

THE HISTORY OF KERALA AND SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH

Regina Valiyaveetil “Origin and development of syro-malabar church in Kerala ” , Department of History , University of Calicut, 2004

CHAPTER III

**THE HISTORY OF KERALA AND
SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Christianity in India had its beginning in Kerala, a small state in the south west corner of India and Kerala can be rightly regarded as 'the Vatican of Christianity in India' for several reasons. First of all it was in Kerala that St. Thomas, one of twelve apostles of Jesus Christ reached and started preaching the Gospel¹. Secondly it was in Kerala that the Portuguese missionaries, who shaped the history of Christianity in India in the later period landed for the first time and started their missionary activities. Thirdly almost all the important events in the history of Christianity in India like the Synod of Diamper 1599 at Udayamperur, Coonan cross Oath 1652 at Mattanchery, major splits of 1874 in Trichur etc. all had taken place.² Finally nearly half of the total Christian population of India and nearly half of the Catholic population of India who constitute 20.56% and 36.48% respectively of the total population of India live in Kerala. Christians are the third largest religious group (20.56%) in Kerala after Hindus (58.15%) and Muslims (21.25%)³.

The History of Kerala

Kerala is a small state in the south west corner of India. Kerala, during the first five centuries of the Christian era was part of Tamilakam. Tamilakam comprised an extensive area of South India. The land was divided into five division on the basis of topography viz. Venad, Kuttanad, Kudanad, Puzhinad and Karkanad. The Cheras, the Pandayas and Cholas were the principal powers

¹ We have discussed the traditions in Ch-II

² For a detailed description of Synod of Dramper, Coonan Cross Oath and major splits see page 52-54 of the this chapter

³ Statitcal profile of the Christian population in India is given in page 63of this study.

who ruled these kingdoms. The exact boundaries of their territories are not known. The Cheras established themselves as an important power in Kerala during this period. The Chera Kingdom corresponded to present Kerala excluding the extreme south⁴.

Even from time immemorial, Kerala, the land of spices, had contacts with the countries of the outside world. The Arabs and the Phoenicians were the early pioneers of the spice trade. Pliny and Ptolemy, the classical writers gave detailed accounts of the ports through which Kerala kept up her commercial and cultural contacts. The most important of these ports were Muziris, Tyndis, Barace and Nelcynda. Among these Muziris, modern Cranganore in Kerala had undoubtedly the place of pride.⁵ It was 'the gateway' of ancient India. It was with the epoch making discovery of the monsoon winds by Hippallus that Muziris acquired importance as a trading centre. In 45 A.D the discovery by Hippalus⁶ of the existing monsoon winds regularly blowing across the Indian ocean gave an impetus to trade between Kerala and the west for voyage along the coast line and there after gave place to oceanic voyage direct to muziris after a trip of 40 days from Ocelis near Aden. Muziris was the capital of Chera empire. It served as an emporium of trade for the Phoenicians, Syrians, Persians, Arabs, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans. According to living traditions St. Thomas, the founder of Christianity in India, landed in Muziris in the year 52 A.D⁷

The history of Kerala in the 6th 7th and 8th centuries is lost in obscurity. The only information we have of this period is from the records of the South Indian powers like the Chalukyas, the Pallavas, the Pandayas and the Rashtrakutas in which they claim to have over- run Kerala⁸. By about 800 A.D

⁴ Elamkulam P.N. Kunjanpillai, *op.cit.*, p.137

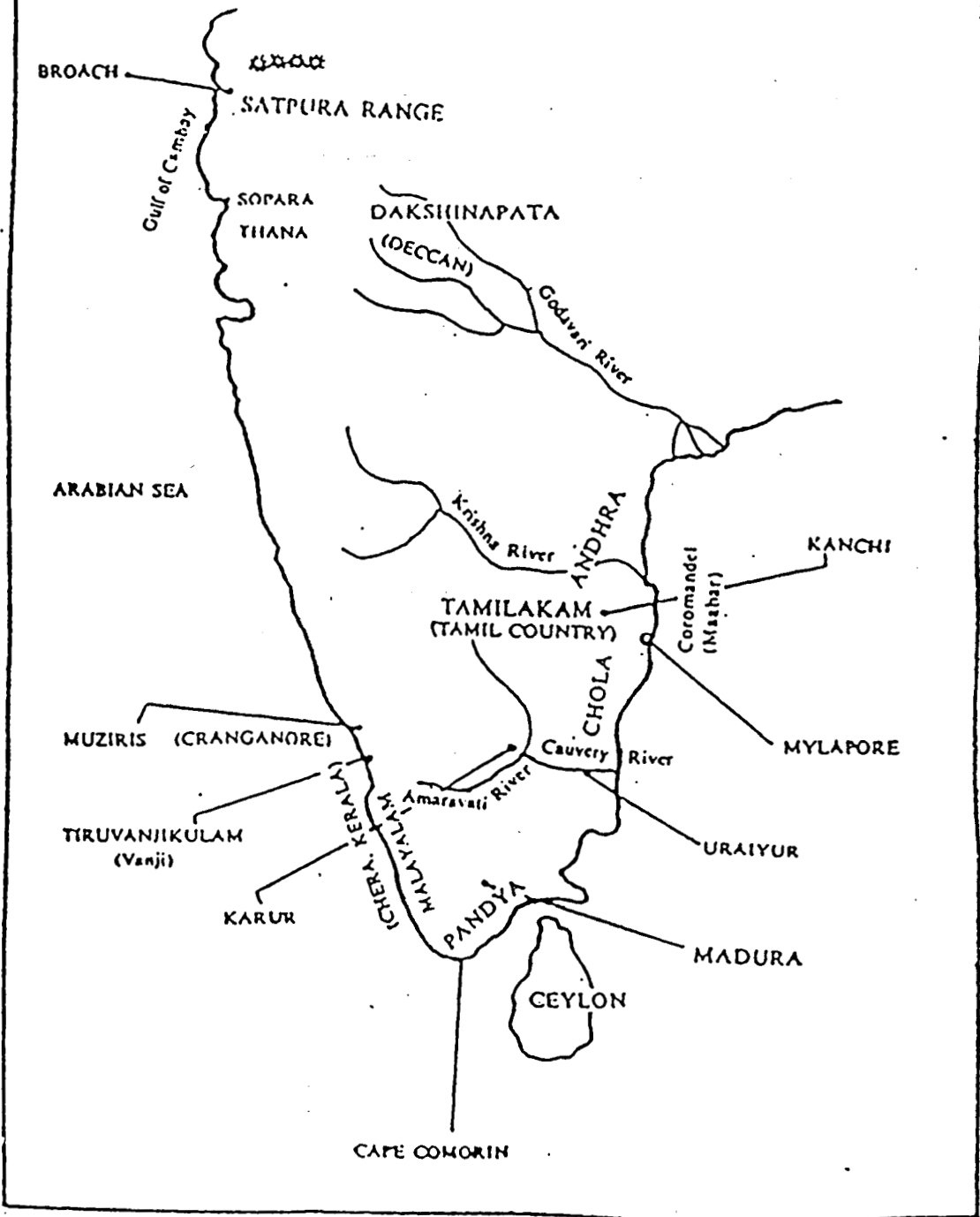
⁵ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, Madras, 1952, p.76.

⁶ G.P. Hourani. *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁷ E. Thurson, *op.cit.*, p.408.

⁸ Elamkulam. P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.130.

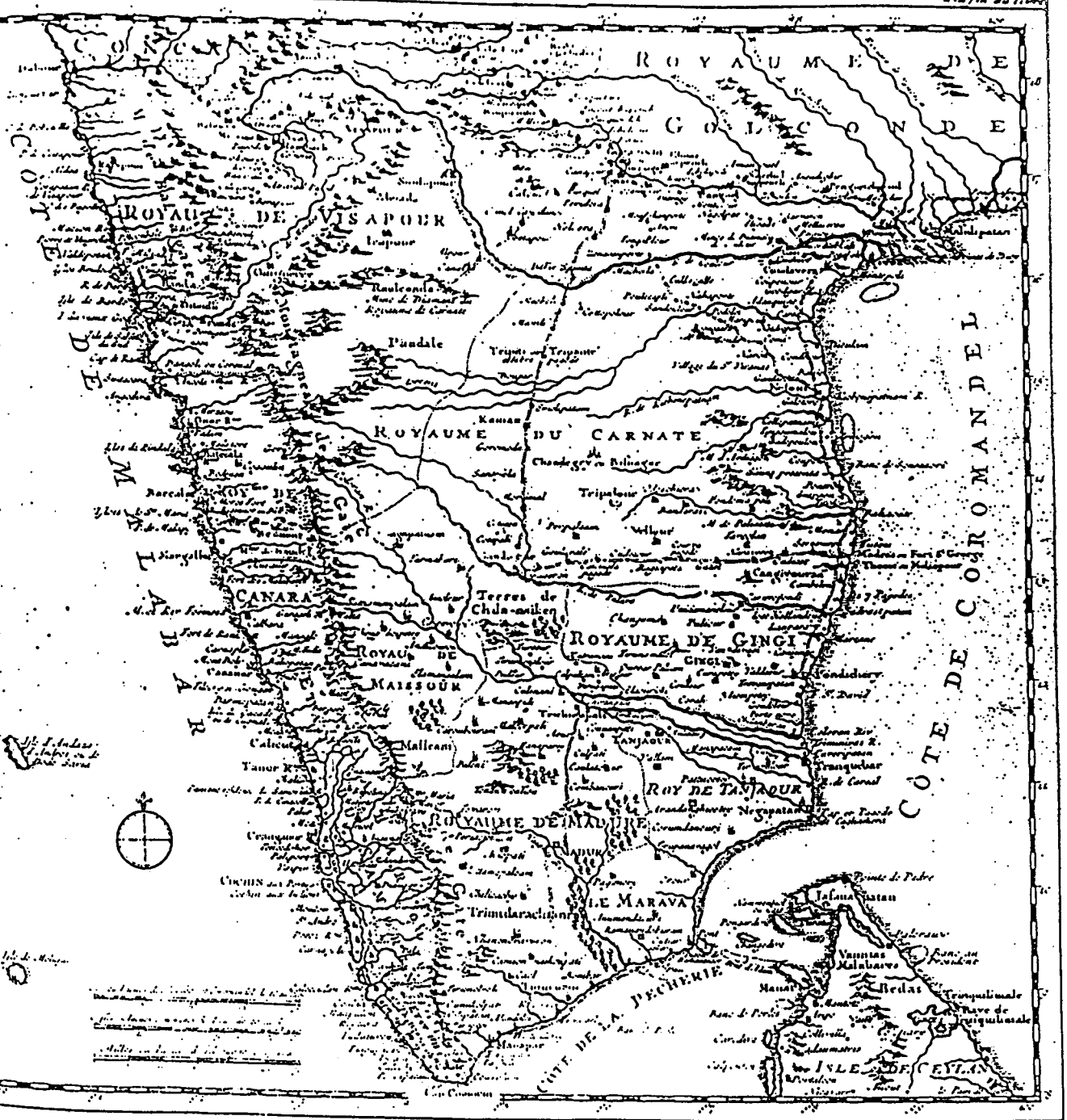
WEST AND SOUTH INDIA IN THE EARLY CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA



