18th century. Cf. *Noticias,* f. 3. Cf. also VALIGNANO 340.
15. MONSERRATE, f. 149. "They live in villages, some honoured people in country houses, who have less information about the things of God for they have no churches and live near mountains isolated from the population, still they acknowledge their Archbishop and Bishop and they visit them from afar. These Christians seem to be those who remained from those converted by the Apostle Thomas, although they were mixed with those who descended from Mar Thoma the Syrian." Cf. also VALIGNANO 339.

The houses were made of wooden walls and not of brick or stone walls,[16] and were thatched with plaited palm leaves.

As for the dress the men did not much differ from the Nairs. Monserrate says: In their dress they do not much differ from the Nairs [17] except for this that they do not cut their hair around the head as the Nairs do, but grow it fully and tie up and arrange it in such a manner that it is very beautiful and serves for a hat or a cap. The old people, however, shave their heads and use hats. Another matter in which the men differed from the Nairs was that when they come to the battle-field they do not smear their heads nor do they paint their bodies with the ashes of cow-dung blessed by the "cursed jogues", which the Nairs make very much of. [18]

The Christian women however were much more modestly dressed than the Nair women.[19] According to Monserrate their dress at home was not very modest (probably in comparison with the European ladies of the time) but on the streets and when they went to the church they covered themselves in some white sheets with which they looked very modest. All, both men and women, went barefooted except the priests.[20]

In the matter of hygiene and cleanliness the Christians were never behind the caste Hindus. Monserrate observed that all, men and women, smeared themselves with oil and went to the river to wash themselves. This they did twice a week: Wednesdays and Saturdays. On such occasions they were very scantily dressed.[21] About their other ablutions and purifications we shall see later on.[22]

Their daily meals consisted of rise and *caril (curry)*. This was mixture of different kinds of herbs and spices.[23]

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16. Paesi, 159, Cf. also Brown 202ff; Mundadan, ibd., p. 8.
17. Paesi 159; Brown 199.
18. Monserrate, f. 149. About arranging the heir (*kudumy*), PM. III 210.
19. Cf. Brown 192f. also *Noticians*, f. 3.
20. Monserrate, f. 149.
21. Ibd. Cf. also Gouvea, f. 62.
22. Baths and ablutions are very important in Malabar especially for the higher classes of people.
23. Monserrate, ibd. Cf. also Barbosa II 7ff.

The calendars they used were the local ones. Two such calendars are mentioned: one based on the foundation of the Magodover or Parur Patanam (but the year of its foundation was unknown to them)[24] and the other based on the foundation of the town of Quilon,[25] which is still in use among all the people of Malabar. These calendars were used in lay matters. For ecclesiastical purposes the Greek year, in accordance with the Chaldean Church calendar, seems to have been in use.[26] The year of our Lord (Christian era) was adopted probably after the arrival of the Portuguese.

3. Communal Organisation

From the documents of the time it is not quite clear whether there was some kind of secular organisation for the community apart fron the ecclesiastical one. It is generally stated that the Archdeacon, whose hold on the community becomes clear only in the second half of the 16th century and especially during the epoch of Synod of Diamper and in the whole of the 17th century, became a kind of leader of the community, of course under the local kings. From the documents at hand we cannot say much about his leadership. What we know from the documents of the 16th century may be pieced together here.

Joseph the Indian, whose mission to Babylon in 1490 and his trip with Cabral to Portugal, Rome, Venice etc. [27] was, no doubt an important man in the community and he was a priest, and the rector of the main church in Cranganore.[28] We do not know who led the delegation to Vasco da Gama in 1503. In bringing the Christians to deal directly with the Portuguese in the matter of pepper trade it was bishop Mar Jacob himself who took the initiative. A certain

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24. Roz, f. 87. Couto 12, 3, 5, 275-76.
25. About Quilon era (*Kollam Andu* or *Kolla Varsham*) see PM IV 265-75. In practice August/September of 824/25 can be considered the beginning of this era.
26. See the year mentioned in the introduction to the letter of the four Claldean bishops who came to India in 1504, Schurhammer 3.
27. See Mundadan, *The Arrival* 58f Soledade's statement that Joseph and his companion were deputed by their bishop to effect union with Rome need not be taken seriously. Cf. Soledade 523f
28. Mundadan, ibd., p. 92.

Matias of Quilon wrote to the king of Portugal in the capacity of a representative of the Christians of Quilon. To all appearance he was a lay man, and a merchant.[29] From all this no definite conclusion can be derived as to whether there was a national leader for the Christian community as a whole except the bishop; if there was, whether he was alone or had other leaders with him, or whether he and they were ecclesiastics or lay men.

Penteado, who heard the story that one of the two sons of Thomas Cana was put in charge of the administration of property and income and the other in charge of the administration of justice, found no one among the Christians superior to others except on the grounds of lineage and wealth.[30] He suggested to the king of Portugal that they should be united and should have an elected chief from among themselves.[31] Of course these are the first impressions of Penteado who was readily sensitive to impressions, and might have formed in his mind without his carefully studying the whole routine of work of the community. It is noteworthy that he does not consider the status of the bishops who were among them at the time.

We know from the privileges which both the Cranganore community and the Quilon community had from the local kings, that there was some provision for the administration of justice as far as it concerned the Christians. This provision authorised the Christians to take it in their charge[32]. Now we know that when the Portuguese opened a factory in Quilon it was agreed between the Christians of St. Thomas and the Portuguese to entrust to the Portuguese factor with the administration of justice. But before that time who was in charge of it in Quilon and in Cranganore? The bishop, the Archdeacon or some other person? No clear answer can be given. It seems that for some time before the arrival of

29. Sup. n. 6.
30. PENTEADO 550.
31. Ibd.
32. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 74f.

the Portuguese the privilege itself was not in force either owing to the negligence of the Christians or the agressiveness of others.

Our suggestion is that the Christians both in Cranganore and Quilon enjoyed some kind of autonomy under the local kings. The ecclesiastical head was also the civil head of the community as far as this autonomy was concerned. Now the ecclesiastical head, the bishop, being a foreigner and quite inexperienced in local affairs, was not in a position to exercise this temporal authority in an efficient way. Hence it may be presumed that there were national leaders, one or more at a time, who helped the prelates in the matter and practically saw to the whole administration of temporal and civil affairs. And this national head or heads might have been probably the Archdeacon or Archdeacons. This we suggest not so much by studying early Portuguese documents as by viewing the later events in which the Archdeacons, in the absence of proper bishops, play such an important part and exercise such influence over the whole community [33].

For the discharge of other duties the community seems to have been organised on the same basis as other communities of Malabar belonging to the higher castes.[34]

4. The 'Christian Dynasty' or the 'King' of the Christians.

This seems to be the place to examine the question of the Christtian dynasty or the king of the Christians of St. Thomas, who according to the allegation of a tradition was their acknowledged temporal ruler, although they lived under many local princes. There are two opinions about the tradition: one which holds that there existed at some time a

33. Cf. THALIATH 15 20 24 25 59 60 77 78 89 92 118 151 152. See also below.
34. Cf. BROWN 169. Every St. Thomas Christian church had (and even now has) a *yogam* (asembly). All major questions of administration of temporal properties of the church, celebration of feasts etc. had to be settled in *yogam*. In more recent times the functions of the *yogam* are becoming less and less important. *Yogam* is of Hindu origin. Temple properties are administered by similar *yogams*. THALIATH 28, n. 80. About the Hindu *yogams* see PM I 250-269.

Christian royal family identified with that of *Villarvattam* [35] which had became extinct before the arrival of the Portuguese. According to this opinion the rod which the Christians presented to V. da Gama[36] was the sceptre of this royal family.[37] According to the other opinion which seems to us to be more probable, the Villarvattam kings were the special protectors of the Christians but not themselves Christians. When that family became extinct, this patronage passed to the king of Cochin who inherited the Villarvattam principality.[38] Let us examine some documents.

The presentation of the rod to V. da Gama in itself proves nothing.[39] Connected with the tradition of the apostolate of St. Thomas, we have seen that conversions of more than one king are alleged by some accounts. But individual cases of conversion are implied by this, and these do not mean whole dynasties. Gouvea says that the Christians of St. Thomas were called by the people in the kingdom of the Pandyan king, "sons of the kings".[40] Roz alludes to this title of the Christians when he says: "It is to be noted that the *olla* (the Quilon grant-plates) calls the Christians of St. Thomas *Tarijanel* meaning *kings* or *first kings*. So were they formerly called because they were, as it appears, the descendents of the kings whom St. Thomas converted".[41] This must have given occasion to Gouvea to conceive the idea of the institution of a royal dynasty by the Christians of Quilon, consequent

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35. *Biliarte* is a Portuguese corruption. We quote here what is found in the *Cochin State Manual* about Villarvattam: "The Achan (Paliat) was originally a petty vassal of the Raja of Villarvattam, who was himself a Kshatriya feudatory of Cochin. What the extent of this principality was is not known, but it certainly comprised Chennamangalam and some territory to the North and South of it...The family of Villarvattath was about to become extinct towards the end of the 16th cent. when the last chief, instead of making an adoption from a Kshatriya family...made his son the Palyat Achan his heir...", MENON, A. 96.
36. Cf. MUNDADAN, ibd., p. 62-66.
37. E.g, T. K. JOSEPH accepts this theory. See his *Malabar Christians and their ancient Documents*, p. 8. See also THALIATH 1.
38. K. N. Daniel; see BROWN 13, n. 5.
39. Sup. n. 36.
40. See below, about the appellations of the Thomas Christians.
41. See ibd.

on the prosperity of the Christians after the arrival of the two saintly brothers Sapor and Prot. This dynasty was called *Beliarte*, and when this dynasty came to an end the kings of Diamper took up their jurisdiction and property. When these Rajas too ceased to exist the kings of Cochin began to claim wider jurisdiction and right over the Christians of St. Thomas than the other kings in whose land they dwelt. [42]

Barros giving the reason why the Christians of St. Thomas were found in greater numbers in Cranganore and in Diamper, says: While the Christians of Mylapore were dispersed on account of wars etc., the Christians in Craganore and Diamper were very much favoured by the local kings. Hence it was common to call the lord of Diamper "the king of the Christians", just as to call the king of Cochin that of the Jews, the king of Calicut that of the Moors, according as one or other of these three peoples are found in greater numbers in these kingdoms respectively.[43] Barros wrote probably before the annexation of the kingdom of Diamper to that of Cochin, or he might not have had heard then of the annexation. According to Dionysio the annexation took place only after the arrival of the Portuguese in India. For he wrote in 1579 that some years previously the king of Cochin, with the help of the Portuguese besieged the kingdom of Diamper and brought it under subjection. According to Roz this was done with the help of João da Fonseca, the then captain of Cochin.[44]

Dionysio explains how the Christians of St. Thomas came under the protection of the king of Cochin: The Christians of the *Serra* are scattered among the mountains as the subjects of different kings of Malabar, although the major

42. GOUVEA, f. 5.

43. BARROS 3, 7, 234.

44. João Fonseca came to India in 1550. By the end of 1552 he has become captain of Cochin, and probably continued in that office till c. 1570. Cf. Couto 6, 9, 1, 223; 6, 10, 15, 504 507; dec. 8, cap. 33, p. 314, 316. Cf. also SCHURHAMMER, *The Mission* 7. Still it is difficult to determine the year of annexation of Diamper to Cochin. What we know for certain is that following the death of the king of Cochin in 1567 the prince of Diamper was made the heir to Cochin. Hence it may be supposed that the annexation took place before that year. Cf. DI VI, appendix 2.

part of them are the subjects of the king of Cochin, with whom the Portuguese are at peace. Hence this king presumes to protect these Christians, since a few years previously he with the help of the Portuguese, besieged and took over the kingdom of Diamper. The king of Diamper had in ancient times received into his kingdom those Christians who had gone here fleeing from the presecution of other gentile kings, and protected them. This is how the protection of them now belongs to the king of Cochin.[45]

Roz[46] has more details about the whole affair. The power of the Christians was and is in the lands of *Byliarte Muttecovil*[47]. This family assumed rulership of the kingdom of Carur[48] in the first year of the foundation of Quilon. But at present that kingdom and its lands are in the possession of the king of Cochin, and this came to pass by the industry of João de Fonseca and of Proto, a Christian leader of the town of Udiamper. How the Biliarte family got the rule is thus expalined: The lands were given by the Xoran Perumal to a Brahmin but the successors of this Brahmin ruler were very bad administrators and found it very difficult to carry on. Hence the Biliarte family was called upon to take charge of the administration. In the course of time the Biliarte rulers became the special protectors of the Christians of St. Thomas in the following manner. The Biliarte king helped the Christians who were molested by Muslims. As a remuneration for this help the Christians collected a sum of money from among themselves and offered it to the king. But the king would not accept it and instead would receive a *fanam* every year from their leaders. Thus the Christians became his subjects, and subsequently those of the king of Cochin who inherited the lands of the Biliarte family.[49]

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45. Dionysio, 394.
46. Roz, f. 90.
47. Sup. n. 35.
48. Carur is said to have been the ancient *Vanji* which, in ancient Tamil records is mentioned as the capital of *Chera* or Kerala (Malabar). This Vanji seems to be the Tiruvanjikulam (Cranganore or near Cranganore). Cf. Innes 31f. Cf. also Mundadan, *The Arrival* 12, n 88.
49. Roz, ibd. Cf. also Brown 13, n. 5.