10.3

COTES DE MALABAR ET DE COROMANDEL

à la fin du livre



Among the better known contributions of the Dutch to the study of India and Indian life are the botanical work *Hortus Malabaricus* (1678) by Johannes Caesarius, *The Superstitions of Heathens in East India* by Philippus Baldaeus, and the *Gentilismus Reseratus* by Abraham Rogerius. Not well known are their historical records and maps. Some of the earliest and best maps of South India especially after the renaissance of cartography in the early 16th century were produced by the Dutch, as is evidenced by the above map from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the Hague

the Chera power was revived in Kerala under Kulesekhara Varman. An illustrious line of kings known as Kulesekharas ruled over Kerala from 800 to 1102 A.D. Their rule constitute a golden age in Kerala history. Under their benevolent rule Kerala enjoyed the benefits of settled administration and all round progress. The Kulesekhara empire comprised practically the whole of modern Kerala, Cuddalore and some other portions of the Nilgiri district and parts of the Salem - Coimbatore districts. It was divided for administrative purposes into a number of nadus or provinces. Mahodayapuram, was the capital of the Kulesekharas. The period was one of peace and tranquility with no major social upheavels or foreign invasions. However, by 999 A. D the Cholas had started on their career of aggression against Kerala and the whole of the 11th century witnessed the great conflict between Cholas and Cheras. During the period of the Chola – Chera war compulsory military training was introduced in Kerala. The war led to far reaching economic and social changes. The way of life which emerged in Kerala at the end of the war was radically different from what it was before. Thus the 11th century A.D saw the break up of political unity of Kerala. In the proceeding two centuries Kerala was a homogeneous political unit under the centralised administration of the Kulasekharas. The viceroys or Naduvazhis of the different Nadus carried on the administration under the effective control exercised by the central government. The conditions created by the war in the 12th Century A.D. weakened the authority of the centre which encouraged the Naduvazhis to assert their independence. Thus the later Kulesekhara age therefore saw the rise of several petty principalities. A number of independent swarupams (states) rose in different parts of the country. Of these in addition to Venad in South Kerala, the most important were the Kingdoms of Kolathunad, Cochin and Calicut⁹.

⁹ P. Shungoony Menon, *History of Travancore*. New Delhi, (reprint) 1985. p.91.

Cranganore came under the control of Cochin state (perumpadappu Swarupam). The history of Cochin during the pre-Portugeese period is lost in obscurity. The inscriptions and literary works give us the names of some of the rulers of the period. Cochin came into political prominence only in the beginning of the 16th century. But it had its origin as an independent principality immediately after the fall of the Kulesekhara empire. The Cochin state had its seat at Chitrakutam in the Perumpadappu village in Vanneri till the end of the 13th C.A.D. Due to the aggressive advance of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Perumpadappu Chief shifted his capital to Cochin which was outside the immediate orbit of the Zamorin's conquests. Moreover, as a result of the heavy floods in the periyar river in 1341 A.D Cranganore had lost its commercial importance and the Cochin port had risen into prominence as a rival to it¹⁰.

In the 15th century began a prolonged conflict between the Zamorin of Calicut and Raja of Cochin for political supremacy of Central Kerala. The internal dissension in the Cochin royal family helped the Zamorin in his aggressive designs. The Zamorin succeeded in bringing a large part of the neighbouring principalities under his suzerainty. The Cranganore area was included in the conquered territory of the zamorin of Calicut.¹¹ Later this area was occupied by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the days of their predominance.

The Portuguese navigator, Vasco de Gama landed at Calicut in May 1498. It was a period of bitter rivalry between the Zamorin of Calicut on the one side and the Raja of Cochin, the Kolathiri and other minor powers, on the other, The Cochin Raja saw in the arrival of the Portuguese on the Kerala coast, a golden opportunity to get foreign assistance against his traditional enemy. The

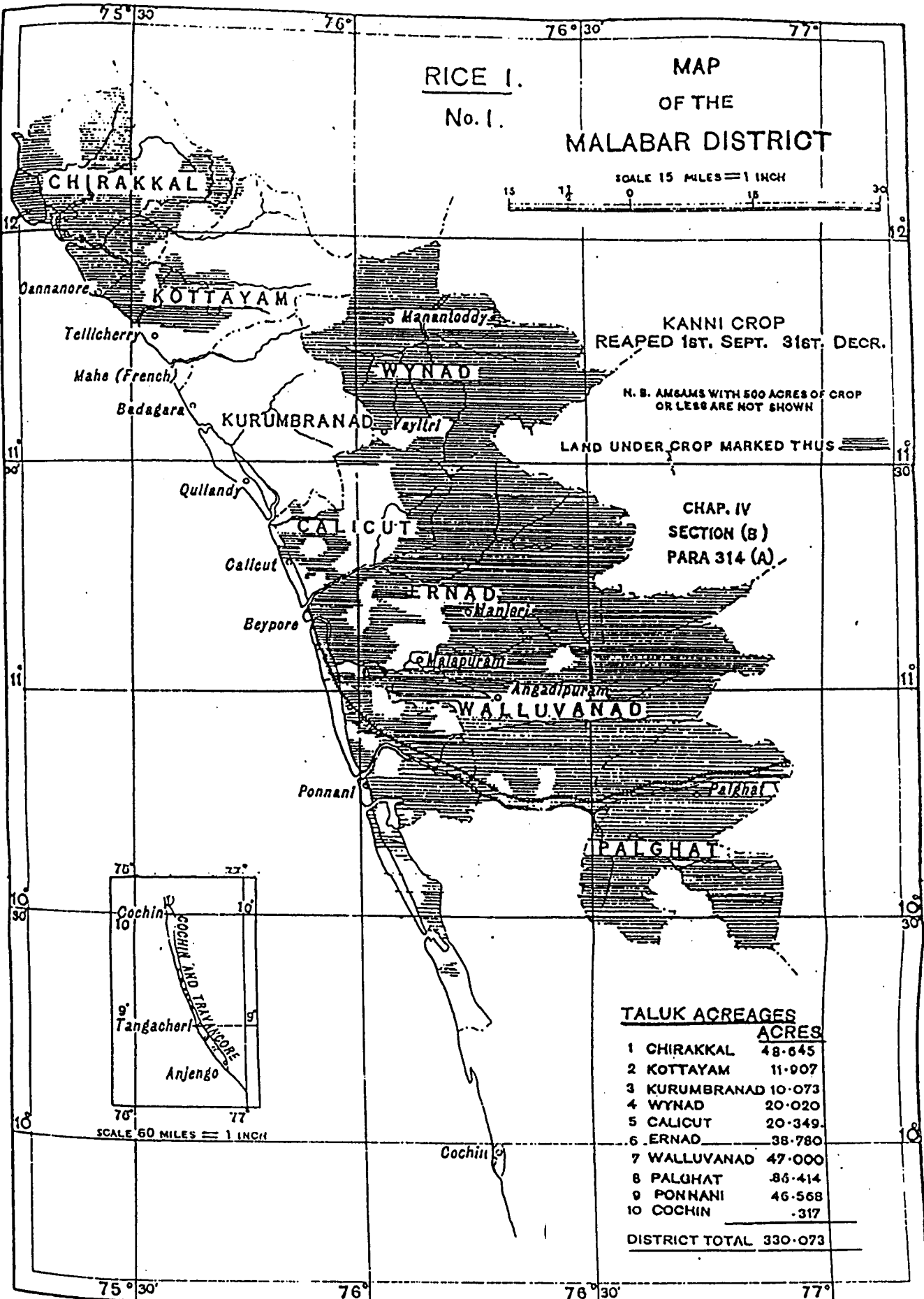
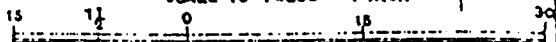
¹⁰ Appan Thampuran, *Cochirajacharithangal*, (Mal.), Trichur. 1927, p.41.

¹¹ Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Vol. I, Trivandrum, 1986, p.26.

RICE I.
No. 1.

MAP
OF THE
MALABAR DISTRICT

SCALE 15 MILES = 1 INCH

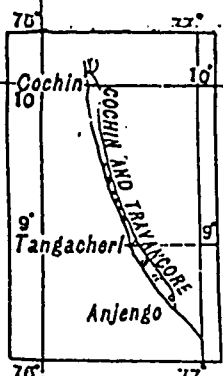


KANNI CROP
REAPED 1ST. SEPT. 31ST. DECR.

N. B. AMBAMS WITH 500 ACRES OF CROP
OR LESS ARE NOT SHOWN

LAND UNDER CROP MARKED THUS

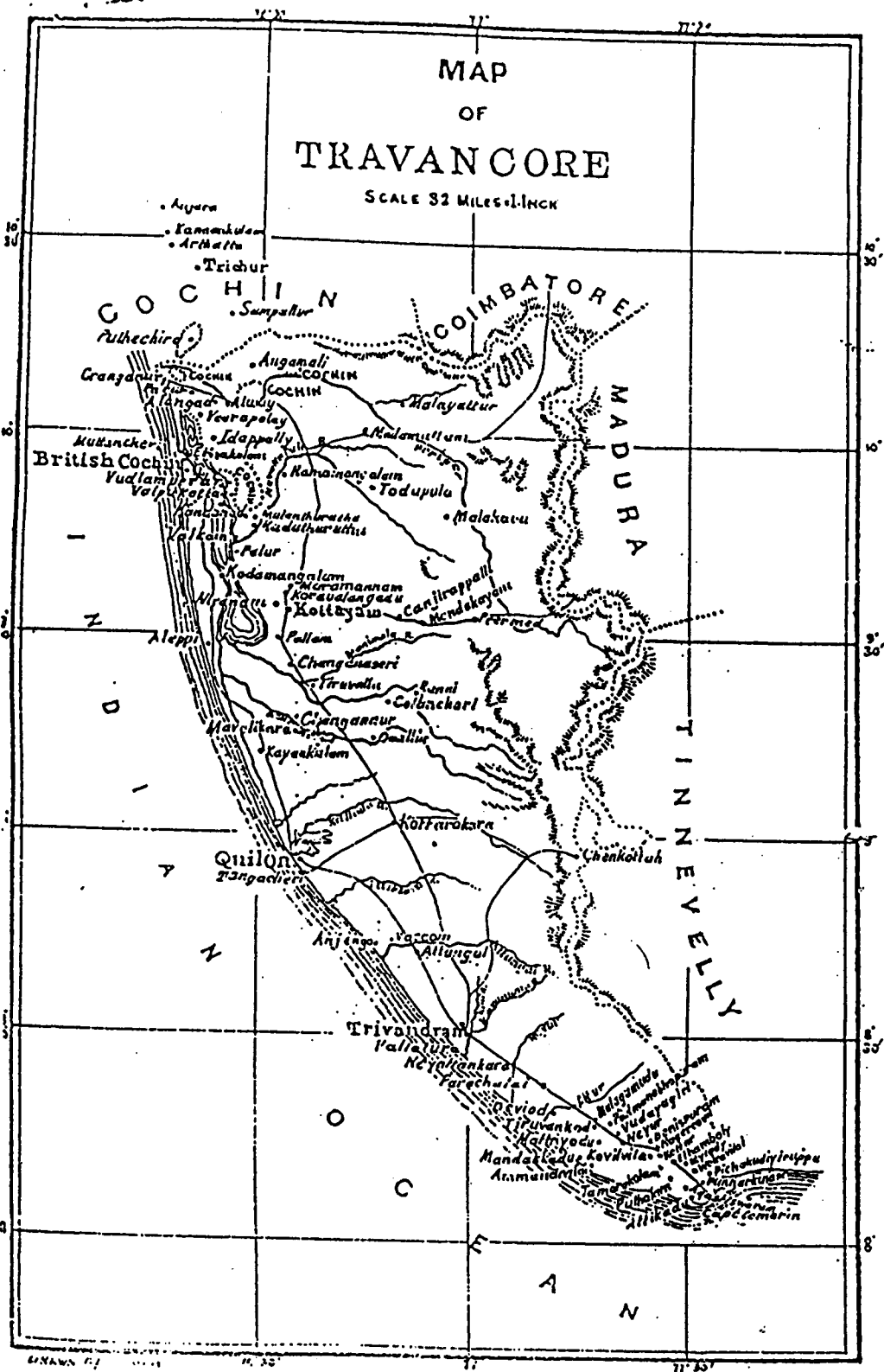
CHAP. IV
SECTION (B)
PARA 314 (A)