Roz goes on to give us the reason why the Christians came to exist without kings in spite of the many privileges they enjoyed from the local kings and especially from the Xoran Perumal, who had distributed his lands among his governors. They had lost their lands earlier. As for absence of a kingly family of their own a legendary account is given which the Christians firmly believe. A prominent Christian named *Quirian Thome*, was one of the governors of the Xoran Perumal, and to him the Perumal promised to give a separate kingdom on condition that he kept the promise a secret until he actually received it. The secret however, leaked out through the wife of this Christian governor, and hence the promise was not fulfilled.[50]

Thus the tradition, as the Portuguese found it, does not incline in favour of Christian kings ruling over the Christians at some time or other. Perhaps Gouvea's account alone is in favour of such a tradition. All are agreed that the Christians had as their special protector at first the Villarvattam royal family of Diamper and then the king of Cochin who appropriated the kingdom of Diamper. How the Villarvattam royal family became protectors of Christians is not quite clear, although Roz's version seems to be more impelling. In consequence of some signal service done to the Christian community by the Villarvattam family of Diamper the Christians might have entered upon a mutual agreement with those kings by which the Christians were to muster to support him when necessary; the king in his turn protecting their interests. According to Roz there was never a Christian kingly family nor a Christian kingdom, but only the tradition that some of the Christians were descendants of kings converted by the Apostle Thomas.

5. The Privileges of the Christians

We have already pointed out the privileges enjoyed by the Christians under the local kings both in Cranganore and in Quilon and also the high social status they had attained

50. Roz, f. 90v.

among the Malabar communities.[51] Here we should treat the subject more in detail.

i. **Social Status.** When we treated about the Malabar tradition on the apostolate of St. Thomas, we mentioned that the local tradition maintains that the majority of the people converted by the Apostle were Brahmins and other higher castes. Observers agree that the Christians still have some customs very similar to those of the Brahmins although many such customs were suppressed in the Synod of Diamper.[52]

In connection with the account of Thomas Cana, we have seen how owing to his industry the Christians had attained the status of the Nairs.[53] As to their social status Roz has the following impressions: Some of the Christians of St. Thomas, who lived from Quilon to Pallur, a place in the kingdom of the Samorym, and who persevered in the faith, were of the same caste as the kings of Cochin, who are called *Covilmar*[54]; others were Brhmins; others Belalas who were an honourable race in Bisnaga.[55] In another place the author writes that the Christians were held in greater respect than that paid to most of their neighbours, the Jews and the Moors.[56]

ii. **Privileges and the Copper plate grants.** In our book, *The Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob, 1498-1552* we suggested that it was to vindicate and safeguard the privileged existence of the community that the Christians approached V. da Gama and sought his protection. We have also described in it how the Christians of Quilon approached Albuquerque with the request that he would try to get all their rights and privileges re-

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51. Cf. *Noticias*, f. 5v-6.
52. Cf. TISSERANT-HAMBYE 164f.
53. Sup. p. 94.
54. According to T. K. Joseph *Kovilmar* means people of the ruling class, almost like the Kshatriyas. Cf. HOSTEN, *Antiquities* 562, n. 3. Cf. also PM III 137, where he says that the kings of Cochin use the title of *Koviladhikarikal*.
55. About *Belalas* or *Vellalans* see *Gazetteer of the Tinnevelly District*, vol. I (Madras 1917) 101 105 106 etc. Cf. also Thurston VII 167-172 and 361-389. about Vellala emigrants of Thodupuzha.
56. Roz, f. 90v.

stored to them from the rulers of Quilon.[57] One of the requests of Mar Jacob in 1524 to the king of Portugal was to order the restoration of the landed property of Cranganore, for over this property the Christians had special rights and privileges.[58]

Whenever allusion is made to these privileges mention is made also of written documents wich describe them. These written documents were in the form of copper plate grants and a number of such plates are adduced by students of the past history of the community of the St. Thomas Christians. The following are the better known ones: the Thomas Cana plates; the Iravikorthan's plates [59]; the Quilon plates [60]; the Thevalacara plates. Much has been written about these plates regarding their number, date, contents.[61] We do not enter here into a critical study of these plates [62]; our object is rather to see how the tradition viewed these plates, and how this tradition is echoed in the Portuguese accounts. The Portuguese authors of the 16th century seem to have known only two sets of these plates, namely those of Thomas Cana and those of Quilon. Hence our treatise is limited to these two.

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57. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 72f. 74f.
58. Ibd. p. 100.
59. Cf. BROWN 89.
60. The Quilon plates and the Thevalacara plates seem to have the same origin. See BROWN 87f.
61. The main sources for the plates are GOES, I 216f.; ROZ, f. 86v-88 89; GOUVEA, f. 5; COUTO 12, 3, 5, 282-85. As for literature the following may be usefully consulted: K. S. P., I 169-200 201-204 303f. 320-23; the literature indicated in SCHURHAMMER 23, n. 69. Cf. also BROWN 85ff.
62. We quote here what Schurhammer has in his booklet *Malabar...*, p. 23, n. 69: ".. We, however, incline to the following *hypothesis:* The measures given by Goes and Gouvea are rough estimates; the description of Pero de Siqueira given after return to Portugal and reproduced by Goes is perhaps partly incorrect as is his statement about de Sousa; the "translation" of the Jew, reproduced dy Couto and Roz, is fantastical, giving one or other well or half understood word and for the rest the oral tradition of what the St. Thomas Christians thought the plates contained; and the *Mar Jacob plates are identical with the Tevalacara and these with the Quilon Tarisa Plates II,* described and partly deciphered in the *Travancore Archaeological Series* (Trivandrum 1920) II 70-85 and belonging to the time of king Stanu Ravi (end of 9th century). Of these Plates No. I is missing, II and III are in the old Syrian Christian Seminary of

a. **Thomas Cana plates**, otherwise known as Mar Jacob's plates [63], are traced back in their origin to Thomas of Cana who is supposed to have obtained them from the then ruler of Malabar. Damião de Goes's seems to be the first Poruguese acount of these plates.[64] He received his information directly from Pero Sequeira,[65] the factor in Cochin from 1543 onwards, who was a friend of Mar Jacob and who helped him to redeem the plates. Mar Jacob, some years previously, had in his extreme necessity, pawned the plates to a man living in the Serra, for 20 cruzados. He had not yet been able to redeem them until he was on his deathbed. When he was about to die Mar Jacob sought the help of P. Sequeira to redeem the plates, telling him that it would give peace to his soul and promising to repay the money if God spared him; and if he died his Christians of Cranganore would pay the sum. Pero Sequeira at once sent one of his men in company with a priest who was Mar Jacob's assistant and who knew the man to whom the plates had been pawned to redeem the plates. The plates were redeemed and brought before the bishop who was very much consoled by it.

After the death of the bishop, Pero Sequeira showed

Kottayam (since Macaulay 1806), IV in the palace of the bishop of the Mar Thomas Syrian Christians at Tiruvalla. Plates II and III, written in Vetteluttu and Grantha letters are in Tamil and contain the donation of land by the King of Quilon to Maruvan Sapir Iso, the builder of the Tarisa Church at Quilon, and the concession of privileges to the Anjuvannam and Manigramam communities. Plate IV gives the signature in Pahlavi, Kufic and Hebrew. The text is "full of unintelligible words and phrases" and the signatures have only partly been deciphered. The following *dates agree* in Mar Jacob, Tevalacara and Quilon Plates, which we call shortly A, B and C, (an English translation of Couto's and Roz's text is given in the interesting monograph of the *Kerala Society Papers* 4, 180): Copperplates, with writing on both sides, in different characters, mentioning a donation of land, given by the king to the leader of the Christians, who builds a church (ABC). The leader is Sapor= Sapir, the place Quilon (BC). The land is measured by elephant (AC); the king gives, besides, 72 viduperu-gifts (A: 62 or 72 casas; B. : 72 hortas; the Jew read wrongly: vidu=houses) and five parts (A: 5 tributes, C: pânchakhandi=5 parts?), and privileges to the Manigrâmam (B inscription 1637=C), and "direitos, corretagem, chapa, peso" (BC).

63. See below, why this plate is called after Mar Jacob.

64. Goes I 216-7.

65. Nothing important about this man and his connection with the Portuguese treasury of Cochin is known from any other source.

the plates to Martin Afonso de Sousa, the governor [66]. The Governor sought for someone who could read the plates but no man who could, was found as the script was very archaic and in different languages. When he was in despair someone told him that there lived in the interior a certain Jew who had good knowledge of languages both contemporary and ancient. The plates were sent to him. Even this Jew found it difficult to make out the writing as the inscription was archaic in form and in three languages: Chaldean, Malabar and Arabic. The same content was not written in all the three languages but what was written in one language was different from the other, so that all the three languages together gave the whole content. The Jew translated the whole into the Malabar tongue and a copy of it was sent to Portugal. The plates were of fine metal, each of one and a half palm-length, and of the bredth of four fingers, written on both sides and bound together at the top with a thread of thick wire.

As for the content, the king who was reigning at the time when the Apostle Thomas arrived and who then resided in Cranganore, gave to the Apostle of his own free will a plot of ground extending many ells measured by an elephant, each measure being equal to the length of ten palms. The king gave the land in order that a house of prayer might be built in that town. It was on the site of the house which the Apostle built, that the Portuguese erected their fortress in Cranganore.[67] All the Christians were asked to build their houses around the house free of royal rent. Moreover the king granted to the church for its maintenance one fifth of all the merchantise the Christians brought to that town; and this was a large sum for the town at that time was a very big trade centre. This privilege is still held by the Christians.

The plates were entrusted to the charge of Pero Sequeira and later to that of his succeessor. Hence even now they should be still there (in the Cochin factory). The copy which

66. For the anachronism in this passage of Goes, cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 147, n. 148.

67. About this fort, see MUNDADAN, ibd., p. 114f.

had been sent to king John III was transcribed into the Portuguese language. But it was impossible for Goes to say what had been done with it by the king of Portugal because the document was not to be seen in the *Torre do Tombo* where such documents ought to have been preserved.

Dionysio seems to allude to these plates when he says that the privileges and dignities obtained for the Christian community from the king of Cranganore, by Thomas of Cana, were contained in a document of iron leaves found by the Portuguese in the possession of the Christians.[68]

Gouvea and Roz were quite familiar with the subject of the tradition written on these plates. According to the former, Mar Jacob gave the plates to the agent of the Portuguese factory in Cochin, for safe custody.[69] Accordingly they were kept for many years in the factory, until, owing to the carelessness of the custodians, they disappeared from there. The Christians felt much concern at this as they were thus deprived of the written documents with which to defend themselves in any contention with the pagan kings, who kept violating those privileges of theirs, which among other things ordered that the Christians alone, when they married, were allowed to wear golden flower in the hair on their heads, to ride elephants (privileges granted only to the heirs of kings), to sit on carpets, and other honours which no other caste had, and which were of great value and esteem among the people of Malabar; and the Christians esteemed them so much that on one occasion when the king of Parur sold one of these privileges to certain Muslims in his kingdom for a large sum of money, the Christians rose against the Moors, and there was a fight between them and the Muslims in which many were killed and much blood was shed on both sides. This incident occurred a few years prior to Gouvea's writing his record.[70]

Couto gives the text according to the Jew's translation and says, that on his arrival in Cochin (1599) he still found

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68. Dionysio 398.
69. Goes agrees with Gouvea in this.
70. Gouvea, f. 4.

the original plates in the factory, but that of late (he is writing c. 1603) it had disappeared.[71] Roz writing in 1604 tells us that the original had been taken to Portugal by the Franciscans and a copy was left in the Cochin factory. His text agrees with that copy. We have already seen part of his text in connection with the story of Thomas of Cana and the Cranganore community.[72] The honours given by the Xoran Perumal are narrated by Roz: he allowed Thomas Cana (and his successors) the use of seven kinds of musical instruments and many honours. They could speak as equals of the king and walk and ride like him. They could use the palanquin. At weddings their women were allowed to whistle with the finger in the mouth as do the women of the kings. The king conferred on Thomas of Cana the duty and privilege of spreading carpets on the ground, of using sandal-paste, erecting pandals, and riding elephants. Royal umbrellas were allowed him. And besides these, he granted for ever five taxes to Thomas and his posterity and to his associates, both men and women, and to all his relations and to the followers of his faith.[73]

b. **The Quilon plates.** It seems that the Portuguese had knowledge of these plates only at the end of the 16th century during the visit of Archbishop Meneses to Malabar. Gouvea tells us that in 1599 Meneses saw them in the possession of the Christians of Thevalacara [74], and that they were three in number, each two palms long and four fingers broad, joined together by a ring. There was writing on both sides of the plate and this writing included the privileges of the Quilon church, inscribed in different alphabets and characters, "Malavar, Canarin, Tamul and letters of Bisnaga" [75].

Roz, who had this translated by a certain Etymani *cassanar* (a Thomas Christian priest called Etymani or more correctly Ittimani) in October 1601, says that these plates were

71. Couto 7, 1, 12, 15.
72. Sup, p. 95f.
73. Roz, f. 87v.
74. Thevalacara near Quilon; cf. KSP I 197.
75. Gouvea, f. 5.

in the possession of the *Tarega*[76] or tenant of Thevalacara. No detailed account of the theme is given, except the indication that the Christians of St. Thomas in Quilon were allowed to collect the hundreth part of the duties on brokerage and weights for the maintanance of their church in the town. Besides 72 gardens also were given to them.[77]

We conclude, what is important in this matter is not the interpretation itself of these plates (which is sometimes very fantastic and not rarely based on half-understood words and phrases and even on the prejudices of the interpreters themselves or of those who had them interpreted,) but the significance which the traditions of the Thomas Christians attached to these plates. They knew from oral traditions and from their very ways of living that they had received from the local kings at different times grants of privileges, perquisites or land. The copper plates were a firm guarantee for safeguarding these grants and for the vindication of their rights whenever any inroads were made into them by anyone. They were zealous guardians of their privileged existence and it was precisely to establish their privileges if they were impugned, that they always sought the help of the Portuguese. Probably at the arrival of the Portuguese, it was, that the Villarvattam royal family, the defenders of the privileges and honours of the Christians, became extinct, or unable to extend their protection effectively.