SCALE 50 MILES = 1 INCH

TALUK ACREAGES

	ACRES
1 CHIRAKKAL	48-645
2 KOTTAYAM	11-907
3 KURUMBRANAD	10-073
4 WYNAD	20-020
5 CALICUT	20-349
6 ERNAD	38-780
7 WALLUVANAD	47-000
8 PALGHAT	86-414
9 PONNANI	46-568
10 COCHIN	-317
DISTRICT TOTAL	330-073

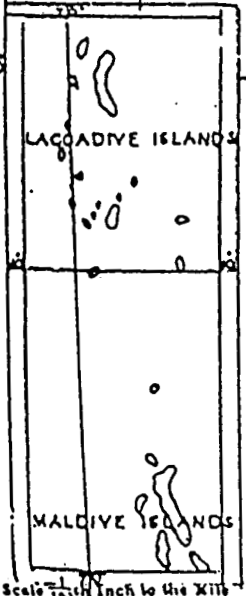
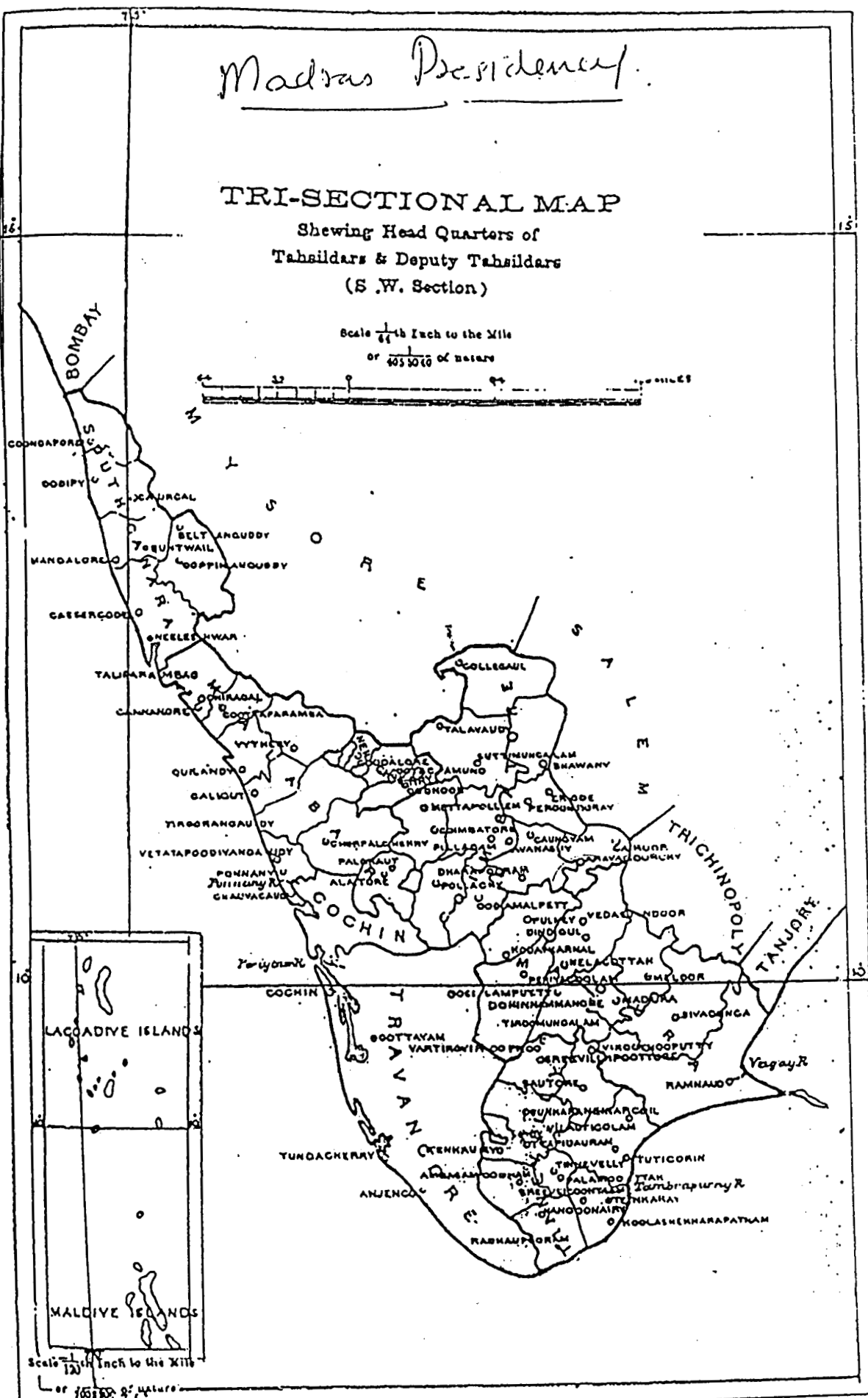
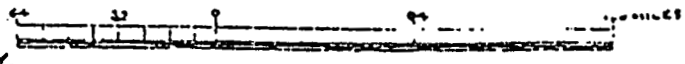


13

Madras Presidency.

TRI-SECTIONAL MAP Shewing Head Quarters of Tahsildars & Deputy Tahsildars (S.W. Section)

Scale $\frac{1}{64}$ Inch to the Mile
or $\frac{1}{4053016}$ of Nature



Scale $\frac{1}{128}$ Inch to the Mile
or $\frac{1}{8106032}$ of Nature

cold reception meted out to the Portuguese at Calicut helped to bring the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese closer together. The Portuguese were given all facilities for trade at Cochin. The Kolathiri too rendered much help to the Portuguese. These helped the Portuguese to establish their commercial supremacy on the Kerala coast for more than a century and a half. It was in 1504 that the Portuguese captured the Trichur area including Cranganore town from the Zamorin and fortified it¹².

In the meantime the Dutch had appeared on the scene as a serious rival. With the purpose of expelling the Portuguese from the Indian soil the Zamorin of Calicut entered into an alliance with the Dutch. By 1675 the Dutch conquered many of the Portuguese strongholds in Kerala like Quilon, Cranganore, Purakkad, Cochin and Cannanore¹³.

The storm of Mysore invasion under Hyder Ali produced complications for the Dutch. In 1766 Hyder Ali captured Calicut. In 1776 Sirdar Khan, the Mysore General entered Cochin territory via Chowghat and occupied Trichur, Tippu Sultan, the son and successor of Hyder Ali entered into an allegiance with Rama Varma, the Raja of Cochin and brought large area of Cochin territory under his control. But immediately after the exit of Tippu, in 1791, a treaty was concluded by Rama Varma with the English East India Company by which the Raja agreed to throw off his allegiance to Tippu and became tributary to the company for his territories then in the possession of Tippu and to pay an annual subsidy of one lakh of rupees. On their part the company agreed to protect him from his enemies and to assist him in recovering the territories conquered by Tippu¹⁴.

¹² C. Achutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 82.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁴ T.M. Satchit, ed., *The Madras states and Mysore Directory*, Cochin, 1938, p. 573.

Rama Varma, who ascended the throne as the Raja of Cochin, in 1790, is known in history as Sakthan Tampuran (the strong Prince). His region up to 1805 was an epoch of economic and social progress. He is the architect of Trichur town. He took interest in the execution of many public utility works. Markets were opened in all major centres. Justice was administered without fear or favour. He suppressed the power of the feudal nobility. He gave the Syrian Christians land and settled them in the heart of the important towns like Trichur, Chalakudy, Kunnankulam, Irinjalakuda, Tripunnithara etc. with a view to promote industry and commerce¹⁵.

It was during Sakthan Tampuran's time that the two ministers of Travancore and Cochin planned a secret revolt to drive the English out of Cochin and Travancore, since the English had interfered in the internal affairs of Cochin and Travancore and created difficulties for its administration. The plot failed, Paliath Achan and Velu Tampi, the ministers of Cochin and Travancore were defeated. It was this unhappy event that led to the signing of the treaty of 1809 with the English by which the English East India company tightened their grip over the rulers of Cochin and Travancore¹⁶.

The administration of Travancore and Cochin then onwards passed under the indirect control of the British. According to the new terms of the treaty, the administration of Travancore and Cochin is conducted in the name and under the control of his highness the Maharaja. The Diwan is His Highness Chief Minister and the Chief executive officer of the state, with whom the agent to the British Governor General and heads of Departments corresponded in all official matters. From the time of Col. Munro's appointment as Diwan of Cochin state in 1812 till the abolition of the office of Diwan in 1947 Cochin was served by a long line of able Diwans. During this period present Trichur area was part of Cochin state.