6. The Appellations of the Christians of St. Thomas

Different appellations are alleged to have been applied to the Christians of St. Thomas.[78] We do not enter into the discussion of the origin or the meaning of these apellations; nor do we attempt to examine how far they were applied to the Christians of St. Thomas exclusively. We touch them only so often as they are found in the Portuguese documents.

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76. The original meaning of this word is connected with broker's business. See DALGADO II 360a; GOUVEA, f. 86v. It is used by some Christians and Nairs and is now hereditary. *Tarakan* is the Malayalam form. Cf. BROWN 170.
77. ROZ, f. 89v.
78. *Tarakan, Mutalali, Panikkar* etc. Cf. BROWN 170f.

We have already seen that they were called by the people of the Pandian kingdom, "sons of kings" and "Tarijanel" meaning, according to Roz, first kings.[79] Roz says that the Quilon plates called them so, and adds that they were called by that appellation once upon a time. Even at the time of Roz's writing those Thomas Christians who lived South of Quilon, both those who had remained faithful and those who had fallen away, were known by the old name *Tarijanel*.[80] The others, i. e., North of Quilon, were at that time called *Nazarani*; and this name was of later origin and was first used by the Muslims and the Turks. The honorific title *Mappila* was always added to their proper names.[81]

II. The Socio-Ecclesiastical life of the Community

We have already hinted at in the previous section that the social organisation of the Thomas Christians was more or less based on the ecclesiastical organisation and religious life. The difficulty is to know what exactly the nature of Church organisation was; what the exact position of the prelates who were always foreigners, and that of the Archdeacons who were apparently all natives; what patterns the ecclesiastical and social organisation followed. We can do nothing but piece together the bits of information found in some of the Portuguese documents of the 16th century.

1. The Prelates

Tradition is unanimous in asserting that the prelates of the St. Thomas Christians came from Babylon for many centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese in India. This tradition is not only not denied by documents but positively proved by them.[82] The account of Joseph the Indian in Venice seems to be the earliest of the 16th century documents which speak of the actual situation in Malabar. According to Joseph

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79. Sup. p. 126.
80. Roz, f. 90. Different interpretations are given to the word *Tarijanel*, cf. Hosten 562, n. 3.
81. See *Controversia*, f. 6v 7v 8 8v etc. *Mappila* is also in many cases applied to Mohammedans.
82. See Mundadan, *The Arrival* 27.

the Christians of St. Thomas had as their head in spiritual matters a Pontiff, 12 Cardinals, 2 Patriarchs, Bishops and Archbishops. Then follows the account of how Joseph himself took one of his superiors to Babylon and got him ordained by the Pontiff, who was called *Catholika*. "In like manner do all the Christians of India and Catai." The *Catholika* nominated the Patriarchs; i. e., one for India and another for Catai. The Bishops and Archbishops were sent to the provinces of India and other places by him accordingly as he thought fit.[83]

i. **Powers of the prelates**

The titles Pontiff, Cardinals, Patriarch, etc. are, of course, adaptations made either by Joseph himself or by his interpreters in order to suit western ears but the whole narration indicates how the Chaldean Church provided for the different ecclesiastical provinces, including India which was the most important of them. The Catholicos of the East used to consecrate prelates from time to time and to send them to different parts of the world which acknowledged him as their ecclesiastical head. India seems to have been the core at this time of the foreign provinces of the Chaldean Church as, apparently, it was to India that the prelates were first sent and from where they dispersed to China and other Eastern territories.[84] At times the Catholicos was not in a position to send his bishops and archbishops to those parts for many reasons, and hence there occured periods of long vacancies. On such occasions the practice seems to have been for the Christians themselves of those parts to take the initiative and send delegations to the Catholicos asking him for prelates. We have evidence of such delegations and of a particular example of one which took place a few years before the arrival of the Portuguese.[85]

The prelates who thus came to Malabar were very

83. *Peasi* 156f.

84. Cf. the letter of the four Chaldean bishops who arrived in India in 1504, MUNDADAN, ibd., p. 84f. ROZ says that bishops were sent from Babylon to Malabar *(Hendo)*, Socotora and China but the principal seat was *Hendo*. ROZ, f. 86v.

85. MUNDADAN, ibd., p. 55f.

enthusiastcally received by the Christians. The ceremonious reception of the prelates is briefly described in the introduction to the letter of the four Chaldean bishops in 1504 [86]: "When these same four (Mar John, Mar Thomas, and the two Indian delegates) came there (Malabar) with the help of Christ, Our Lord, they were received by the faithful with great joy and they went to meet them with joy, carrying before them the book of the Gospel, the cross, censers and torches and they introduced them with great pomp and with the chanting of psalms and hymns".

The Christians not only showed the foreign bishops such enthusiasm in the beginning but were always very much attached to them and showed them great respect. This is attested to by all the 16th century documents, and this attachment and respect of the Christians for their prelates was considered by the Portuguese as an obstacle to their plans of latinisation. [87] Penteado writing in 1516/18 says that the obedience and respect the Christians showed these prelates was even greater than what the Latins showed the Pope. They used to kiss the feet of the Chaldean prelates and did many other things to any extent to show their devotion to them.

This much is very clear. But some questions arise: What were the powers of these prelates? What was the relation among the bishops themselves when there were more than one, as often the case was? These questions are difficult to answer precisely because the documents are not clear about these powers and relations. We only examine the documents according to the chronological order and try to see whether we could derive some conclusions.

According to the letter the four Chaldean bishops wrote in 1504, the first thing the two bishops who came to Malabar after a long period without bishops did, was to consecrate altars and ordain priests "for they had been without Fathers for a long time". When one of them, Mar Thomas, returned to the Catholicos, Mar John his companion remained in India

86. SCHURHAMMER 3. Cf. also SRD IX 299.
87. See MUNDADAN, ibd., chs. 3 and 4.

"as bishop". One of the three bishops who were consecrated and sent to India in 1503 was a Metropolitan, and all the three were sent to the "countries of India and the islands of the sea, that are between Dabag and Sin and Masin". [88]

Penteado, after his first visit to the Christians of St. Thomas in Cranganore and its vicinity, wrote to the king of Portugal that the Christians of St. Thomas were looked after by priests ("padres") from Armenia; they came in groups of six at a time and their spiritual care lasted 80 to 100 years. Each member of a group obeyed the others. They claimed that they came as legates *a latere* (of the Patriarch). If at any time it was found necessary to get Fathers earlier than the end of the usual term, a delegation was sent to ask for them.[89] Of course the whole situation is not clear from these words of Penteado either because Penteado was not able to understand the whole system or the system itself was somewhat variable. In the eyes of Penteado they were not more than ordinary priests; this is contrary to all other documents and to what Penteado himself wrote to Cardinal Primate of Portugal later on.[90] All that he seems to imply–that the "Fathers" were merely legates, and that each one was bound in obedience to the other–might have risen from his erroneous assumption that they were not more than ordinary priests. Perhaps he is right when he says that they were sent to Malabar at intervals of 80 to 100 years. But the number six which he mentions in connection with the groups sent is not upheld by any other document we know. Barbosa in connection with the alleged first delegation of Christians to Babylon bring priests to India, says that the first group of one bishop and five or six clerics stayed in Malabar for five or six years and when they went back there came another group who stayed with them for the same period. [91]

From 1504 there were five or more bishops in Malabar and that one or two of them might have proceeded to some

88. SCHURHAMMER 3.
89. This seems to be the meaning of the passage in PENTEADO 550.
90. SRD II 357-361.
91. BARBOSA II 100f.

other fields under the Chaldean Church.[92] What was the relation that existed among the other bishops who remained in Malabar? Nothing is clear from the documents unless we accept the theory of Penteado that they were legates and all equal in status and were dependent, each on the other. After 1530 there are only two bishops, Mar Jacob and another young bishop. Their mutual relation and proper fields of activity are also undistinguished. From the documents which we have about the matter, namely a letter of Penteado to the Cardinal Primate, the letters of L. de Goes and others,[93] it would appear that both worked among the Christians of St. Thomas without distinction of dignity, although Mar Jacob appears to have been more important personage in the eyes of the Christians of Cranganore and its vicinity. Mathew Diaz who wrote in 1550 also does not help us to clear up things for he merely says that in the name of the Patriarch of Babylon there came men from Babylon as bishops, to instruct them in the Catholic faith, which they did, not without some errors.[94] Barros alone says that the two bishops divided the land between them, the younger one taking the portion from Quilon towards Cape Comorin, the older one residing in Cranganore.[95] But no other document guarantees such a territorial division, although later on two Vicars were set up by Mar Joseph, one for the care of the Christians of the South and the other for those in the North.[96] The later documents and the situation existing in the latter part of the 16th century and after, favour the single see theory.

As regads the offices of the bishops, it appears that the consecration of altars and priests were reserved to them.[97] According to Dionysio churches could not be erected, nor mass said in them unless the bishop had laid the first stone and until he had blessed them.[98] We shall see later on how

92. Cf. MUNDADAN, ibd. p. 83-87.
93. Ibd. p. 105 ff.
94. SRD IV 77f.
95. BARROS 3, 7, 11, 237.
96. See below the section on Archdeacons. Cf. also *Goa* 10, f. 463.
97. Sup. p. 139.
98. DIONYSIO 402.

far baptisms were reserved to the bishops. Mathew Diaz says that amongst other things the bishops ordained natives, but did not give them permission to say mass.[99] From this are we to understand that no native priests were allowed to say mass or that even saying mass was reserved to the bishops alone? Such a hypothesis does not appear supported by any other document.[100]

As stated earlier, we are not quite sure how far the bishop was involved in the temporal administration of the community which included the maintenance of, and device against foreseen risks to, the privilegs and rights the community enjoyed under the local kings. Mar Jacob, who styles himself as "Jacob Abuna, Armenian priest who rules over the so called Quilon Christians in India.." whom he ruled "in the things of God, for which I have been deputed and sent by the patriarch of Babylon", appears in his career to have been often involved in the temporal matters of the community.[101] For example, he led his Christians to the Portuguese factory in Cochin several times and persuaded them to sell their pepper directly to the Portuguese. He asked the king of Portugal to see to the security of the rights and privileges of the community. He seems to have been the guardian of the Thomas Cana plates which he, in his extreme necessity, had pawned to a man but which he redeemed before his death.[102] But perhaps all this was exceptional and done under the influence of the Portuguese, and this might not have been the usual practice of the bishops.

ii. The title of the prelates

Bishop Roz found that according to the tradition of the Christians and according to the Chaldean books the see of Serra was the oldest of the parts of India and the farther East. The Apostle Thomas founded this see in Mylapore and when the Christians fled from Mylapore and settled down in

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99. SRD IV 77f.
100. See next chapter, section on the Liturgy.
101. SCHURHAMMER 10.
102. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 95ff.

Cranganore, the see of Mylapore was transferred to Cranganore. After the arrival of the Portuguese and their erection of the Portuguese fortress in Cranganore the Christians, molested by some overzealous religious, left Cranganore and settled themselves in other places, because they were insisted on their conforming in everything to the Roman rite such as eating fish during Lent and beginning Lent from Ash Wednesday etc. Their prelates, in fear of the Portuguese, changed their place of residence from Cranganore to Angamali. Thus Angamali (by which name the see of Serra was known at the time of Roz) was the continuation of the see of Mylapore, and hence the most ancient see in India. Its title was all *Hendo*, that is all India. The prelates from time immemorable styled themselves Archbishops and Metrapolitans of all India. This is attested to not only by tradition but also by the Chaldean books including the breviary which always styled the prelate, Metropolitan of all India.[103]

When Clement VIII took away this ancient title of their see the Christians of St. Thomas complained to the Pope and to the king of Portugual and got it restored. Thus Roz, their bishop in 1607, was again called by the old title "Metropolitan of Hendo".[104]

iii. Territory of the see

Claiming Angamali as the continuation of the Apostolic see of Mylapore (and therefore the oldest see in India), and under the presumption that there existed only one see in India before the arrival of the Portuguese and supported by many witnesses from among the Thomas Christians, who were supposed to know well the traditions and ancient usages, Roz contended that the see of Angamali, (of which the other title was all *Hendo* or India,) included the following territories: on the West Coast from Cape Comorin 140 leagues up till the Karnatic regions comprising the coasts of Cape Comorin, the Fishery Coast, the Travancore Coast, Quilon, Cochin, Cranganore Calicut, Cannanore; on the eastern side of the Ghats from Cape

103. Roz, f. 9v 43v-44 13 3 3v 4v 5 6v
104. Ibd. f. 12.

Comorin up till Mylapore including Nagapatanam, and the whole of the kingdom of Vijayanagar. *Hendo* or India, which properly speaking extended from the Indus river to Cape Comorin, for practical purpose included all the territories mentioned above. Another definition of the territory is also suggested: the see of *Hendo* included all the territories formerly ruled over by the three crowned kings of South India, namely the Xoran Perumal, the Pandi Perumal and the Xraton Perumal.[105]

Of course all this had a polemic purpose[106] and we cannot take it at its face value. There seems to be little doubt about the fact that the see of the Thomas Christians was known for generations as the Metropolitan see of ALL INDIA, and the metropolitans were called by the same qualifying title. As for the extension of the territory, we would suggest that there was no proper delimitation of territory as there was no need for it before the arrival of the Portuguese. The *All Hendo* was a vague term and included all the places where the Thomas Christians lived. In that way there is nothing wrong if one says that the whole of India was the territory of the see or the eclesiastical province of India.[107]

iv. **The residence of the prelates**

Roz's theory is that from the settling down of the Christians of Mylapore in and near Cranganore, the prelates always resided in Cranganore, and Angamali was later chosen as a place of safety from molestations of the Portuguese. Roz proves this from the situation which the Portuguese found in Cranganore and from some of the vestiges he himself could show in his own time in Cranganore.[108] There is no doubt that some of the bishops used to reside in Cranganore and some died there and lay buried in the church there. It is quite probable that the Cranganore church, apparently the most important church of the Thomas Christians, was con-

105. Ibd. f. 3-3v 5 3 5v 131 131v.

106. Sup. p. 90, n 12.

107. Cf. EHSES, *Concilii Tridentini Actorum Pars V=Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, Actorum Nova Collectio,* Freiburg, i. B. 1919, VIII 959 about the vindication of the Chaldean Church of territories in India. Cf. also TISSERANT-HAMBYE 39.

108. *Controversia,* f. 6 7v 43v. 45v-46; cf. also f. 8 9v.

sidered the *Cathedra* of the Metropolitan of India. But it may be doubted whether all the bishops before Mar Abraham, (who is alleged to have first shifted the residence from Cranganore to Angamali,) as a rule resided in Cranganore. In all probablity Angamali, which was the centre of learning for eclesiastics and the town in which monks resided, was even before the time of Mar Abraham, a part-time residential place of the Metropolitans. We must not forget that Roz has a polemic purpose in his mind whenever he speaks of the titles, residence and territory of the see of Angamali.[109]

2. The Archdeacons

As stated above the Archdeacon is generally believed to have been the national head of the community. But how far, and in what sense, this title is to be accepted, it is difficult to determine.[110] No document gives us a clear idea as to his position in the first part of the 16th century and earlier. The first time we hear about the title Archdeacon in the Portuguese sources is in the narration of Amador Correa on the big feast the Thomas Christians celebrated in Parur and Cranganore in 1563. In the feast the bishop of Cochin also took part with the intention of bringing them under his jurisdiction. After the feast was over a few lay leaders, and the *cathanars* under the leadership of the Archdeacon promised obedience to the bishop of Cochin. The Archdeacon is said to have been left behind by Mar Joseph as the Vicar General of all the *Serra*[111]. In this narrative the Archdeacon undoubtedly acts as the head of the community, and the leadership of the Archdeacon is prominent during the rest of the century and the 17th century. His power is especially manifest during the synod of Diamper and under Portuguese bishops. But whether his power was always asserted is open to question, especially because it was apparently from the time of Mar

109. Roz was preoccupied in shifting his residenc to Cranganore. Cf. also sup. p. 91, n. 15.

110. Some idea about Archdeacons, position in the Chaldean Church may be had from DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientales* I 117 122 123.

111. SRD IX 300f. About Mar Joseph and his absence at this time see THALIATH 7ff. Cf. also DIONYSIO 398f.

Joseph, that the Archdeacons obtained the status of Vicar Generals. Not only A. Correa but Dionysio also tells us so. His text is worth quoting: "Formerly when the bishop died there was no one to take his place..Mar Joseph ordained that there should be an Archdeacon for Angamali, who should be vicar for the Christians who lived in the Northern parts; he appointed another to be vicar for the Southern parts. The latter being dead, the Archdeacon of Angamali, a certain George of Christ,[112] is the purveyor of the whole community of Christians".[113] From this it would appear that the very institution of the office of the Archdeacon was first begun by Mar Joseph. Probably Dionysio means only the new responsibility, namely that of being the vicar general, and of the office of administering the church during the vacancy or absence of the bishop.

What substantially the Archdeacon did is given by Dionysio in another place in his record when he treats of the maintenance of the prelates. It was the duty of the Archdeacon to fix the amount each village had to contribute for the subsistence of the prelates and to see to the collection of the same.[114] It is difficult to believe that this custom was a later introduction, after the organisation undertaken by Mar Joseph. Hence it may be inferred that the office of Archdeacon already existed before that time and that he administered matters, especially of a temporal nature, pertaining to the whole community. There might have been more than one Archdeacon at the same time, each to look after the affairs of a particular territory. However from the available local documents it would appear that there was only one Archdeacon and that he was the national head of the community. According to a document now in the possession of the Potthanikat family of Kothamangalam the Archdeacon is called "*Ittikuriath Archdeacon Achan, Jathikku Karthavian*" = "Ittikuriath [proper name], Father Archdeacon, Lord of the Nation".[115]

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112. About him, see THALIATH 14f.
113. DIONYSIO 401.
114. Ibd. p. 402.
115. Cf. also *Noticias*, sup. p. 116,

3. The clergy

It is not quite clear whether besides the prelates there were also Chaldean priests working among the Thomas Christians, although some of the documents and tradition would appear to suggest it.[116] The existence of a good number of native clergy generally attached to each church is very well attested to by later documents although little reference to them is to be seen in the early Portuguese documents. These native priests were known by the name *cathenar* or *casanar* which being a Malabarisation of the Syriac word *Qasisa;* and the clerics below the priest's grade, whether deacons or not, were known as *chemas*, another Malabarism for the Syriac *samas*.[117]

i. *The Diocesan clergy*

Outside the church the priests were not much different from the laymen in their dress and perhaps owing to this fact, the early Portuguese might not have even noticed them.

Joseph the Indian said in Venice that the Christians of St. Thomas had priests and deacons and subdeacons. The priests did not wear the tonsure; instead they carried at the top of their heads a tuft of hair.[118] Goes whose narration is very similar to that of Joseph says, "The priests have their tonsure in the form of a cross".[119] Monserrate who had penetrated into the life of the community somewhat profoundly wrote in 1579: "Before the arrival of the Portuguese they did not wear the tonsure, they were dressed in white just as the clerics of Constantinople, as it is read in the (writings of the) Holy Fathers of the Greek Church, who reprimanded the vanity of the priests (shown) in their white and curious stoles[120]; after the coming of the Portuguese

116. MONSERRATE, f. 150.
117. MONSERRATE, ibd. The interpretation given to the words is correct. The explanation given by YULE & BURNEL (169f) & DALGADO (161f) is not satisfactory.
118. *Paesi* 158.
119. GOES 215.
120. PG 58, 645.

they wear tonsure and many dress themselves in black".[121] What form exactly the priestly garb took cannot be traced from any document.

There is no doubt that the priests were generally married. When Joseph the Indian told the Venetians that the priests lived in chastity[122] he meant conjugal chastity, or he was misunderstood by the interpretor. Goes is definite about it: "The priests keep conjugal chastity, that is, after the death of the first wife they do not marry another".[123] Father M. Carneiro, S. J. and his companions who had been to the Serra for a visit found out that the casenars were married and an old casanar, who was very erudite in the scriptures and taught at the "university" of Angamali for fifty years, told the Portuguese that he would not join the Portuguese so long as the Portuguese priests remained unmarried.[124] Due to the Portuguese influence the priests began slowly to keep celibacy. When the change occurred is not clear. Dionysio wrote in 1579: "A few years ago the priests were married. Now all keep celibacy and if some one gets married, he remains suspended".[125] Monserrate[126] supports Dionysio".. the clerics were married indifferently and were treated just as laymen; even now there are some of them, 80 and 90 years old with grandchildren and great grandchildren. Their wives have precedence in the church and have the title of dignity: *cathediar*, which is equivalent to priestess.[127] This title is retained by some even now who are married to the priests but they no more enjoy (the privilege of) precedence,

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121. MONSERRATE, f. 149v. Barbosa speaks about the dress of the Chaldean Fathers (probably bishops): "They wear their tonsures reversed, hair in the place of the tonsure and the head around it shaven. They wear shirts, and turbans on their heads, they go barefoot, and wear long beards". BARBOSA II 101. Cf. also GOUVEA, f 59.
122. *Paesi*, ibd.
123. GOES I 215.
124. DI III 806. Cf. also below about the training of clergy.
125. DIONYSIO 399. In 1565 we hear of some unmarried priests among them, cf. DI VI 428.
126. MONSERRATE, f. 149.
127. This is derived from cathenar in a crude way.

or does the present Archbishop[128] allow them (the married priests) to say mass, though some still marry because he (the Archbishop) cannot punish them as they are in the territories of the pagan kings and can pass over to the schismatic Symeon".[129]

ii. *Monks and nuns*

Besides the secular clergy there seem to have been monks and nuns also. Joseph the Indian said that they had monks in black habit who lived in great poverty and chastity. Similary there were nuns also.[130] Goes says the same: They have monasteries of monks, who wear black dress. There are nuns too of the same order. Both monks and nuns live in great observance, honesty, chastity and poverty.[131] No other documents speak expressly of the religious among the Thomas Christians. Roz speaking about Angamali calls the church there the hermitage of SS. Gervasis and Protasis.[132]

iii. *Ordination*

The ordinations took place at two stages: at the first stage the candidates were made *chemazas*, when the orders up to diaconate were conferred on them, and at the second stage they were made *cathenars* when priesthood was conferred on them.[133] In selecting candidates no consideration seems to have been given to age restrictions. According to Dionysio, at one time little children were ordained, and afterwards boys of 16 and 17 years; even at the time of his writting (1578) such disorders persisted, although the custom was being corrected, and the Archbishop kept the Tridentine form.[134] Monserrate gives us the reason why no age restriction was countenanced in this matter: It was not

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128. Mar Abraham. Perhaps this practice might have been already begun by Mar Jacob. Mar Joseph might have enforced it more strongly.
129. About this bishop, see THALIATH 12. Cf. also VALIGNANO 340.
130. *Paesi* 158f.
131. GOES I 137 215.
132. ROZ, f. 98v. GOUVEA, f. 61 describes old people and some widowers adopting a kind of religious life.
133. DIONYSIO 402.
134. Ibd. 399. Cf. also DI III 806.

always easy for the bishops to come from Babylon and hence children used to be ordained in all the grades.[135]

iv. *Education and training of the clergy*

The moulding of the clergy by discipline was not, of course, kept at a high standard.[136] Ordinary priests learned only to read (and perhaps understood) Syriac, the liturgical language, just enough to perform the different functions attached to their office. The function of the priests do not seem to have been more than saying Mass on certain days, saying the divine office in choir, assisting at marriages, funerals and at some family functions such as *chathams* and first rice-feeding of the little child etc.[137] The young clerics received instruction from elderly priests of the same parish.

If such was the general situation, there is evidence that there were specialised people and educational centres for the training of the clergy, perhaps for only a select few. Thus Joseph the Indian could tell the Venetians: "They (the Christians of St. Thomas) have excellent doctors; study of letters; they have the books of the prophets just as we.."[138] Goes follows suit: Their doctors teach the Old and New Law, especially the prophets in public schools. Some of them are well versed in the Law.[139] Dionysio from his own personal knowledge wrote that the Thomas Christians had many doctors who interpreted the Sacred Scriptures; that they esteemed St. John Chrysostom much; that they had many apochryphal histories.[140]

Angamali was a training centre for priests who came from all parts of Malabar. The person who recorded the visit in 1557 of Father M. Carneiro to Christians in the interior,

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135. MONSERRATE, f. 150. Cf. also VALIGNANO 342; Gouvea f. 59.
136. About the education of the laymen, see GOVEA, f. 61v-62. The boys began their training in reading and writing and in warfare under a Panikker from 8 years of age and continued till 25 years of age. Cf. also BROWN 186f.
137. See below ch. 7, sections on Liturgy and Sacraments.
138. *Paesi* 159.
139. GOES I 215.
140. DIONYSIO 400f.

says that Angamali was a "University", "For there is a casanar who is like a father among them and in him they had great confidence on account of his old age and learning. For 50 years he has been teaching the Sacred Scripture, and he has many disciples from all parts of Malabar".[141]

He also explains the method of instruction. The old casanar taught the Scripture in the Syriac language. The disciples who were beginners in the study were given exercise in writing and learning the alphabet. The mode of learning was, by their writing down the lessons the master gave them and by drill in repeating them.[142] The main purpose of their study was to read and interpret the Sacred Scriptures, although some were taught in the Fathers and the theologians. Some students transcribed the books of the Fathers and theologians and treasured the manuscripts.[143]

That the Christians had in their possession many books had been already alluded to. Joseph the Indian said in Venice that the Christians of Malabar had many books of the doctors besides the Bible and the Prophets.[144] Goes says, "They have the same books of the Old and New Law as in the Canon of the Roman Church, written in Hebrew and Chaldean..They have the books of the doctors which expose the Law...."[145] We have already seen that Roz and some others derived much of their information about the traditions of the Christians from the Chaldean books found among them, to purge which Roz was commissioned by the Goan synod of 1585.[146] Most of the witnesses of the judicial process of 1607 gave their testimony from what they knew both from oral tradition and from the old Chaldean books. Perhaps Dionysio is referring to these books when he says that the Christians possessed many apocryphal histories.

Some of the better educated among the priests were specially trained to preach. Goes says that there were preachers

141. DI III 804 809.
142. Ibd. p. 804. Cf. also DIONYSIO 401.
143. Cf. HAUSHER 21.
144. *Paesi* 159.
145. GOES I 215.
146. Cf. Sup, p. 41f.; cf. also HAUSHER 9f.

among them who ordinarily preached to them during the whole year.[147] Dionysio tells us how the preaching was performed: These Christians love sermons, and sermons are delivered to them by those cathenars who know something. Their method of preaching is to narrate stories one after another without any regard to sequence or to the suitability of the occasion. They enjoy preaching for two or three hours at a stretch.[148]

4. Parish Life

The word 'parish' may not be strictly applicable to the church and the community of clerics and faithful attached to it in a Thomas Christians village or town. However, life in all the eclesiastical divisions was much the same. The churches were built by the people who contributed to the building and its maintenance, each man contributing what he could. In every marriage the fifth or the tenth part of the dowry of the bride was donated to the church. In baptism too the sponsors and parents of the child contributed.