¹⁵ C. Achutha Menon, *op. cit.*, p.3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.315

COCHIN STATE

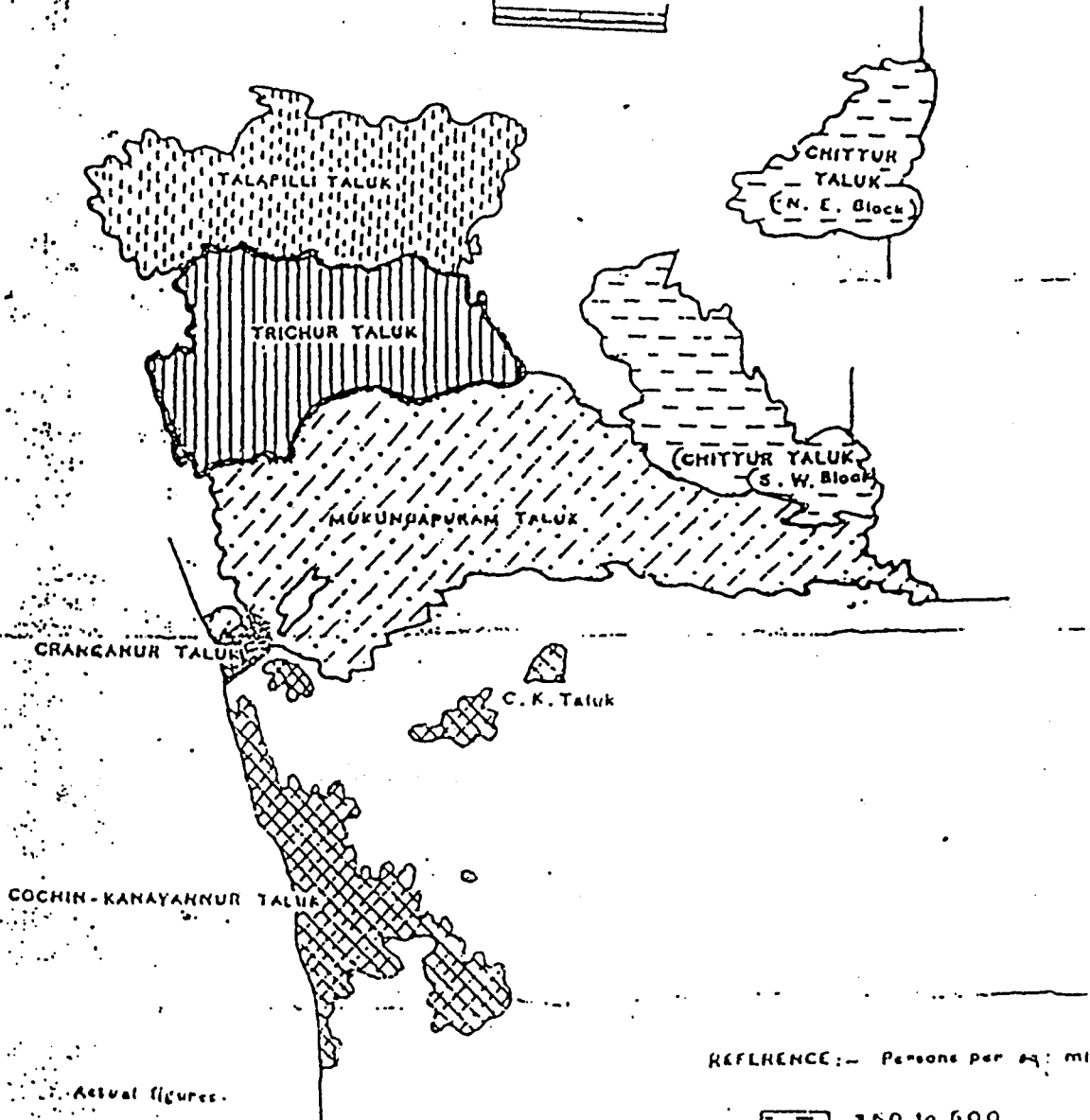
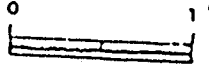
1938

showing

Density of the Population

Per Square Mile by Taluks

Scale 1" = 12 Miles



REFERENCE:— Persons per sq. mile

Actual figures.

Taluk	Persons per sq. mile
Cochin-Kanayannur Taluk	2210
Cranganur Taluk	2420
Mukundapuram Taluk	517
Trichur Taluk	975
Talapilli Taluk	701
Chittur Taluk	365

	360 to 600
	600 to 650
	650 to 800
	800 to 1000
	2000 to 2250
	2250 to 2500

For administrative purpose the Cochin state was divided into six Taluks, viz., Cochin – Kanayannur, Mukundapuram, Trichur, Talapilli, Chittur and Crangannore¹⁷.

Cochin state was integrated with Travancore on July 1, 1949, to form, the new state of Travancore – Cochin under the states Re-organization Act. The four southern taluk of Tevala, Agastivaram, Kalkulam and Vilvavancode and a part of Shencottah Taluk were separated from Travancore – Cochin and included in Madras State. The district of Malabar and Kasargod Taluk of South Canara districts were added to the remaining portions of Travancore – Cochin to constitutes the new state of Kerala. The state of Kerala formally came into existence on Nov.1 1956¹⁸. Though Kerala is a small state with an area 38,863, 59 km which represent only 1.18% of the total area of India, 3.43% of the total population of India is in Kerala. Among these 58.15% are Hindus, 21.25% Muslims and 20.56% Christians¹⁹. Kerala which now divided into 14 districts is noted for its high percentage of literacy i.e. 90.6% and comparatively high per capita income, religious toleration etc.

The History of Syro-Malabar Church

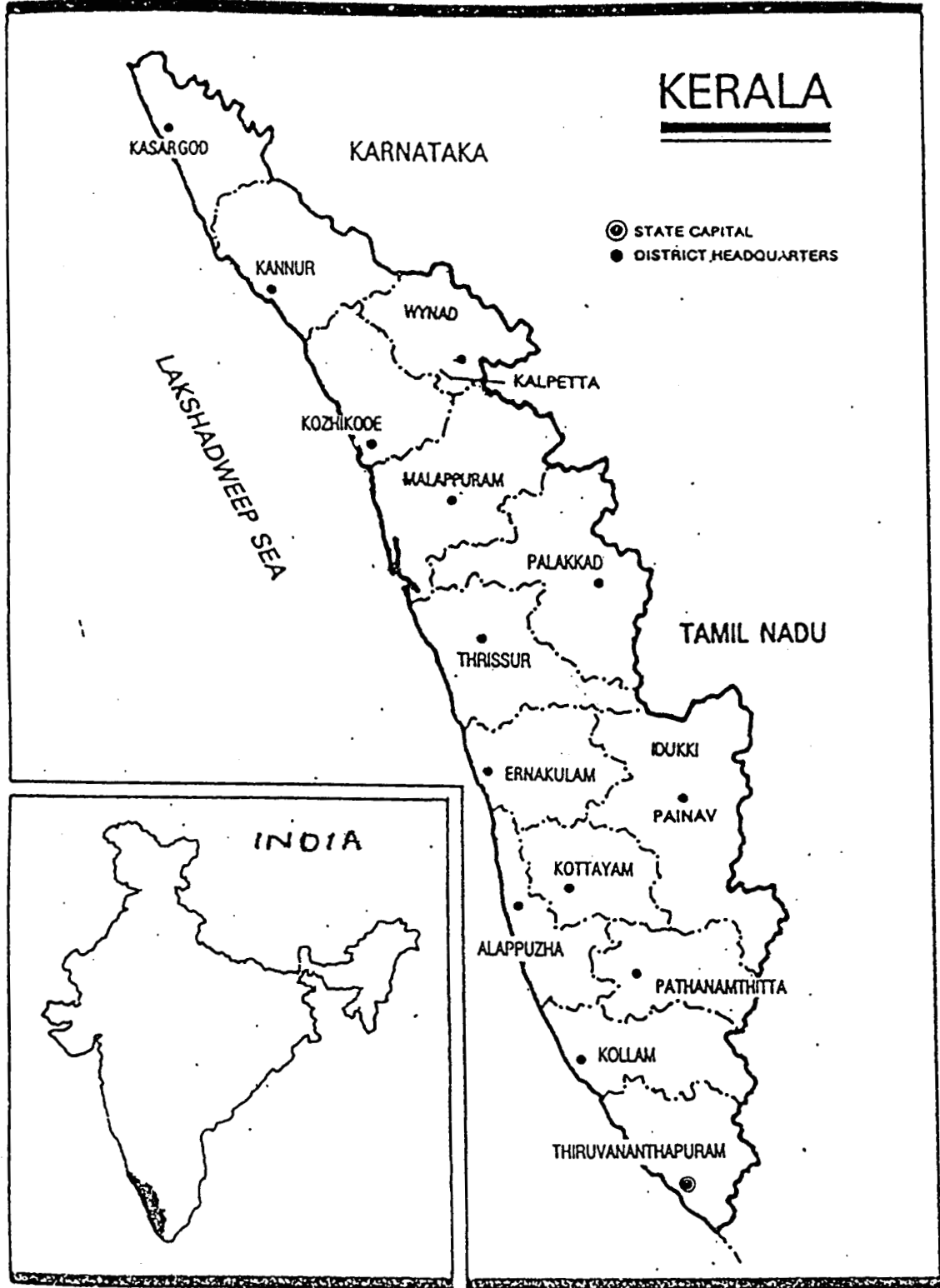
Christianity in India traces its origin back to St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ and so they are known as St. Thomas Christians . According to the strong and living traditions of St. Thomas Christians. St. Thomas came to India by sea and landed at Muziris or Cranganore in Kerala in 52 A.D²⁰. Hence Kerala is the cradle of Indian Christianity and St. Thomas is claimed to be the founder of Christianity in India. St. Thomas converted many high caste Hindu in Kerala to Christianity and founded seven Christian

¹⁷ T.M.Satchit, *op.cit.*, p.573.

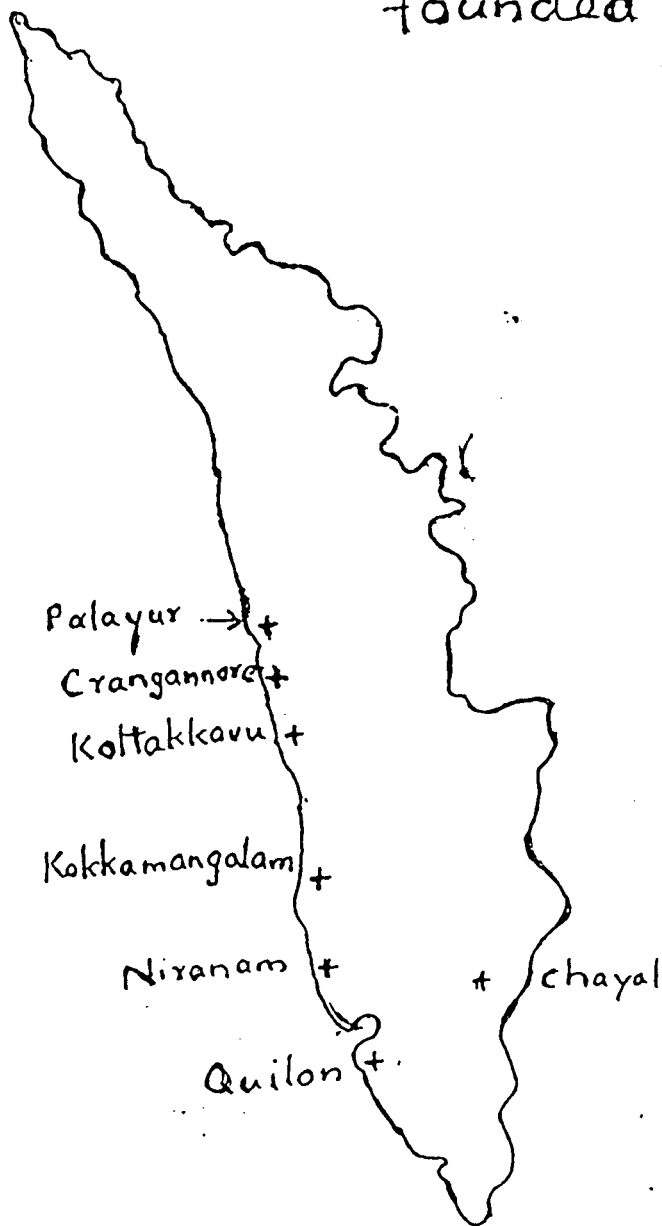
¹⁸ A recent map of Kerala is given in the next page.

¹⁹ Census 1991.

²⁰ A.F.Klign, *The Acts of Thomas*, Leiden, 1962, p.4ff.



Places in Kerala where St. Thomas
founded churches.



communities (churches) at Palayoor, Cranganore, Parur, Kokamangalam, Quilon, Niranam, and Chayal.²¹ St. Thomas visited the Coromandel Coast, made conversions, crossed over to China and preached the gospel, returned to India and organised the Christians of Malabar under some guides (Priests) from among the leading families he had converted and erected few places of worship. Then he moved to the coromandel and suffered martyrdom on or near the little mount²², Madras. His body was brought to the town Maylapore and was buried in a holy shrine he had built.

St. Thomas Christians in the early period

The scarcity of the documentary evidences of the early centuries is a grave problem to the students of history both secular and religious. Hence it is difficult to get an adequate picture of St. Thomas Christians in this period. But we do possess certain evidences which serve as mile stones along the lonely route of the past history of this period.

St. Thomas Christians and the Chera Kings

The Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were the rulers of south India in the early centuries of Christian era. The communities founded by St. Thomas flourished under the Chera Kings, the then rulers of Chera kingdom who were known for their religious toleration. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were at constant war in South India. All accounts show that the Chera king had a powerful ally in the Christian merchants of Muziris. They were in a position to advance the Chera king large sums of money and supply him with arms in his campaigns against the Pandyas

²¹William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, new edition, Vol.1, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.199.

²² Church monument inscription – Little mount St. Thomas Church Madras.

and Cholas. This was probably the real cause of hostility of Pandyas and Cholas towards Malabar Christians who enjoyed the patronage of the Cheras.²³

Up to the fall of the Chera Kingdom the Thomas Christians of Malabar were under the Chera kings. Afterwards they were under many kings and chieftains. In this early centuries Cranganore was the centre of Christians. But the situation changed with the invasion of Arabs. The Thomas Christians and the Jews moved to other places like Quilon and Cochin.²⁴ Angamale rose up in importance during this period. According to tradition the 8 days fast observed even today was started at this time as a vow to preserve the virginity of the Thomas Christian girls and women against the attacks of Arabs.²⁵

St. Thomas Christians and the Persian church

The available sources of the early period reveal the existence of an old Christian community in Malabar known as St. Thomas Christians and they are also known as the Persian Christians or Syrian Christians; St. Thomas Christians because of the belief that St. Thomas preached the messages of Christ for the first time in Malabar and succeeded in establishing Christianity there.²⁶

St. Thomas Christians were also known as Syrian Christians because of the observance of Syrian ritual, Syriac language and also the ecclesiastical solidarity with the Syrian Church²⁷. The church in Malabar was in close alliance and ecclesiastical solidarity with the Persian or East Syrian Church. This alliance is based on several factors. As it had been the custom of the early church, the church in India also formed part of the regional grouping of the

²³ P.Thomas, *Christian and Christianity in India & Pakistan*, London, 1954, p.29.

²⁴ S.S. Koder, *Kerala and Her Jews*, Cochin, 1965, p.2.

²⁵ George Menachery ed., *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia*, Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, pp.133-134.

²⁶ K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.444

²⁷ *Ibid.*,

churches. The local churches in the East outside the Greeco Roman world developed a kind of solidarity and the Patriarchal See of Selucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of Persian empire, emerged as its centre. The Church in Persia holds on the tradition that St. Thomas on his way to India did visit Persia and founded there first Christian Community.²⁸

The church in Edessa, Persia claims the same tradition through Mar Addai, a disciple of St. Thomas. The church of Seleucia – Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian empire also defends the St. Thomas tradition on the ground that Mar Mari, a disciple of Mar Addai founded the church there.²⁹ This ecclesiastical solidarity based on the same apostolic tradition may be an expression of their Thomastic affinity. Such a common patrimony did build up a common solidarity. The close commercial relations which existed between the middle East and Malabar reinforced this solidarity. It is also believed that a colony of Syrians had settled in Malabar in the early years of the Christian era, and that the present Syrian Christians are the descendants of that colony by inter marriage with the native population.³⁰

The presence of the colony of the Jewish merchants and the early converts from among them paved the way for the use of the Syriac language for worship. From the very beginning of their church the Syriac heritage has always been a source of inspiration and prestige for the Thomas Christians. During the time of persecutions in the Persian Empire many Christians fled for safety to India and these immigrants were welcomed into this community in India. At a later period the persecutions in the middle East under the Islamic rulers was another occasion for the exodus of the Christians to India.

²⁸ Xavier Koodapuzha. *op.cit.*, p.49.

²⁹ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.37.

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

The relation between the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire was far from cordial. In such a situation the churches in the East which were outside the Roman Empire were practically forced to develop their own administrative system which resulted in the emergence of an effective ecclesiastical set up centered on Seleucia – Ctesiphon. Within this set up the church in India developed its own autonomous administrative system maintaining its hierarchical communion with the church of the East. The hierarchical organisation also followed the pattern of regional grouping of the churches. The important administrative centres with the Roman Empire emerged into great metropolitan sees. Similarly in the East Seleucia, the Capital of the Persian Empire, also gradually become the metropolitan see of the churches in the East which were outside the result of the urgency to have their own administrative autonomy without depending on the patriarchal sees within the Roman Empire.³¹

The presence of the Syrian Christians in India and the relationship with their church have paved the way for accepting the Syrian rituals and language in the very beginning itself by the St. Thomas Christians. In a society like India, where the people of other religious traditions like Hindu and Muslims were using Sanskrit and Arabic respectively for their worship, the use of Syriac in the worship of the Thomas Christians was considered quite normal

‘The Chronicle of Seert’ , an important East Syrian document of the 7th or 8th century A.D. makes reference to a bishop named David, who allegedly evangelised the Indian people between 295-300 A.D.³². In the list of the Bishops who attended the Nicean council of 325 A.D held in Seleucia is mentioned one ‘John the Persian’ who according to the history of Galasius written in the Second half of the 5th century, was bishop of the whole Persian and greater India.³³

³¹ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.37.,

³² *Ibid.*, p.50

³³ *Ibid.*, p.50.

These references indicate that some relation existed between the Christians of India and the church of Persia.

Immigration of Thomas of Cana and Syrians to Malabar

The immigration of a large number of Syrians into Malabar under the leadership of a merchant prince called Canai Thoma in 345 A. D.³⁴ is an epoch making event which places Christianity on a firm footing in India. His personality and wealthy following impressed Cheraman Perumal, the then local ruler and Thomas of Cana and Syrians received a royal welcome from the Perumal. Many a Malayalam ballad describes in glowing terms the greatness of Canai Thomas and the prosperity that descended on the Perumal's kingdom because of the alliance between the king and the merchant prince. The copper plate grant contained many privileges which tradition says, Thomas Cana got from the Perumal, has not come down to us³⁵.

The Syrians and Malabar Christians soon entered into matrimonial relations and merged into a single community. The Syrians brought a new vigour to the Malabar church. From now on the Christians in Malabar began to be known as Syrian Christians. A regular flow of clergy and bishops was kept up from Syria. They organised the Malabar church and introduced Syrian liturgy. More direct relations of Malabar were established in later centuries, the ecumenical council held in Nicea in 325 A.D at the instance of Emperor Constantine was attended among others, by Johannes who is described as the "Metropolitan of Persia and India".³⁶

³⁴ P.J.Podipara. *op.cit.*, p.63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64.

³⁶ P.Thomas, *op.cit.*, p.39.

It is believed that from the time of Thomas of Cana, Syrian priests used to come to Malabar to look after the spiritual affairs of the Christians here. The letters of the two Persian patriarchs, Mar Ishoyab III (647/8 or 650/1) and Mar Timothy I (780 – or 789 – 823) mention the juridical dependence of the Indian church on the East Syrian or Persian church. The Malabar tradition hails the activities of two saintly persons from Persia by name Sapor and Prot who are said to have come to Malabar in the eighth – ninth centuries³⁷.

In 1490 A.D the Malabar church sent a delegation of 3 members to Babylon with the purpose of getting bishops for Malabar. The Chaldean Patriarch Mar Simon IV (1437 – 1467) sent two bishops, Mar Thomas and Mar John to Malabar. Mar Thomas returned to the Patriarch with offerings and good news from Malabar. After hearing his report patriarch Elias V (1502 – 1503) consecrated three more bishops and sent them to Malabar. These three namely the Metropolitan Mar Jahabalaha, Bishop Mar Denha and Mar Jacob together with Mar Thomas and Mar John formed the hierarchy of India at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Of the five prelates, Mar Jacob governed the Thomas Christians for a long period until his death around the year 1552. Apart from the Bishop there was an Archdeacon to look after the temporal affairs of the community. There was also yogam (assembly) consisting of the heads of Christian families to assist the Archdeacon to make appropriate decisions³⁸.

The Malabar Christians enjoyed high social status. Their position was almost equivalent to that of Nairs. The cast Hindu believed that the ceremonial touch of the Christians would purify the vessels, water and other objects polluted

³⁷ Bartholomew of Jesus, T.O.C.D., *The Syrian Christians in Malabar*, Mangalore, 1917, p.37.

³⁸ Andrews Thazhath, *The Juridical Source of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Kottayam, 1987, p 71.

by the approach or touch of the low castes. The Malabar Christians distinguished themselves in such professions as agriculture, trade, and military service.³⁹

The rise of Islam and the dominance of the Indian seas by Muslims put the affairs of the Malabar Christians in a bad shape. The seaborne trade of Malabar passed from the Christians to the Muslims. There was considerable animosity between the two and the flow of bishops from Syria was obstructed by the Muslims. The political upheavals in Syria and Persia had their repercussions in Malabar too. Christian fleets disappeared from the trade routes and Muslims captured the trade of the Malabar ports. Cranganore was sacked by the Arabs and the centre of trade shifted to the newly risen port of Calicut in the north. The authority of the Perumal himself waned. Three independent kingdoms – kingdoms of Calicut, Cochin and Travancore arose in its place. Of these Calicut under its ruler Zamorin was a staunch ally of the Muslim power, its enemy Cochin, an ally of the old but broken Christian power⁴⁰.

The church in the early Portuguese period 1489-1599

In 1498, Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese Navigator, landed at Calicut. Groups of merchants, soldiers and missionaries followed him to India. The arrival of the Portuguese in India marked the beginning of a new era in the religious history of the Malabar Christians.

The Zamorin, the ally of the Arabs, viewed the Portuguese with suspicion. The Raja of Cochin was eager to court the friendship of the Portuguese and build up the trade of Cranganore lost to Calicut with the rise of the Muslims. The greatest rejoicings were, however, of the Syrian Christians impoverished by the loss of trade to the Arabs and fallen in prestige and power on that account, they entertained hopes of re-establishment of their lost glory by

³⁹ Anantha Krishna Iyar, *The Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam, 1926, p.99.

⁴⁰ P.Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.38.

the Portuguese friendship and patronage. They promptly sent ambassadors to Vasco da Gama who himself was eager to befriend his co-religionists in the strange land he had reached. The result of the first contact between the Malabar Christians and the Portuguese was one of extreme cordiality.⁴¹

In 1510 the Portuguese conquered Goa and rebuilt the city and made it the capital of the Portuguese empire in the east. It was also the headquarters of ecclesiastical authority and missionary activities. In 1534 Goa was raised to a Bishopric and in 1557 to an Archdiocese with Cochin and Malacca as suffraganes.⁴²

Franciscans were the pioneer missionaries of Portuguese India. In 1541 they founded a seminary in Cranganore. In 1542, the Jesuits and in 1548 the Dominicans, extended their missionary activities to India. The missionary work of Francis Xavier, a Jesuit priest who landed at Goa in 1542 is worth mentioning.⁴³ He was struck by the object distress of the lower classes of Hindus who were treated as subhumans by high caste Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike. So he catered to the social and spiritual needs of these miserable people first. It was during this period that a large number of low caste conversions to Christianity has taken place.