The administration of the church and its properties was entrusted to some honourable people who managed affairs well.[149]

To each church were attached its clergy, both cathenars and chemasas. According to Dionysio there were in every church one, two or sometimes three cathenars who said the divine office in choir in the Chaldeo-Syrian language.[150] In the parish which was visited by Carneiro and companions in Trubule (Thodupuzha) in 1557 there were seven or eight cathenars besides the old cathenar who took them there.[151] According to Dionysio there were no special vicars or curates in any church but all cathenars held equal rights in administering sacraments and burying the dead etc. However, an old priest was held in greater respect. The income was equally distributed among them.[152]

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147. Goes I 215.
148. Dionysio 401.
149. Ibd. 402. About 'yogam' or parish assembly, sup. p. 125, n. 34.
150. Dionysio 399f.
151. DI III 807.
152. Dionysio 400.

The means of subsistence of the parish clergy were provided from the properties of the church and also from the benefactions made by the people to the church. They had other incomes such as those from marriages, baptisms, funerals etc. The principal source of their income was, as stated in the records, from *chathams* or funeral feasts, which were held all through the year and from which the priests who participated in them earned a great deal. [153]

5. Punishments

We have seen that the Christians had certain privileges in the administration of justice even in civil matters. [154] How far this was actually exercised and in what way, is not at all clear from the documents. [155] Dionysio gives us the following information as far as punishments are concerned: The crimes against the state were punished by the king of each country; the crimes against the commandments of the church were punished by the bishop, if they were grave; if not, by the cathenar and the parish council composed of the principal Christians of the place. The punishment usually consisted in paying some money to the church, and when the culprit refused to pay it, they excluded him from the church, and if still refused, he was excommunicated, and the other Christians were asked not to communicate with him. When the offender was a cathenar, he was refused the *casuri* [156] in the church, and this meant that he was not admitted to the common prayer of the church. If the cathenar did not amend even after this he was denied incense [157] in the Liturgy at the time of the purification with the thurible, and if he still refused to correct his conduct he was excommunicated [158].

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153. Ibd. 401 and DI III 805.
154. Sup. p. 124 f.
155. THALIATH 42. Acc. to Gouvea the bishop exercised the power. GOUVEA, f. 61. Was it always the case?
156. See below ch. 7, section on Divine Office.
157. Ibd.
158. DIONYSIO 402f. Cf.also GOUVEA, f. 60v.

6. Conversion Policy

It is generally believed that the Christians of St. Thomas, owing to their general Indian mentality and especially their caste feelings, were averse to proselytising. [159] The caste feelings, no doubt, stood in the way of receiving into their community the low castes. But as regards the higher castes they must have had no objection in making converts from among them. We know from tradition that by intermarriages with the higher castes especially the Nairs the Christian community received many non-Christians among them and had them baptised. Roz says that the Northist community were always eager to increase the numerical strength of the church and had received many pagans and baptised them. [160] Conversion of the lower castes might have been taken up by the Thomas Christians only after the arrival of the Portuguese [161].

7. The Place of the Laymen in the Church

We have already seen some allusions in some of the documents to this subject. The administration of the parish church was in the hands of honourable men of the place. They constituted the parish council, and had the right, together with the priest to punish offenders against the commandments of the Church. [162] Also in matters affecting the interests of the community of the Thamas Christians as a whole, the lay leaders had their voice. We have seen one

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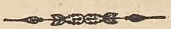
159. BROWN 173.

160. Sup. p. 99.

161. One of the claims of bishop Roz against the bishop of Cochin in the process of 1607 was that those who had been newly converted in Thomas Christian localities came under the jurisdiction of Angamali. During this process many witnesses on the side of Roz (most of them Thomas Christians) testified that it was the practice of the Thomas Christians to take care also of the newly converted in spite of the fact that they did not strictly belong to their community. Special arrangements had been provided for them to attend religious services in churches, either by erecting separate churches for them or by reserving a particular part of the church for them. These converts were called *Columbucos*, Cf. *Controversia*, f. 4-4v 5v 6v 7v-8 8v 16v-17 19-19v 19v-30 45 132. Cf. also *Synodo Diocesano*, VIII, decr. 35 36. Cf. also SCHURHAMMER, *The Mission* 26.

162. Sup. p. 153.

example at Parur where after the feast the lay representatives together with the priests and the Archdeacon swore obedience to the bishop of Cochin. The importance of the laymen in the ecclesiastical affairs comes into better relief during the synod of Diamper and after. [163]



163. It was a very ancient custom among the St. Thomas Christians for their lay representatives to attend ecclesiatical conventions. This was due to the fact that laymen had considerable influence in the administration of Cnurch welfare. Thus laymen took part in the diocesan synod of Angamali in 1583 and in the synod of Diamper, 1599. Cf. THALIATH 42.

CHAPTER 7

LITURGICAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

The tradition of the St. Thomas Chritians which traces back the origins of the community to the work of St. Thomas, the Apostle would imply that the Apostle gave to the community a Christian way of worship more or less adapted to local needs. The shift over to the Chaldean form of worship should have taken place, according to this view, after the arrival of the Fathers from Chaldea at a time when the Malabar Church was in a very critical stage. From tradition and history we are sure that the Malabar Church from very old time depended on the Chaldean Church not only for its prelates but also for its way of worship. Some of the pre-Diamper manuscripts still extant, [164] the decrees and acts of Diamper [165] and many of the 16th century Portuguese accounts about the life and customs of the Christians, are clear proof that the Malabar Church followed the the use of the Chaldean Church for their worship and liturgy in the larger meaning of the term. [166] However, there can be no doubt that a number of local observances connected with baptism, marriage, funeral etc., which may not strictly be called liturgical, were in use among the St. Thomas Christians, as we shall see below.

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164. See TISSERANT-HAMBYE 175.

165. See *Synodo Diocesano,* IV (Baptism and Confirmation), V (Eucharist and H. Mass), VI (Penance and Extr. Unction), VII (Orders and Matrimony). See also some of the decrees of Ac. III. Cf. also GOUVEA, f. 58-61.

166. Two works may be here suggested: P. Petrus le BRUN, *Liturgia Chaldaeo-Malabarica et Chaldaeo-Nestoriana comparatae,* Paris 1716, 1843; R. H. CONNOLLY, OSB, *The work of Menezes on the Malabar Liturgy=Journ. Theol. Studies,* April and July 1914.

1. Religious Life in General

That the Christians of St. Thomas were pious people, very devout in the practice of their religion is evident from many Portuguese testimonies of the 16th century. Roz found them very pious, having great veneration for the cross [167]. If Penteado could discover that only a few of them (they were very few) knew the prayers of the primitive Church, namely the Our Father, the Hail Mary [168] and the creed, many witnessed to their patient, devout and active participation in the long and sometimes tedious services conducted in the church in the Chaldean language [169], their faithful observance of the different fasts some of which were not strictly obligatory [170].

We may here quote one or two eye-witnesses to the faith, devotion and piety of the Christians. Melchior Nunes Barreto, after a visit to the Christians in 1563 in company with the bishop of Cochin, writes to his brethren in Europe: "I cannot tell you, my dear brethren, how much I am consoled in the Lord when I see and speak with these Christians who from the time, when St. Thomas had been in these parts, as it is believed, have kept faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ in spite of the fact that they had been deprived of instruction, sacraments and other means which are preserved among us by the divine goodness, and even though they have been living among an infinite number of infidels, not only molested by the gentiles but even persecuted by the Moors and Jews, who are living among them, in spite of all this they have always preserved the veneration, obedience and faith of the Holy Cross and the memory of the mysteries of the Catholic faith. And on all days before sunset they assemble in the Church to recite the psalms and the lessons in Chaldean, and in the morning they do the same, the cassanars ... reciting their matins at the altar and

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167. Roz, f. 91.
168. Penteado 544.
169. It is probable that some laymen also understood the Chaldean language. Cf. Placid, *Hindu in Culture*, 99.
170. See below.

the people answering their *alelyas* and other words with such impetus of the spirit that, although I do not understand the words they provoke in me devotion". [171] Dionysio calls them the lovers of fasts and of the sermons which were preached to them by their cathenars for many hours together. [172] The great respect they showed to their clergy especially their prelates was a wonder to the Portuguese. Their attachment to the local church had been already referred to, earlier.

2. The Churches

From some of the documents it would appear that the churches in their architecture and external and internal decoration did not much differ from those of the West. We have seen the description of the church at Mylapore [173] and many accounts tell us that it was in the Western style except in one or two points. The same is stated of the churches in Malabar generally. Joseph the Indian said in Venice: "The temples of the Christians are made in our (the Wetern) fashion, except for the fact that they have only crosses in their churches. At the summit of the church also there is a cross. They have no bells." [174] All are agreed as to the fact that in the church there were no images but only crosses. When the Poruguese came to Quilon in 1503 they found in the church there three altars each with a cross on it; the one on the central altar was of gold. [175] Penteado wrote to the king in 1516/18: They have crosses in their churches on the altars as well as engravings, but no images or engraved outlines of profiles and faces. They are asto-

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171. DI V 416.
172. Dionysio 401.
173. Sup. p. 32 f.
174. *Paesi* 156. Cf. also Goes I 170 214. Concerning church bell DI III 805 has this: "Their bell is a piece of wood hung by two cords by which they call People..."
175. Cf. Mundadan, *The Arrival* 75. However their contact with the Portuguese brought in gradually some modification. They asked Albuquerque for a painting of St. Thomas. Cf. also Penteado 544 and DI III 804. According to this last document they were more familiar with images on Portuguese models in their churches.

nished to hear that we have images because they say that St. Thomas had prohibited them. Our men have begun to introduce images (faces) and they see it". [176]

As for other differences in the construction of the churches the description of the pre-Portuguese church of Mylapore may be taken as a model. As has been pointed out before, according to some documents the churches did not differ much from the Western churches. But from Monserrate it is clear that these statements are simplifications and generalisations. Monserrate is definite that the majority of the churches were built in the fashion of the Hindu temples. He says in his account: "Their churches, of which there are still many, were built in the same manner as the houses of the idols of these parts; the present Archbishop sees to it that they are built in our style." [177]

3. Church-going and Prayers

Before going to the church the Christians washed their bodies and put on newly washed clothes. If any one could not do this, he did not either go at all to church or if he did he would not enter the church, for they thought that only those who were clean of body and clothes were worthy of entering the church. On their way to the church they would not allow themselves to be touched by any other castes. At the entrance of the church they washed their feet in a well and such wells could be seen at the entrace of every church [178]. Entering the church they made a profound inclination of their heads, the heads touching the floor. This bowing was directed towards the cross, the chapel on the right containing the baptism font, and towards the chapel (house) on the left in which the bread was prepared.

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176. PENTEADO 545.

177. MONSERRATE f. 149v. Cf also Gouvea f. 60v.

178. Joseph the Indian (*Paesi* 158) and GOES (I 215) say that there was holy water at the entrance of the church with which they sprinkled themselves on entering. Gouvea describes the making of holy water: the sacristian made it by dissloving some earth brought from the tomb of St. Thomas in Mylapore, GOUVEA, f. 60. Cf. also *Bibl. Vat. Borg. Lat.* 155 f. 16.

Then they returned to the centre and all together sang loudly their prayers together with the priest or the minister present. The prayers over, all prostrated themselves on the floor praying for a short time in secret. Rising up they went to kiss the hand of the priest or to touch that of the minister. This they did only on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. On the other days of the week they did not enter the church but only went to the doors.[179]

4. Church Functions in general

As it has been already pointed out, it was the East Syrain form of worship that the Chistians followed both in the Liturgy proper and the other official functions of the Church. In some of the documents it is said that they followed the Greek liturgy. The obvious reason is that to many in the West at that time the Greek rite meant simply the Oriental rite. Penteado seems to have noted some difference at least as regards baptism between the Greek rite and the rite followed in Malabar, which he calls Nestorian as against others who would consider it Greek. [180]

All accounts agree that the divine services were held in the Syro–Chaldean language. Roz says that their ecclesiastical language was always Syriac, a popular dialect of Hebrew [181] which was prevalent at the time of Christ Our Lord and his Apostles who spoke it and preached in it. [182] It was also the language used generally for other ecclesiastical purposes. We have already seen that the priests were taught in that language. Speaking about the necessity of having some Jesuit priests instructed in that language Barreto wrote:"...as all these people (of Malabar, Socotora and Persia) have their divine things in the Chaldean language and not in any other, they give almost no credit nor any devotion nor any authority to all the doctrine given to them except covered in Chaldean. This excessive devotion to the Chaldean langu-

179. PENNEADO 549. Cf. also DI III 805.

180. PENTEADO 359.

181. This is a mistaken idea. Aramaic cannot be called a popular dialect of Hebrew.

182. ROZ, f. 91.

age does great harm to them, for given the fact that they possess some errors very perilous to their salvation we cannot help them out because of the little credit they give to our Latin literature...." [183]

5. Divine Office

We have already seen that attached to each church, there was a large number of clerics, whose main occupation was to say the divine office in the choir.[184] Barbosa speaking about the Chaldean bishops says: "They have the church law and recite their prayers perpetually. Yet I know not whether they recite the whole office as do our Friars."[185] From this it appears that the priests were bound by church law to say the office but about the manner in which this law obliged them is not clear from Barbosa. To Monserrate it appeared that the priests did not consider reciting the hours obligatory except in the choir or in conjunction with it, for they were not seen to say the hours outside the choir. [186]

From the references made above it is clear that the laymen also took part in the reciting of the divine office. How often they took part is not quite clear. From the account of Penteado it seems they did this only on Sunday mornings and Saturday evenings; on other days they did not even enter the church. But from other accounts it would appear that they joined the office more often and even every day. Barreto seems to say that they did it twice every day early in the morning and in the evening. Monserrate says that all the people generally went to attend the divine offices.[187] Most probably the following was the ordinary practice: on Sunday mornings and Saturday evenings, so also on feast days, all the people gathered in the church to join the priests in the recital of the office; on other days a few attended; the custom might have been different in different

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183. DI V 416f.
184. Sup. p. 153.
185. BARBOSA II 101.
186. MONSERRATE, f. 149v.
187. Monserrate. f. 150. Cf. also sup. p. 157 160.

localities, and each writer may be giving what he personally experienced.

The prayers consisted of psalms and antiphons which were divided in accordance with the seasons and hours. [188] As to the hours, Penteado restricts the recital to Sunday monrnings and Saturday evenings. M. Carneiro and companions found in 1557 that the priests assembled in the churches in the morning to recite the hours and in the evening to adore a cross which they had in the church. [189] According to Barreto all assembled in the church in the evening before sunset and in the morning to recite the psalms and lessons in Chaldean. [190] According to Monserrate the office was recited by the priests at three different times: twice in the morning namely, before sunrise and after sunrise, and in the evening after sunset. [191]

They began the office with the special ceremony of giving peace to each other. M. Carneiro gives us the following description: "They keep the feasts from the previous evening until night, and go to the church with their shirts washed; and they give the peace to one another in this way: the first touches the hand of the oldest priest and kisses them, then after all having formed a line beginning with the cassanar, the next one in the line goes to touch the hand of the cassanar and others next to him and then a third one does the same and so on all, in their turn." [192] Dionysio says that the peace was called *casuri*, and that it was the custom of the Chistians, that while the cathenars stood to recite the divine office, all who entered the church, both the cathenars and the faithful should go to the cathenar [eldest cathenar?] with both their hands outstretched touch his hands as a sign of peace. If the cathenar refused to be touched by any one his refusal was a sign that he was not

188. Ibd. 149v.
189. DI III 804.
190. Sup. p. 157.
191. MONSERRATE, f. 149v.
192. DI III 805.

admitted to the prayer of the church. This was the first step in the punishment of a delinquent priest.[193]

About the manner of reciting the prayers we have already seen some details given by Penteado and Barreto.[194] We may add some details given by Monserrate. "When they set themselves to pray they prostrate themselves and kiss the ground and when all have prostrated they rise and then they prostrate once again. In signing and sanctifying [in making the sign of the cross on themselves] they do in the same manner as we, except that when they call upon the name of the Holy Spirit they sanctify themselves from the right to the left." The divine office was always sung standing but leaning on some kind of elevated tables,[195] one on one side and another on the other side.

6. The Liturgy or the Eucharistic Sacrifice

Among the Thomas Christians the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, just as other ecclesiastical functions, naturally followed the use of the Chaldean Church, and there might have been in use all the three anaphoras of the same Church although for the anaphoras of Theodor and Nestor we have less evidence than for that of Addai and Mari.[196] M. Carneiro and companions heard that the priests were celebrating a mass which they called the mass of Nestor, in which they had great devotion.[197]

There is some difficulty in understanding how frequently the real Eucharistic Sacrifice was offered and how often the cathenars attached to the churches were permitted to perform it. In connection with the recital of the divine office we have seen that they gathered in the church in the evenings and the mornings, but there is no express mention of the

193. DIONYSIO 402. Cf. also sup. p. 153.

194. Sup. p. 157 160.

195. MONSERRATE, f. 149v. Cf. also GOUVEA, f. 60.

196. Probably owing to the fact that these two masses were suppressed by the synod of Diamper, and perhaps they were not encouraged by the Latin missionaries because they contained names which they did not like.

197. DI III 804.

liturgy; on the contrary the evidence is rather against the frequent celebration of it. It may be doubted whether the liturgy was observed even on all Sundays, not to say, every day. Penteado says that the sacrifice was celebrated very inrefquently except in Lent when it was celebrated every Sunday.[198] Penteado need not be taken very seriously as he was writing his impressions after his first visit among the Christians. But there are others who knew things better; and they also appear to say the same. For example, Mathew Diaz, a latinised Thomas Christian priest, wrote to the king of Portugal in I550 that the bishops who came from Babylon ordained natives without giving them permission to say Mass.[199] Dionysio, according to whom the main occupation of the parish clergy was to say the divine office in the church choir, says that the cathenars did not baptize or say Mass except a few times; the bishops reserved for themselves the celebration of the Eucharist. [200] From all this we may conclude that there were certain restrictions in the matter as far as the ordinary clergy were concerned, although it is unlikely that the priests were never allowed to celebrate the Eucharist.

The liturgy was called by the Christians *Curbana*[201] which meant offering. They had no vestments as in the Latin Church but simply put on a large piece of cloth in the form of an amice and over it a stole which they called *orario*.[202] The celebrant invariably said Mass with to ministers. Barbosa speaking of the Chaldean bishops says: "He who says it (the Mass) walks between two men, who help him, one on each side".[203] Penteado knew that without these two ministers it was unlawful to perform the sacrifice.[204] Monserrate wrote in 1579 that the priests could not say

198. SRD III 548.
199. SRD IV 478; cf. also MOSERRATE, f. 149.
200. DIONYSIO 400. Cf. also VALIGNANO 341.
201. This is the word still used by the Thomas Christians for the sacrament and sacrifice of the Eucharist.
202. MONSERRATE, f. 149. About *Orarion*, cf. RAES 236. *Orarion* is actually the dress of deacons. Cf. GOUVEA, f. 59.
203. BARBOSA II 101.
204. SRD III 548.

Mass without a deacon, although the previous bishop (Mar Joseph) gave the permission that a layman might serve the Mass.[205] The Mass was said on the altar with a cross facing the celebrant. [206]

To all probability the bread used in the liturgy was fermented bread although Joseph the Indian is reported to have told the Venetians that the asym bread was in use just as in the Latin Church [207]. No other account of the time except that of Goes[208] (whose account, as it has been already pointed out earlier, tallies with the report of Joseph), concedes this but all state that the bread used was fermented bread. Penteado is of opinion that it was wheat bread mixed with salt and olive oil.[209] According to the report of Melchior Carneiro, their Mass could not be celebrated without a certain oil which they mixed with wheat flour. The Christians of St. Thomas are said to have asserted that Nestor was condemned by the Pope for stealing this oil when he was in Rome. In the consecration they used wheat flour mixed with this oil and olive oil from Portugal.[210]

Barreto wrote in 1561 that the cathenars consecrated fermented bread mixed with a certain oil, which they believed, was consecrated by Our Lord.[211] The description of the bread given by Monserrate is interesting: "Previously they had many rites in the Mass, which they call *courbana* meaning oblation, because they make a round loaf of rice with a ball in the middle, I do not know whether of the same material or wheat flour. I do not know whether only this ball is consecrated or the whole loaf; the procedure is this, the priest consumed the ball and distributed the loaf among the people, by which even if the ball is of wheat flour, an intolerable error is committed because the people think that they are

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205. MONSERRATE, f. 149.
206. Cf. BARBOSA, ibd.
207. *Paesi* 158.
208. GOES I 215.
209. PENTEADO 548. Cf also BARBOSA, ibd.
210. DI III 805.
211. DI V 417. About the "fermentum sacrum" of the Chaldeans, cfr. HANSSENS II 169-174.

receiving communion".[212] Soledade also says that the Franciscans, among other things, corrected "the abominable error of consecrating the sacrosanct body and blood of Christ in cakes of rice and wine of the palms".[213]

As regards the wine used, apart from the statement of Soledade which may be an exaggeration, all agree that it was made out of dried grapes by putting it in water and then pressing out the juice; this juice was consecrated. The reason was that the vine did not grow in India. The dried grapes or raisins came from Catay (China) according to Joseph the Indian, from Meca and Ormuz according to Barbosa.[214] Monesrrate was of opinion that owing to the large quantity of water used in the process of making the wine the consecration was invalid.[215]

The liturgy was never celebrated without the incense, with which the inner and outer part of the chalice, and all other things were fumigated. The people assembled too were incensed and they made certain wavings of their hands in order to make the smoke come to them.[216] Whenever the priest turned to the people during the Mass they said "Pax vobiscum" [its Syriac equivalent].[217]

After the Gospel there was preaching. The creed used in the Mass was the Nicean.[218] There was only one elevation, the chalice being never elevated. At the elevation all the people rose up and bent their heads down to the floor and said that they were not worthy of seeing it.[219] The bread was divided into many parts, according to Penteado, and no reason was given by them for doing this.[220] But

212. MONSERRATE, f. 149.
213. SOLEDADE 916.
214. *Paesi* 198; BARBOSA II 101.
215. MONSERRATE, f. 149. Cf. GOUVEA, f. 59; there are many interesting details.
216. Ibd. Dionysio says that the second stage in the punishment of a priest was to deny him incense during the divine service. Sup. p. 153.
217. MONSERRATE, ibd.
218. Ibd.
219. SRD III 359.
220. Ibd.

Monserrate says: They do not break the host into three parts as we do but only into two, and one of the parts is dipped into the blood and after having got it wet in the blood, with it the other portion is wetted in several places.[221] The communion of the faithful was in both species. Penteado gives the following description of the communion: when the priest has finished communicating he comes with the ministers, (without whom he cannot celebrate), one of whom carries the divided Sacrament while the other bears the chalice. The priest stands in the middle of the ministers near the door of the chapel. First the men approach the priest to receive communion. Each communicant appraches with his arms crossed on his chest, the right arm over the left. The priest taking the Sacrament places it on the right palm of the recipient and he places it in his mouth; then he moves to the right and communicates the Blood applying his mouth to the rim of the chalice. After the men the women do likewise.[222]

Barbosa's description, although shorter, agrees with Penteado's: "They communicate with the salted bread instead of the host, and consecrate thereof sufficient for all who are present in the church, they distribute the whole of this as if it were blessed bread, and every man comes to the foot of the altar to receive it from the priest's hand."[223] M. Carneiro found in one of the churches of the Christians a chalice of copper which would contain half an almude[224], from which all used to communicate, "for they have this error, namely that all communicate under both species..."[225]

According to Monserrate, the Mass ended with a Gospel which was read by the priest facing the people.[226]

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221. This may be considered as a more factual report. About the breaking and manipulations, see RAES 97ff.
222. PENTEADO 548f.
223. BARBOSA II 101.
224. 5 to 30 litres.
225. DI III 805.
226. Ibd. 149. The *huthama* or the final blessing may be meant by this "Gospel". Cf. also VALIGNANO 340.

7. The Sacraments

The general impression the Portuguese had was that the Christians of St. Thomas had not all the sacraments, [227] especially that of confirmation and extreme unction, and according to certain accounts, even confession. However, we have to remember that the Portuguese were viewing things from the point of view of the Latins from which some real sacraments might appear as if they were unreal. Another remark we have to make in this connection is that linked with the sacraments there were many extrasacramental functions which were rather of a social nature. We shall describe them in their proper place.

1. *Baptism*. There is some uncertainty as to the time and manner of administering baptism and as to the minister of the same sacrament. We shall see first some of the documents and try to derive some conclusions from them. Joseph the Indian said in Venice that the children of the Malabar Chrstians were baptised 40 days after their birth, unless there was the necessity to baptise them earlier. [228] According to Penteado no one was baptised before three years of age. He adds; "Many are baptised at 50 years of age; this I say because I met people whose children had been baptised but they themselves were not. All this is due to the fault of the Fathers (the Chaldean Bishops) who go about among them, who are not to be accused because they are friars and lack the three reins namely shame, fear and religion. And they do not baptise in the church unless this age is over; and however old the people may be they do not baptise them unless in great numbers. And this, it seems to me, was on account of avarice, for one has to bring three fanams however poor he may be, and the rich even more. These alms are divided into three parts, one part goes to the priest, another to the ministers and the third to the church." [229] Barbosa observed that the majority of the Christians lacked both

227. SOLEDADE 521 etc.
228. *Paesi* 158. Cf. also GOES 215: "on the 40th day unless there was danger of death".
229. PENTEADO 546.

doctrine and baptism. In another place he remarks about the Armenian (Chaldean) clerics: "And the said priests having remained there for a time return to their house in Armenia, taking with them great riches, for they demand money from everyone who would be baptised, which is very ill done, for some having no money cannot raceive baptism".[230] In 1557 when M. Carneiro visited a very remote and mountainous place where Christians lived, he met some five or six catechumens – among whom there was a woman – who had not till then received baptism and he was asked to baptise them. He baptised them, as it appeared to him that if he did not, they would find it very difficult to get themselves baptised because they were living isolated very far away from the Portuguese churches and in mountainous parts. As was the custom of the land, they offered him some *fanams*... and at his refusal to receive the money they were scandalised, although he believed that later on they were edified by his refusal. Carneiro adds that it was their custom to pay their bishops money for the sacraments.[231] Carneiro further baptised many sons of the Thomas Christians in other places, among whom were men and women, all of whom received baptism with an oath of obedience to the Roman Church.[232] Barros also speaks in harsh terms against the Chaldean bishops, and states that it was because of their avarice that many people remained unbaptised as were not able to pay the required money.[233]