Portuguese - Latin regime : Unrest, Revolt, Schism 1599-1887

The Malabar Christians were also known as Syrian Malabar Christians because of communion with the Eastern or Oriental Churches of Persia and Syria. At the time the Portuguese came to India, the Syrian church in Malabar was under the care and control of the Christian Patriarch of Babylon. They were

⁴¹ P. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.45.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.50.

⁴³ Jesuit Archives, Rome, Goa, 47, cited in P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.120.

following the Syrian rite, their liturgical language was Syriac. They had given an Indian colour and shape to their liturgy and such other religious practices.⁴⁴

When the Portuguese who were following the Latin rite and language came and settled in India they began to insist that the religious practices of the Syrian Malabar Christians should be conformed to Latin usages in every respect. They preferred the Latin language and customs in liturgy. The Syrian Christians of Malabar who claim their origin to apostle St. Thomas insisted that the ' Law of Thomas' was different from ' the law of the Latin Church. But the Portuguese with their sense of superiority were not ready to accept a Christian way of life different from their own. They became suspicious of the orthodoxy of the Syrian Christian's faith. They considered some of the Syrian Christians Liturgical practices as heretical and superstitious. The attempts made by the Portuguese bishops to substitute the Latin rite for the ancient Syrian rite paved the way for the hostile relationship between the two groups. But what made the relations really hostile was the efforts of the Portuguese, with the help of the political powers to cut off the relation of the Syrian Christians with the patriarch of Persia and to bring them under their own jurisdiction. After the death of Mar Jacob, who was the Bishop of Malabar at the time of arrival of Portuguese, the latter made every effort to prevent new Persian bishops from reaching Kerala. Mar Abraham who managed to reach Kerala had to suffer severe opposition and threats of deportation from the Portuguese authorities. But he managed to rule the Christians till his death in 1597⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ *Catholic Directory*, p.141.

⁴⁵ P.J.Podipara, *op.cit.*, p.134.

The synod of diamper (Udayamperur) 1599

After the death of Mar Abraham in 1597, Menezes, the archbishop of Goa visited the churches of Malabar Christians. In 1599 he convoked the synod of Diamper, 130 clergy and 660 laymen met at Diamper (Udayamperur) in the territory of the king of Cochin. In this Synod the Thomas Christians were prevailed upon to condemn the patriarch as a heretic and schismatic and to swear they could not accept any bishops except the one immediately nominated by Rome. The Patriarch thus condemned was Denha Simon who was in explicit communion with Rome.

The Synod enacted fundamental changes in the rite and ecclesiastical laws of the Thomas Christians; dealt with doctrine, morals, discipline, abuses, superstitious practices and so on. It also changed several religious rituals to suit the Latin customs, introduced administrations according to Latin canon law and abolished many social and cultural practices of indigenous origin. Thus the Synod gave official stamp to the Latinization of the Syrian Malabar Christian community.

The question is whether Don Menezes, who convoked the Synod had any right to conduct that Synod which he called "a diocesan synod according to the sacred canons". The titles for conducting the Synod, according to his convocation letter, were: the two Briefs of Pope Clement VIII, his own position as primate of the East and the absence of a cathedral chapter in the vacant see of Angamale. None of these points, nor all put together, could give Dom Menezes any right to celebrate a diocesan Synod in the metropolitan epharchy of Angamale which was not even his suffragan See at the Synod, though in the acts of the Synod he says it was his suffragan See. Nor was Angamale under the

Padroado of the king of Portugal at that time Angamale was also not included in the Latin hierarchy of the time.⁴⁶

The 'padroado' jurisdiction in Kerala Aug 5, 1600

The term Padroado means the patronage exercise by the king of Portugal on the Christian church in India. Under this scheme the king of Portugal undertake to evangelise the countries conquered by them for which service the Holy see (the Pope) granted the king certain privileges. The chief among these privileges was the right of presenting suitable persons to be bishops of dioceses created in the conquered or colonised territories. Thus Latin Archbishops under the Padroado jurisdiction were appointed in Kerala. The first archbishop thus appointed was Francis Roz, S.J. (1600-1624). Installed first at Angamally, he transferred his seat later on to Cranganore. He was succeeded by Stephan Britto (1624-41) and Francis Garcia (1641- 59)⁴⁷. The Syrian Malabar Christians naturally did not like to be ruled by the Portuguese Bishops nor did they appreciate the latter's Latin customs. Moreover, under the Portuguese Bishops, the Archdeacons who had been in the past the ' defacto' rulers of the community were reduced to a mere titular position with no real powers. People resented these changes and longed for a bishop from Persia, if not from themselves. They began to send requests to the Patriarch of Babylon.⁴⁸

Coonen cross oath at Mattancheri, Cochin, 1652

In 1652, the Patriarch of Babylon, at the request of Syrians, sent Bishop Ahathalla to Malabar. But the Portuguese authorities refused to allow him to land. They deported him to Goa. A false rumour spread that, Ahathalla was drowned by the Portuguese off the coast of Cochin. Emotionally upset by the

⁴⁶ P.J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p.139.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.147.

⁴⁸ Jose Kuriedath, *Authority in the Catholic Community in Kerala*, Bangalore, 1989, p.9.

news, the Syrian Christians assembled near the open air cross at Mattanchery Church. They decided that no Syrian worth his name should owe allegiance to Goa and Portuguese.⁴⁹ Everyone was asked to swear by the cross of the Mattanchery church, made famous by this day's events, that he would not accept the authority of Goa. To make the Oath effective, it was necessary for every individual to touch the cross. The huge crowd tied long ropes to the cross in all directions and touched the rope when they took the solemn pledge. This event is known in Syrian Christian History as the Coonen (Crooked) Cross Oath or the revolt of Coonen Cross.⁵⁰

In a few days those who took the oath convened a meeting at Alangad. Twelve priests imposed their hands on Archdeacon Thomas Parambil and ordained him as their Bishop. But many realizing the wrong direction of the movement did not approve this step. This was the beginning of a great schism (separation) in the history of the Syrian Malabar Christians. The group with the Archdeacon Thomas later got affiliated to the Jacobite church of Antioch and came to be known as Jacobites.⁵¹

The others remained under the Latin rule in order to be in Catholic communion and later they were popularly known as Syro-Malabar Catholics⁵².

⁴⁹ Nagam Aiya, *op. cit.*, p.184.

⁵⁰ P.Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.104.

⁵¹ Jose Kuriendexth, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

⁵² The use of the term ' Syro-Malabar church' is seen for the first time in the writings of the missionaries in 1788. When the catholic Thomas Christians were separated from the Latins in 1887 their Church was called' Syro- Malabar Church' ' Syro' referred to the liturgical language Syriac, Malabar is a region located on the South – West Coast of India, corresponding in great part to the modern federal State of Kerala.

Italian Carmelites 1657

The Roman ecclesiastical authorities realised the damage done to the Indian Christianity by the misplaced zeal of the Portuguese missionaries. Pope Alexander VII now sent to Malabar one Father Joseph Sebastian and a few Carmelite priests to study the situation. With the help of two influential native priests, Fr. Chandy Parambil and Fr. Chandy Kadavil, Fr. Sebastian succeeded in getting back as many as 40 churches from the side of the separated group under Archdeacon Thomas. On Sebastians' return to Rome in 1648, he was consecrated Bishop and sent back as Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. By 1663, the total number of churches reunited to the Catholic faith under bishop Sebastiani was 84.

Dutch intervention, the demand for indigenous bishops

In 1663, the Dutch captured Cochin and expelled all other Europeans from the country. The Italian Carmelite priests had to leave the country. Bishop Sebastiani, before leaving Malabar, concerted Fr. Chandy Parambil and appointed him Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. On his death, the Italian Carmelites, having secured the consent of the Dutch to reside in the country, again became Vicars Apostolic of Malabar, with Verapoly as their seat. The Carmelites were under the Roman congregation for the propagation of faith commonly known as 'Propaganda Regime'. Portuguese Jesuits under the patronage of the Portuguese king (Padroado) got charge of the Archdiocese of Cranganore. Thus the Syro Malabar Catholics were divided into two separate jurisdiction till the end of the 19th century, Rome and Portugal, i.e., Propaganda Regime and Padroado Regime respectively.⁵³

⁵³ P.J. Podipara. *op.cit.*, p.155.

The attempts of the Syro-Malabar Catholics to get a bishop either from Persia or from themselves continued. In the 2nd half of the 18th C two representatives authorised by the Syro-Malabar community, Fr. Joseph Cariattil and Fr. Thomas Paremakkal. They made a long journey to Portugal and Rome to appraise the Padroado and Propaganda authorities of the grievances of the community, the cruelty, the unedifying behaviour of the missionaries, failure in the administration of justice, and the superiority complex of the missionaries were some of their grievances. Though Cariattil was made Bishop of Cranganore he could not rule his people as he on his way back, died in Goa, in 1786 under mysterious circumstances. Before his return he had appointed Paremakkal as Governor to his See and the latter ruled the Padroado See of Cranganore from 1786 to 1799. After Paremakkal's death, the administration again fell into the hands of foreigners⁵⁴.

The Roccas schism – 1861

The Syrians still continued their request to secure for themselves a bishop of their own rite. When Mar Roccas, Bishop of Perath, sent by the Chaldean Patriarch Mar Josepy Audo against the will of the Holy See, began to usurp jurisdiction in Malabar several apostolic briefs were sent from Rome condemning this.⁵⁵ By the brief 'Naper nobis of Pope Pius IX dated 26 September 1862, the Chaldean Patriarch was forbidden to send to Malabar any more bishops and thus the Chaldean jurisdiction over the Thomas Christians came to a formal end. Here in Malabar because of the confusion about the leadership only 84 churches accepted Roccas. Thus started the schism.

During this crisis Fr. Chavara Kuriakose Elias was appointed as the vicar general for Syro-Malabarians.⁵⁶ Fr. Chavara wrote many pastrols in fulfillment

⁵⁴ Jose Kuriedath. *op.cit.*, p.11.

⁵⁵ Andres Thazath, *op. cit.*, p.215.

⁵⁶ C.D. Valerian, *Chavara Kuriakose Eliasachan (Mal.) Mannanam*, 1939, pp.160-161.

of his assignment.⁵⁷ He with great ability strenuously fought against Roccas. The Pope ordered the patriarch to recall Roccas under pain of excommunication in 1862.⁵⁸ The majority of the Thomas Christians who followed Roccas were under the impression that Roccas had his mission from Rome and all of them returned to the obedience of the former church.