Dionysio knew that formerly there were many unbaptised adults, and the reason why they remained unbaptised was, he says, that the cathenars could not baptise them because the bishops retained the exclusive right of baptising. As for the remuneration, he says that the faithful gave to the church according to their capacity.[234] According to Monserrate children were baptised on the 40th day after

230. Barbosa II 100 107.
231. DI III 796 798.
232. Ibd. 798. Cf. also III 810.
233. Barros 3, 7, 11, 236.
234. Dionysio 400 402.

their birth at the earliest but there were many old people who were not baptised, and some even died without baptism...Two reasons are given by him for this state of affairs: one, the lack of priests; one priest alone could not perform the complicated ceremonies and many of the priests did not know to perform these ceremonies; the second, the difficult problem of money to be paid to the priests for baptism. Only a few people knew the essentials of baptism in order to administer it in case of necessity. [235]

From the foregoing testimonies it would appear that the sacrament of baptism was not given the same importance relevant to salvation as we attribute to it. The payment of a sum of money for being baptised was a deterrant and people postponed it indefinitely in a careless manner. The greatest obstacle to early baptism was the limited number of priests who could perform it. The majority of the documents seem to imply that the administration of the sacrament was the reservation of bishops; it appears that practically only the bishops who came from Chaldea could adequately perform it. In his letter of 1524 to the king of Portugal Mar Jacob says that the Christians did not like to be baptised by anyone other than himself so long as he lived. It appears that there was a large number of unbaptised Christians, especially in Quilon, at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. We hear that the Portuguese missionaries baptised a good number of them and converted them. [236] This was natural if we presume that among the Thomas Christians the sacrament of baptism was in practice reserved to the bishops; for we know that the Christians of St. Thomas had been long without prelates and it was only a few years before the arrival of the Portuguese that a delegation went to Mesopotamia and brought down two bishops. These two bishops had so many things to do that they could not at once baptise all the unbaptised, especially those who lived in the interior and in mountainous regions. The main help the Franciscans rendered to Mar Jacob was to baptise the

235. MONSERRATE, f. 150.
236. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 75.

people. [237] Even many years after the zealous work of Mar Jacob and his companions some still remained unbaptised, as we saw when going through the account of the visit of Carneiro in 1557. From all this we are strongly tempted to suppose that practically only the prelates baptised unless in cases of extreme necessity. However, it may also be true that only the complicated ceremonies were reserved to the bishops, while the essentials of the sacrament could have been performed by anyone, whenever needed. This view seems to be supported by the statement of Monserrate.

As for the ceremonies of baptism we have no details. That they were different from the Latin ceremonies is clear from what Mar Jacob wrote to the king of Portugal. The Portuguese suspected the validity of the baptism given by him and hence he had to inform the king that he knew the Scriptures sufficiently to administer it validly, although he was not familiar with the usages of Rome and the Popes. Penteado made one of the Chaldean bishops perform the baptismal ceremony and when it was done Penteado found fault with the bishop because what the bishop did, did not conform to the Latin method. [238] At his first visit among the Chrislians Penteado had no opportunity to witness a baptismal ceremony, but he heard from the Christians that the proper form was that of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit". [239] Later, especially after his experiment with the younger bishop, he concluded that the baptism was Nestorian and not Greek, although some told him that it was Greek. He found that at some time before the baptism the priests blessed some legumes and put some in the mouth of the child, giving it its name, as it was done in olden times and, as Penteado believed, it was even then done among the Greeks. After this ceremony they took the child to receive the sacrament of baptism and this in the proper seasons, namely the Paschal and the Pentecostal. They did not use salt in the ceremony. [240]

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237. Cf. ibd. p. 109.
238. Cf. ibd. p. 105f.
239. PENTEADO 544f.
240. Ibd.

The blessing of legumes and the giving the child its name, described by Penteado, may be the ceremony of rice-giving described by Monserrate. It was an extra-sacramental, social function. Monserrate describes it thus: "At the end of six months (after the birth of the child) they are wont to give the child rice, for which they invite their friends and relatives, and the priest comes to bless the eating and takes a little from the rice mixed with black dilute sugar (jaggery) and puts it to the mouth of the child; he does not touch the rice with the hand but with a cross of gold or of gold-plated silver, placed inside a circle. After this has been done by the priest, the relatives and friends approach and repeat the action and then all go to eat the best possible (meals). [241]

ii. *Confirmation.* We know nothing about this sacrament except Penteado's statement that after baptism they had no episcopal chrism. He narrates further how he, after his quarrel with the younger bishop, tried to get some of the Christians to be chrismed by the old bishop, and how the younger bishop resisted the older bishop who tried to do it and how five Christians came to receive it at last. [242]

iii. *Confession and Communion.* Without regard to particular instances it is stated in the documents that there was only general confession among the Thomas Christians although some of the documents appear to deny the existence of any sort of confession among them before the arrival of the Portuguese. This denial most probably is due to the fact that to some of the Portuguese the idea of a general confession did not mean much. According to Joseph the Indian, the Chirstians of St. Thomas confessed and communicated as the Latins did and they went to communion three times in the year.[243]

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241. MONSERRATE, f. 150. Cf. also BROWN 185f.

242. Cf. MUNDADAN, *The Arrival* 108. About the Chaldean custom in the matter of confirmation, cf. RAES 144ff. To the Portuguese the unction in both confirmation and extreme unction was considered nesseary. But the Chaldeans perhaps did not attach such an importance to unction but they attached importance only to the imposition and blessing. Cf. Raes's article in *Orient Syrien* (1956) 241-54.

243. *Paesi* 158.

Goes says that they went to confession before receiving communion.[244] But all this cannot be but general statements. Penteado was told by the Christians that they had only a general confession and that they confessed to God in a clear voice all together. [245] What Carneiro and his companions observed was that they did not go to confession before receiving communion. Further, confession among them was not frequent, and it appeared that some who went to confession did so because of their social communication with the Portuguese.[246] Dionysio wrote in 1578 that previously confession among them was not considered necessary and on their death beds they received the sacrament without confessing; but at the time of his writing, confession and communion had been introduced among them. [247] According to Roz it was Mar Jacob who first introduced confession among them, confession in the form in which he found it in use with the Portuguese. For this he translated the formula of absolution from the Latin into Chaldean which formula was revised by Mar Joseph. [248] The *Historia Serafica* asserts that one of the reforms made by the Franciscans was to introduce the sacrament of confession among these Christians. [249]

iv. *Extreme unction* is one of the sacraments, the existence of which among the Thomas Christians is denied by all accounts, although a sacramental blessing in its place is admitted. [250] The account of Joseph the Indian and of Goes are identical when they say that the Christians had no extreme unction but in its place the sick were blessed by the priest. [251] The sacrament, which, according to Dionysio, they

244. Goes I 215.

245. Penteado 549. Cf. also SRD II 359.

246. DI III 804f.

247. Dienysio 400.

248. Roz, f. 91. Here there is no question of the sacrament of confession as such, but that of the Latin formula.

249. May be, the writer is alluding to what Mar Jacob did according to Roz. Cf. Gouvea, f. 58v, where an interesting ceremony of purification is described in the place of confession.

250. Cf. Kelaita, 194 195 about some prayers & blessing of an oil for the sick.

251. *Paesi* 158; Goes I 215. Joseph says that the priest blessed the body of the the infirm and Goes, that he blessed the infirm.

received before death, without confessing, might be the Viaticum. [252]

Some of the customs among them, connected with the death of a person, are interesting. According to Joseph the Indian and Goes, the dead were buried in the same manner followed by the Roman Church.[253] But Dionysio wrote in 1578 that until some 40 years before his writing the dead were buried near the houses and even at the time of his writing no one was buried inside the church. [254] Mourning for the dead person was much the same as the custom of the country adopted by all. When a Christian died many Christians, mainly his relatives and friends, came together into the house of the dead and ate together for eight days and prayed for the dead. If the dead person had not made a testament, it seems, this assembly arranged for the proper inheritance of his property, which was to be given to the nearest relative. The wife got back her dowry and was free to go home and get married after the lapse of a year. If she married before, by law and custom she would lose the dowry. [255]

The dead was commemorated annually with a funeral meal which was called *chata*. According to Carneiro it was similar to the Portuguere *saimento*, and the occassion was kept as a feast and many people were given food. This was the principal source of income to the parish clergy. [256]

v. *Martrimony*. As we have noted already something about the conferring of orders we need not repeat its process here. As for matrimony the church functions seem to have been very simple, and not many details about them are available. Matrimony was preeminenly a social celebration and was conducted with many ceremonies, of which we possess some details. Joseph the Indian had to say about matrimony

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252. Sup. p. 172f.

253. *Peasi*, ibd; GOES, ibd.

254. DIONYSIO 400. This might have been the case as regards lay men. From other documents it is clear that bishops were buried in churches. Cf. MUNDADAN, ibd. p. 86. About cathanars nothing is clear.

255. *Peasi*, ibd; GOES, ibd. Cf. also BROWN 183. Cf. GOUVEA, f. 58 about Confirmation and Extreme Unction.

256. DI III 805. Cf. also sup. p. 153. About death services, cf. BROWN 205f; about *chattam*, ibd. p. 207f.

only that the Christians were not allowed divorce. [257] But this divorcc, it seems, must be understood as separation. Goes says: "...in the matter of matrimony there could be among them, in no case, separation, except at the death of the man or wife; otherwise they have to live together for good or bad". [258]

We have seen already that the wife brought to the husband a dowry which she got back at her husband's death if she did not marry before the end of a year after death. When Dionysio says that at marriages the people gave the fifth or tenth part of their income to the church, he must have meant so much of the dowry as is the custom even now among them. [259]

Penteado, when he visited the Christians for the first time, learned from them that the giving a veil in the church was practised by a few, but very few, we can say by none; generally the parents of the bride and of the bride-groom contented themselves by giving their children in marriage together with dowries and by each giving a feast for one day. Some did something more, but Penteado's description of what that was, is very vague. [260] Monserrate gives us a fuller description especially of the social observances in connection with marriage: "When they are married they use ceremonies common to the whole land and ceremonies particular to the Christians which the gentiles cannot use *etiam extra sacramentalia*, for when the couple go to promise in the church they give a fanam wich is equal to one "real" of silver [261]; afterwards the cassanar marries them without proclamations (of bans), and very often they are married in the prohibited degrees, so much so, there was a time when marriages were conducted in the same degree as of Abraham and Sara [262].

257. *Peasi* 159.

258. GOES I 125.

259. Sup. p. 152. Cf BROWN 177f. In 1958 the Kerala Government has got a bill passed in the Kerala assembly forbidding the practice of dowry.

260. PENTEADO 545.

261. Cf. MUNDADAN, op. cit., p. 74, n. 177.

262. We see Father Mathew Diaz asking the Portuguese king to get a dispensation for the Christians in the matter.

This (the marrying of the couple by the cathanar) being over they go home and the women make something like rice milk and with it paint the place where the couple are to be seated and a cloth being spread on the top they are seated in ceremony. After the lapse of three days they go to wash themselves and when they wash many people assemble and to all of them is given *betre* [263] to eat, and to the priest a sum (of money) for giving his assent to the washing; and after the washing (ceremony) they can enter the house, which they could not before; and after they are in the house for two or three days they go to wash themselves in the river." [264] According to Roz some of the privileges which the Christians had obtained from the local kings, concerned marriage ceremonies. In accordance with these privileges, on the day of marriage the bride and the bride-groom with crowns on their heads were carried on men's shoulders or on elephant back, besides a hundred other ceremonies. [265]

To conclude our review of the sacraments: we saw that the Portuguese unanimously deny the existence of two sacraments: confirmation and extreme unction. Some also claim that the sacrament of confession was newly introduced by the Portuguese. It may be admitted that the use of private and particular confession was not common among Thomas Christians; as for the other two sacraments it is not impossible that the Portuguese were led to deny their existence on account of the absence of the anointing usually considered necessary at that time for their valid administration. In the case of confirmation the Portuguese could not find any ceremony separate from that of baptism.

8. The Feasts

Some of their feasts were the same as those of the Latin Church and a few fell on the same dates or in the same seasons. But many feasts were either different, or were celebrated on different days. Joseph the Indian gave the following list of the feasts: the holy week, especially Good

263. Cf. ibd. p. 124. *Vettila* which the Malabarese chew.
264. MONSERRATE, f. 150.
265. ROZ, f. 92v. Cf. also GOUVEA, f. 59v.

Friday, Easter and the two days following, the Octave of Easter (which was the greatest feast of the year because on that day St. Thomas put his hand on the side of Christ), the Ascension, the feast of St. Thomas. the holy Trinity, the Assumption; the Nativity of Our Lord and the Epiphany, the feasts of the Apostles and, the Sundays. [266]

Goes adds to this list the feast of Pentecost. [267] Penteado knew that they had the feast of the exaltation of the cross on the same day as the Latins. Both Penteado and Dionysio say that the feast of the Assumption was on the same day as that of the Latins. Dionysio adds that at the time of his writing (1578) some Latin feasts such as the Anunciation had beeen introduced. [268] Monserrate found that the feast of the Transfiguration was held in August, and the 12 Fridays after the nativity were dedicated to the honour of the 12 Apostles. [269]

In honour of St. Thomas, besides the Octave of Easter, they had another feast in July. According to Joseph the Indian, and Goes, it was on the first of Juy, and both the Christians and the pagans had great veneration for it. Penteado's statement that it was held on the 4th June (on which the Latins had the feast of the translation of St. Thomas) seems to be incorrect. Amador Correa witnessed to the celebration of a special feast in the year 1563 on November 21, which date according to the Christians, commemorated the day on which there arrived in a port, two leagues from Cranganore, the log, or the ship, on which St. Thomas came to Malabar. [270]

Generally the feast was begun on the eve with solemn vespers. [271] Monserrate gives us some particulars connected with certain feasts. A ceremonial vigil was kept on the eve of Christmas and on the day of Christmas only the night Mass

266. *Paesi* 158.
267. GOES I 215.
268. PENTEADO 545; DIONYSIO 401.
269. MONSERRATE, f 150. Cf. also VALIGNANO 339.
270. SRD IX 298ff.
271. DI III 805.

was celebrated and no other was said. Similarly on the eve of the Assumption they had great celebrations which occupied the Christians the greater part of the night. On Christmas night they blessed a bon fire of dry wood and went around it in procession. [272]

Besides these common feasts, the Christians of St. Thomas had two or three particular feasts of their Church. Thomas Cana was one of their saints [273] but it is not known whether they had a special day dedicated to him. Mar Sapor and Mar Prot were known as *Quadisakal* (saints) and they had many churches dedicated to them. Their feast was celebrated on May 19. [274] On the fifth of July was celebrated the feast of "Quirce", who was, according to Roz, St. Cyriac, a child martyr and son of St. Julita. He was a celebrated saint for the Chaldeans. [275]

9. Fasts

Beside the common fasts of Advent, Lent and the Fridays they had some special fasts such as that of 15 days before the Assumption, the so called fast of the Ninivites or Jonas the Prophet [276]. According to Dionysio the fasts of Lent. of the vigils of Chistmas, Pentecost, Ascension, Our Lady, S. Ormisdas and other saints of their Church were obligatory. while the 15 days before the Assumption, the three days' fast of the Ninivites was undertaken for devotion. [277] Lent began not on Ash Wednesday but on the Monday before

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272. MONSERRATE, f. 149v.

273. ROZ, f. 88v. Couto says that he was put in the list of the saints by the Christians and an office was assigned him, COUTO 12, 3, 5, 285.

274 ROZ, f. 89v. Cf. *Synodo Diocesano*, Act III, decr. 9 and 10.

275. ROZ, f. 88v. Kuriakose is one of the most common names of the Thomas Christians. As to the names in use among the Thomas Christians during the 16th and pre-16th century some allusions are given in the process of 1607. Some of the witnesses are called by the following names: Jacob (f 3), George and Augustine (f. 4.) but Augustine seems to be a new introduction or the witness was not a Thomas Christian, Mathew (f. 6v), Aypu (f. 8, means Joseph,) Cheriya (f. 8. George?), Zacharias (f. 10). That they used many Old Testament names is clear. Cf. *Synodo Diocesano*, Act IV, Sect. 1, decr. 16. Cf. BROWN 208, Cf. also GOUVEA, f. 60v.

276. DIONYSIO: Ninivites; MONSERRATE: Jonas.

277. DIONYSIO 401. Cf. also VALIGNANO 340.

Ash Wednesday.[278] The fast of Jonas was held for three days but Monserrate did not know at what exact season it occurred. According to what he heard from the Archbishop (Mar Abraham) it was instituted by the order of a Patriarch during a great pestilence in Syria which pestilence came to an end miraculously when the three days' fast ordered by the Patriarch in all the churches under his obedience was over. They called it the fast of Jonas, the Prophet, not for any other reason but because that it lasted three days; during which the priests did not go out of the church. They fasted similarly before the feast of the Transfiguration. [279]

That the Christians took very earnestly their fasts is attested by more than one witness. Dionysio calls them lovers of fasting, and Carneiro found that they observed their customs of fasting etc. perfectly. [280] According to Joseph the Indian they did not eat food from Good Friday until the day of Easter. [281] On fast days they ate (as the principal meal) only after snunset. [282] The married people abstained from the use of conjugal rights. [283] On these days they did not eat meat, or fish, or eggs, or things made of milk. Nor did they drink wine or eat *bettre* which are leaves of a herb, which the eat usally all the day through". [284] However they did not consider the fast broken by eating *canji* (rice poridge) [285] in the morning nor by eating fruits, and they even ate rice twice in their ignorance. [286]

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278. Roz, f. 90 90v. Dionysio 401.
279. Monserrate, f. 149v.
280. Dionysio, ibd. DI III 403.
281. *Paesi* 158.
282. Penteado 545; DI III 805.
283. Penteado, ibd. Dionysio 401.
284. Monserrate, f. 149v; Dionysio, ibd; Penteado, ibd.
585. This is usually their break-fast.
286. Monserrate, ibd. Monserrate mentions this from the western point of view. Cf. also Gouvea, f. 59v-60.

CONCLUSION

In the second part of the present book we have been trying to portray, from the studied records of the Portuguese in the 16th century, 1) the history of the Christians of St. Thomas as it appears in their own tradition, and 2) the actual life and customs, both secular and religious, of this community. At the end the picture which emerges is not complete in all the details but more or less satisfying. This picture is sufficient to give us a glimpse of the life of the Thomas Christians, prior to the influence of the Portuguese on them.

The Pnrtuguese were from the beginning not a little puzzled by the particular pattern of Christian life of the Thomas Christians. To many of them the social, ecclesiastical and ritual customs and practices, which differred from the Latin and western ways, were real 'abuses' and 'errors'. Archbishop Roz was convinced at the begnning of the 17th century that many Portuguese, including some religious, had not understood anything that was not conformable to the Latin rite, and had believed the differences to be heretical and superstitious. True, Father Carneiro, a Portuguese Jesuit, about the middle of the 16th century told the Christians: "Both you and we hold to the same faith; the difference of customs matters littile." But such examples were few and far between.

From the earliest years of their arrival the Portuguese revealed their desire to make the Christians conform to the Portuguese manners and modes; but their initial attempts to

change them were rather sporadic. A more or less systematic effort began with the establishment of the college or seminary at Cranganore (1541). The community did change in the course of time, though not in the same degree and speed as the Portuguese expected them to do.

The study of the traditions of the Christians will definitely form a background to understanding this process of change and the pressure exerted on them to bring about the change. So too will it, we hope, bring home to us the extraordinary spontaneity with which the community adjusted itself to its environment in course of time.

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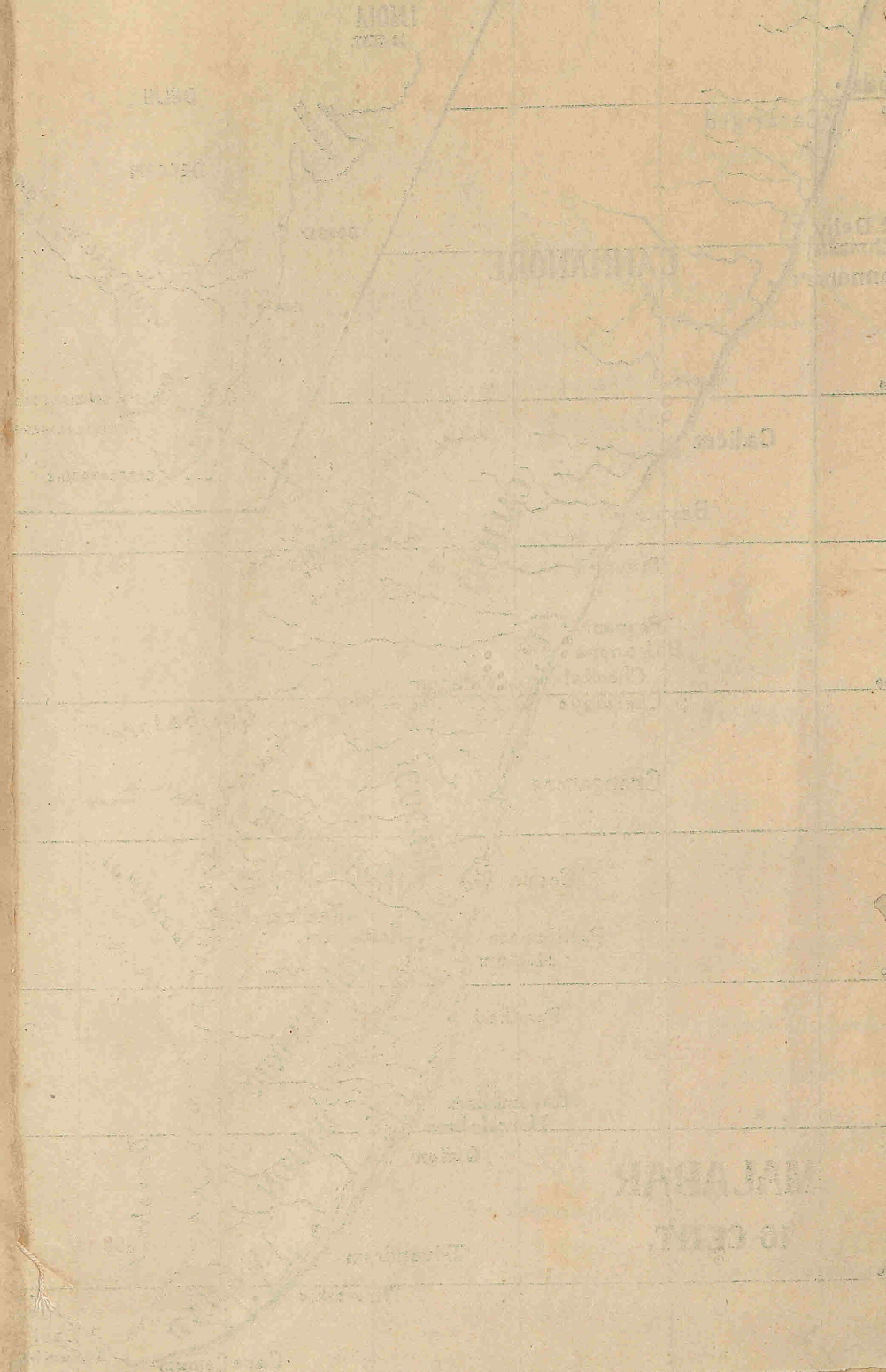
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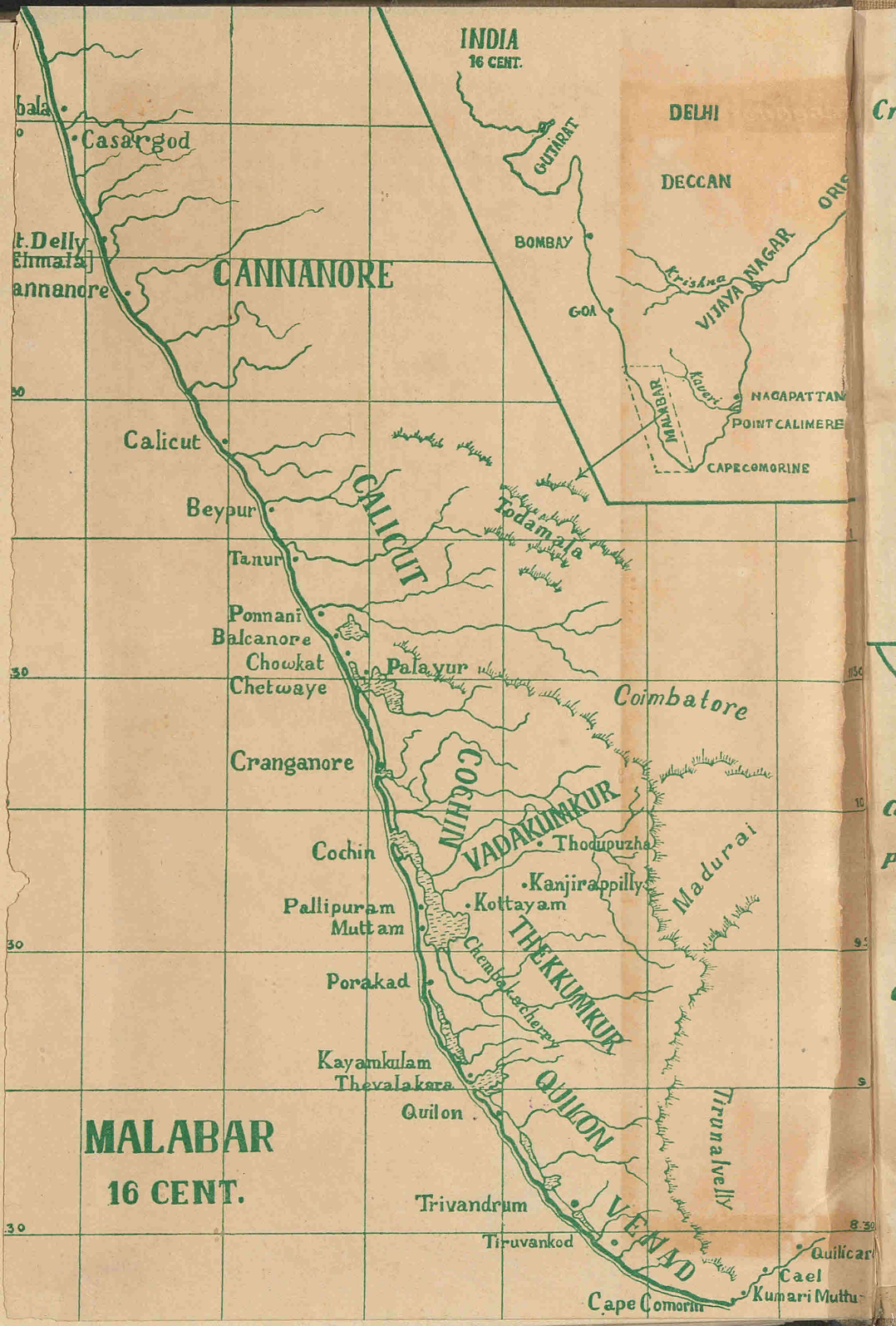
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