The Mellus Schism, 1874-1882

This Schism was particularly due to the efforts of the Syrian Catholics under the Padroado administration. The people of Trichur took the lead in this affair. In 1874, the Syro-Chaldean Patriarch sent, as before another Bishop Mar Mellus. The people thought he had been duly sent with the permission of the Holy See Rome and he was given a warm reception at Trichur. The Trichur church of “our lady of Dolours” was his centre of work. He persuaded large number of people into his fold. However, Mellus, was excommunicated by Archbishop Leonard, by the order of the Pope. The people were disillusionized and many of them abandoned his cause. But a few families continued in the schism, Mellus was recalled and he left Malabar on 5th March 1882. While the schemas of Roccas dwindled with his departure from Malabar in 1862. The schism of Mellus left behind as small community in Trichur and its vicinity (the Surais) which eventually submitted to the Nestorain Patriarch of Chaldean and thus estranged itself from Roman communion⁵⁹.

Separate Apostolic Vicariates for SMC in 1887

Having found that contacts with the Persian church would only bring further schism in the church the Syro-Malabar Catholics began to petition the Roman authorities directly. After persistent requests for a long time, the Holy

⁵⁷ C.D. Valerian, *op. cit.*, p.159.

⁵⁸ Andrews Thazath, *op. cit.*, p.215.

⁵⁹ See The Surai church inscriptions preserved at Trichur Surai Church.

see designed to heed their legitimate prayer. The first positive step Rome adopted towards the independence of the Catholic Syrians was to appoint in 1877 Fr. Marcellinus Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic with special charge of the Syrians. Other measures followed in quick decision. In 1886 pope Leo XIII established the hierarchy of the Latin Rite. Veropoly was made an archdiocese and the archdiocese of Cranganore was suppressed. In 1887 the Syrians were completely separated from the jurisdiction of Veropoly, Latin rite - Separate apostolic Vicariates were constituted for the Syro-Malabar Catholics - Trichur and Kottayam with Adolf Medlycott (An English Prelate) for Trichur and Bishop Charles Lavingane S.J. (A French Prelate) for Kottayam as their rulers⁶⁰.

Even now, the community did not cease petitioning Rome to appoint a bishop from among themselves. So finally in 1896, the Holy See erected three Vicariates Apostolic under the Propaganda, viz. Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry, with indigenous bishops, Mar John Menachery, Mar Aloysius Pazheparambil and Mar Mathew Makil respectively. In 1911, a new Vicariate Apostolic was erected at Kottayam exclusively for the Southists. (The earlier Vicariate Apostolic of Kottayam that had been established in 1887 had been suppressed in 1896). Mar Mathew Makil was transferred to Kottayam and Mar Thomas Kurialacherry was appointed at Changanachery. Under indigenous bishops, the Syro-Malabar Catholics began to make fast progress in all fields.

The erection of a Hierarchy for SMC in 1923

The progress made by the Syrian Catholic community under indigenous bishops and their sincere devotion to the Holy See were highly appreciated by Rome and as a result on 21st Dec. 1923, the Syro-Malabar hierarchy was established by Pope Pius XI.⁶¹ The name of the church by usage in the official

⁶⁰ The Papal Bull. No.1. of Pope Leo XIII, 1887, Archepharchial Archives, Trichur,

⁶¹ See Bull, No.11, in the same source.

document was changed to Syro-Malabar church. Ernakulam was raised to Metropolitan status and the eparchies of Trichur, Changanacherry and Kottayam were made its suffragans. In 1956 Changanassery also was raised to the status of Metropolitanate. By that time the number of the eparchies for St.Thomas had increased to seven⁶².

SMC, after the historic Vatican council of 1962

The second Vatican council was held in Rome between 1962-65⁶³ promulgated 16 documents that were expected to reform and update all area of the life of the Catholics. Various changes took place in the structure and leadership pattern of SMC after the council. Two documents, 'Constitution of the church' and 'Constitution on the church in the modern world' were concerned with structure and functioning of the church. With regard to the structure of the Catholic church the most important change during our time is the shift from the papal, monarchic and pyramidal model to the collegial and communion model. But the changes reached India only after 3 decades.

SMC, A major Archiepiscopal Church, 1992

From 1956 onwards the SMC found itself in an anomalous situation of having two Metropolitans – Ernakulam and Changanassery – and without a common head. Besides, the 9 dioceses outside these provinces, which were erected from the year 1962 onwards were not suffragans of any of these two. As the CCEO (Code of Cannons of the Eastern Church) was promulgated in 1990 it became imperative to rectify this anomaly. Thus on 16 Dec. 1992⁶⁴. Pope John Paul II raised the SMC to the status of a major Archiepiscopal church with

⁶² *The Catholic Directory*, 2000, p.3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁴ Papal Bull, No.115, 1992, preserved in Major Archdiocesan Archives, Ernakulam.

the title of Ernakulam – Angamaly. The Metropolitan of Ernakulam was made its major Archbishop.

Mar Antony Padiyara was made the first major Archbishop and Archbishop Abraham Kattumana was appointed as Pontifical Delegate to complete the process with the power of major Archbishop exercised by him temporarily.

In 1997 Pope John Paul appointed Fr. Varkey Vithayathil, as the apostolic Administrator of the SMC with the power of the major Archbishop. He was made major Archbishop in 1999. The Major Archbishop is the head and Father of the church. He has all the power of the Patriarch.⁶⁵ The major Arch Bishop is the head of an individual church. He, with the Synod of Bishops of the church constitute the highest authority under the Holy See. The church will have a proper territory where the major Arch Bishop can exercise his authority. Thus SMC attained full autonomy since a patriachate is established with jurisdiction over the whole of India and is allowed to develop its own mode of worship and other socio-religious practices suited to the genius of Indian culture.

Present Syro-Malabar Church

As have seen above, the Syro- Malabar church has now 15 administrative units in Kerala and 11 outside Kerala. In Kerala the 15 dioceses are grouped into two provinces Ernakulam and Chenganacherry.⁶⁶ Under the archdiocese of Ernakulam are the dioceses of Idukki, Irinjalakuda, Kothamangalam, Mananthavady, Palghat, Tellicherry, Thamarassery and Trichur. The province under the Archdiocese of Changanacherry comprises the dioceses of

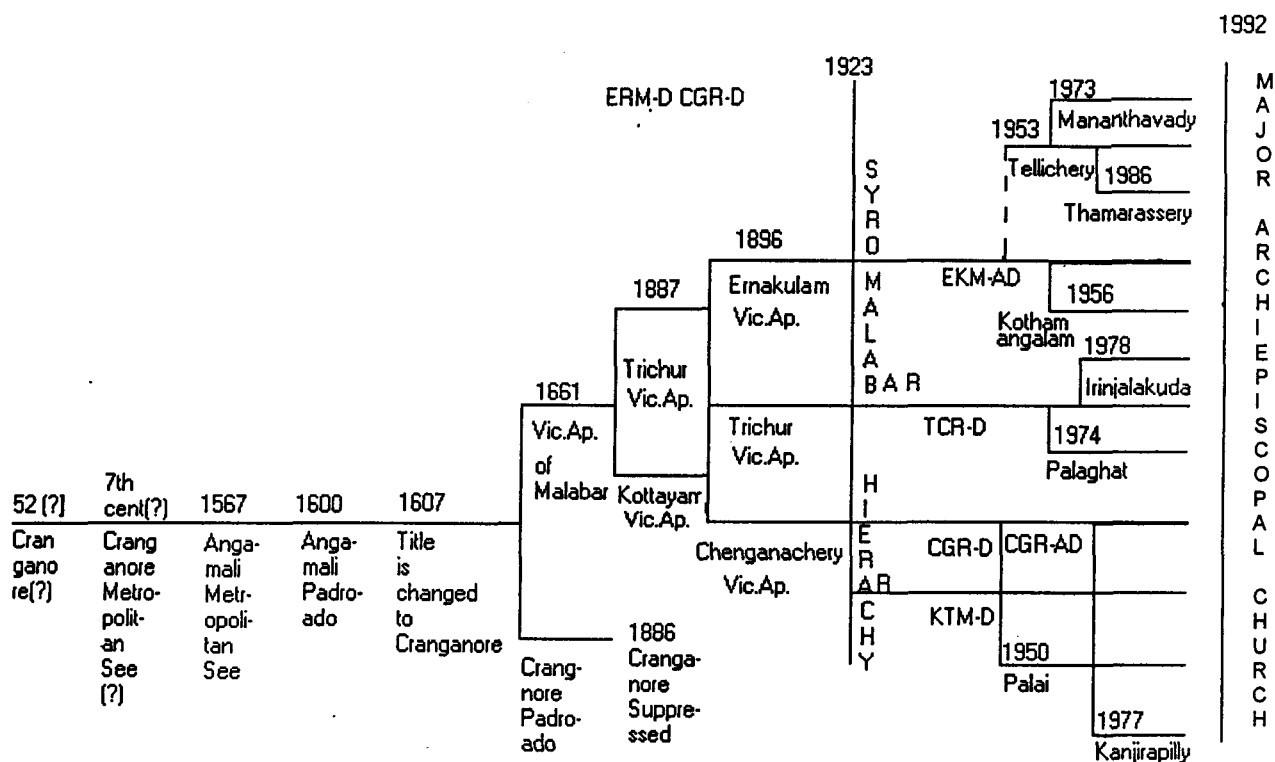
⁶⁵ The Catholic Patriarch is a bishop who enjoys power over all the bishops including the metropolitan and other Christian faithful of the Patriarchal church over which he presides. The Patriarch appoints bishops and erects new dioceses.

⁶⁶ *Archeopharchy of Trichur Directory*, 2002.

Belthangady, Kanjirapilly, Kottayam, Palai and Thalassery. These fifteen ecclesiastical units constitute the Syro-Malabar hierarchy of India. The eleven dioceses of Syro-Malabar rite outside Kerala are Adilabad, Bijnor, Chanda, Chicago, Gorakhpur, Jagadapur, Kalyan, Sagar, Satna, Rajkot and Ujjain.

A statistical profile of the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala is given in the next page.

A graphic presentation of the Syro- Malabar dioceses in Kerala according to their origin



Catholic church in Kerala

The term Catholic comes from the Greek and means universal or concerning all. Historically the term has come to denote the totality of the Christian communities which are in communion with the church of Rome. In the

English speaking world this meaning is often made clear by the expression 'Roman Catholic Church'⁶⁷.

The church founded by Christ was first taught and governed by the apostles of Christ and St. Peter was the head, the first Pope⁶⁸ and Vicar of Christ on earth. Hence the church is apostolic, doctrines being direct from Christ through apostles.⁶⁹

The three rites of Kerala Catholic church

In order to complete the picture of the catholic community in Kerala we give below a very brief accounts of the three rites. By rite it means 'The way in which liturgical worship is carried out, that is, the words and actions used in performing a religious ceremony'. Rites were historically local origin. Different rites have evolved in course of church history, giving to liturgical worship and church life in general form and usages peculiar and proper to the nature of worship and the culture of the people in various circumstances and places.

There are three catholic churches in Kerala which follow three different rites. 1. Syrian rite (Syro-Malabar Church) 2. Latin rite (Latin Church) 3. Syro – Malankara rite (Syro-Malankara Church)

According to the Census of India, 1981, the number of Christians in Kerala is 5,233, 865 forming 20. 56% of the total population of the state. The Christians are the third largest religious group in the State after Hindus (58. 15%) and Muslims (21. 25%)⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ Jessie Corrigan Pegis, *A Practical Catholic Dictionary*. New York, 1956, p.43.

⁶⁸ The word Pope comes from the Latin Papa, which is an affectionate term for father.

⁶⁹ Thomas J. Arukalil, *The Catholic Church of Kerala*, Kottayam, 1996, p.10.

⁷⁰ *Census of India*, 1986.

According to the Catholic Directory of Kerala, 1986, there are more than 4 million (4,271, 660) Catholics in Kerala. They account for 36.48% of the total Catholic population in India.

The table below gives the distribution of Catholics by Rite in Kerala.

TABLE 1.1
Number and Percentage of Catholics in Kerala by Rite⁷¹.

Rite	Population	% to the total population in the State	% to the total Christian population in the State	% to the total Catholic, population in the State
Syro- Malabar	2,697,677	10.60	51.54	63.15
Syro- Malankara	285,191	1.12	5.45	6.68
Latin	1,288,792	5.06	24.62	30.17
Total	4,271,660	16.78	81.61	100.00

The table shows that the Catholic population of Kerala is 16.78% of the total population of the State. The Syro- Malabar Catholics form the majority of not only the Catholic population of Kerala (63.15%) but even of the total Christian population of the State (51.54%).

Table 1.2 in the next page gives the organizational strength of the Catholics, viz., the number of ecclesiastical provinces, dioceses, parishes and priests in each rite. Proportionate to the strength of the population, the organizational unit and personnel of the Syro- Malabar Church account for the majority of the total units and personnel of the Catholics in Kerala.

⁷¹ *Catholic Directory of Kerala*, Angamali, 1986, p.507

TABLE 1.2

Number of Provinces, Dioceses, Parishes and Priests in each Catholic Rite in Kerala⁷²

Rite	Provinces	Arch dioceses and dioceses	Parishes	Priests		
				Diocesan	Religious	Total
Syro-Malabar	2	12	1233	2041	969	3010
Latin	1	9	340	614	285	899
Syro-Malankara	1	3	550	320	93	413
Total	4	24	2123	2975	1347	4322

A brief history of Syro-Malankara Catholic and Latin Catholic church

In order to complete the picture of the catholic community in Kerala, we give below very brief accounts of the Syro-Malankara and Latin Catholic Communities also.

(a) Syro – Malankara Churuch

While narrating the history of the St.Thomas Christians, it was mentioned that a section of the community which revolted against the Jesuit rule in 1653 later separated itself from the catholic communion and got affiliated to the Jacobite Patriarchate of Antioch. They adopted the Antiochean mode of worship and ecclesiastical discipline and came to be known as Jacobites. Later due to a number of disputes, of which the most important was over the nature of the jurisdiction of the antiochean Patriarch over the local community the Jacobites were divided into two groups: the Orthodox church which claimed complete

⁷² *Catholic Directory of Kerala, op. cit., pp.506-507.*

autonomy to the local church in all administrative matters, leaving only spiritual leadership to the Patriarch; and the Jacobite church which favoured a closer link with the patriarchate.

Since the end of the world war I, one Orthodox priest, P.T.Geevarghese, was active in bringing about the spiritual renewal of his church. In 1920 he founded the first Orthodox religious order in India, the order of the imitation of Christ with male and female branches. They became known as the Fathers and sisters of Bethany, after the name of the first monastery of Metropolitan of Bethany under the name of Mar Ivanios with special jurisdiction over his religious houses and the people attached to them. Three years later one of his monks was also ordained bishop, suffragan to him, under the name of Mar Theophilos.

Mar Ivanios and Mar Theophilos wanted to reunite their church with Rome. Accordingly, they began correspondence with Rome. At last in September 1930. Mar Ivanios and his companions were officially received into communion with Rome. They were followed by all the Bethany sisters, most of the Bethany men, some 35 diocesan priests and about 4000 faithful. Contrary to initial expectations, the majority did not follow Mar Ivanios. However, in 1932, the holy see, through the apostolic constitution 'Christo Pastorum Principi' erected a new hierarchy under the name 'Syro-Malankara church' for the reunited group.⁷³

The Syro-Malankara hierarchy consisted of a single ecclesiastical province with Trivandrum as the Metropolitan see and Tiruvalla as its suffragan. Recently, in 1978, a new diocese was added to the province with Bathery as its head quarters.

⁷³ E.R. Hambye, "The Catholic Thomas Christians 1653-1970", in *Christianity in India*, ed. by H.C Perumalil and E. R. Hambye, Alleppey, 1972, pp. 191-192. For the history of the Syro-Malankara church, see also Cyril Malancherupil, *The Syro-Malankara Church*, Alwaye, 1973.

Like the Jacobites, the Syro-Malankarites also follow the antiochean customs in liturgy and other religious practices. The administration of the church is, however, carried out according to oriental canon law of the Catholic church and the ancient indigenous customs of the community.

(b) Latin Catholic Church

The Latin church of Kerala originated from the successful missionary work of the Portuguese. The Portuguese ⁷⁴activity was not restricted to the 'reformation' of the St. Thomas Christians as we have already described. They converted many Hindus to Christianity in different parts of the country. It was in Cochin that the Portuguese settled first and began to do evangelisation. By the middle of the sixteenth century, there were about 15000 Christians in Cochin. Similarly, large number of conversions took place in Cannanore, and Chaliyam⁷⁵.

The Portuguese also promoted marriage between native women and the Portuguese merchants and sailors. The chief promoter of such mixed marriages was Alfonso de Albuquerque, the conqueror of Goa⁷⁶.

Later the missionary works of St. Francis Xavier gave great boost to the Latin missions. In 1544 Xavier baptised over 10,000 Mukkuva fisherfolk in Tranvancore and, thereby, laid the foundation of the Latin Christianity there. In Quilon also they converted many and build a church for them⁷⁷. He continued his missionary work in India till 1552 in which year he left India for the far east. His life came to an end in the same year in the island of Sanchian.

⁷⁴ Mundadan, ~~History~~, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 1., Bangalore, pp. 355 – 390.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.364 – 67.

⁷⁷ Wicki S.J., "The Portuguese Padroado in India in the 16th century and Francis Xavier", in Perumalil and Hambye, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Missionaries belonging to different religious congregations continued their work after the death of Francis Xavier. Many more conversions took place in Cochin. Many parishes were established and were entrusted to the diocesan clergy. In 1558 a diocese was erected in Cochin under Padroado. The Latin Christians of the southern parts of India who had earlier been under the archdiocese of Goa were brought under the new diocese. Later, in 1661, the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar with its head quarters at Verapoly was established under propaganda with jurisdiction over Latins and Syrians.

In 1886, the Latin hierarchy of India was established and the Vicariate of Malabar was changed into Archdiocese of Verapoly. When separate Vicariates were established for the Syrians in 1887, Verapoly became an archdiocese of Latins only. In 1930, it got its first indigenous archbishop in the person of Dr. Joseph Attipetty. Today the Latin ecclesiastical province of Kerala consists of one archdiocese and eight suffragan dioceses, viz. Calicut, Cochin, Kottapuram, Vijayanpuram, Alleppey, Quilon, Punalor and Trivandrum.⁷⁸

Besides the three Catholic Communities mentioned above, there are several other Christian group in Kerala. the most important among them are the Jacobite Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church, the Marthoma Church, the Nestorain Church, St. Thomas Evangelical Church, Thozhiyoor Sabha, Church of South India, the Church of Brethren, Pentacostal Church, Salvation Army, Seventh day Adventists, Church of God, Jehovah's witnesses and Lutheran Church. Some of these groups are of indigenous origin while others are branches of churches from abroad. The members of the first six churches or groups belong to the original St. Thomas Christian community which in the course of history became divided into separate groups due to various reasons.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ M.D' Suza, *History of the Catholic Church in India*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1910. p.75.

⁷⁹ For detailed treatment of the history of Christianity in the 19th and 20th centuries, see P.J.Podipara, *op.cit.*, pp. 184-201.

Catholic Dioceses at a Glance: Syro-Malabar

Dioceses	Catholic Population	Parishes and Stations	Priests			Nuns	Bros.	Institutions													
			Dio cesan	Relig ious	Total			Ecclesi-astical	Educational								ORPH.	HOST.	HOSP. & DISP.	PUB.	
									COL	HSS	HS	UPS	LPS	NS	TS	Te.S					PROF
Adilabad	10,500	19	3	27	30	138	2	1	-	-	11	1	-	-	1	-	-	17	2	11	-
Belthangady	20,000	44	28	06	34	126	-	1	-	-	3	5	-	7	4	-	-	1	6	8	1
Bijnor	1,896	29	12	27	49	174	02	2	-	-	9	10	-	-	-	-	-	6	12	-	-
Chanda	12,877	32	14	48	52	269	4	4	-	4	5	14	-	-	1	-	-	24	5	25	2
Changanacherry	3,80,000	261	344	563	907	3586	2	17	9	5	52	30	75	147	7	23	-	24	35	19	4
Emakulam	4,45,377	325	360	251	611	3960	109	18	15	4	48	68	127	159	-	145	-	55	39	65	11
Gorakhpur	2,225	21	17	19	36	162	8	3	2	3	14	1	17	-	-	1	-	8	11	-	-
Irinjalakuda	2,54,863	135	87	107	194	1700	-	11	13	2	27	14	44	75	10	-	5	34	23	9	1
Jagadapur	6,411	24	04	60	64	270	55	9	-	2	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	2	27	23	1
Kalyan	1,00,000	48	37	69	106	210	-	-	-	-	4	14	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	9	1
Kanjirappally	1,88,000	121	215	269	484	1600	108	10	10	3	30	28	34	110	-	-	-	21	24	27	2
Kothamangalam	4,89,700	226	298	143	441	2708	58	6	6	10	47	41	68	111	-	-	-	26	11	22	3
Kottayam	1,43,383	139	148	84	232	1195	4	7	6	6	20	17	53	80	42	-	2	06	22	13	2
Manathavadi	1,63,500	133	153	106	213	1200	24	30	4	2	18	21	47	85	5	-	-	44	3	15	3
Palai	3,38,000	157	433	1209	1642	3820	167	19	9	8	55	135	125	166	3	-	19	47	45	20	7
Palghat	65,075	130	82	71	153	1424	-	11	8	11	25	17	44	77	1	-	5	27	27	20	1
Rajkot	1,000	51	4	82	86	375	-	4	1	9	26	-	27	71	-	-	-	6	5	53	-
Sagar	6,500	27	17	23	39	200	7	2	7	5	8	11	-	-	-	-	-	2	11	17	1
Satna	2,640	23	26	23	49	127	7	11	4	4	9	4	1	17	3	12	-	8	-	9	1
Thalassery	2,89,569	189	218	76	291	1291	5	9	6	4	26	33	45	107	-	-	2	19	23	20	1
Thamarassery	1,17,105	88	119	76	195	914	1	1	3	3	29	33	41	60	18	-	-	19	-	12	1
Thukkalai	22,000	42	22	12	34	185	2	1	-	4	12	10	19	65	-	-	-	13	-	4	1
Thrissur	4,31,000	211	249	85	334	3965	68	19	22	7	56	42	92	93	-	35	5	50	45	50	7
Ujjain	2602	39	10	64	74	191	-	5	-	7	10	10	9	-	-	6	-	4	15	17	1
Total	34,94,223	2514	2900	3500	6352	29,700	633	201	125	103	547	565	868	1441	95	222	38	449	382	491	52

Source: Indian Christian Directory, 2002