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(Title of the Thesis) PORTUGUESE IMPACT ON CHRISTIANITY IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
CHURCH ARCHITECTURE (16TH -18TH CENTURIES A.D)

A thesis submitted during (Year) 2020 to the University of Hyderabad in
partial fulfillment of the award of a Ph.D. degree in (Department/Centers/School) HISTORY/SOCIAL SCIENCES

by

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**Portuguese Impact on Christianity in Kerala with Special Reference to
Church Architecture (16th -18th Centuries AD)**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

HISTORY

by

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DECEMBER 2020

DECLARATION

I SINU ROSE hereby

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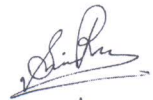
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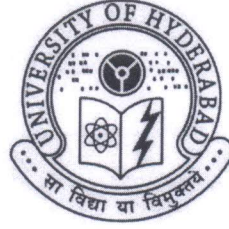
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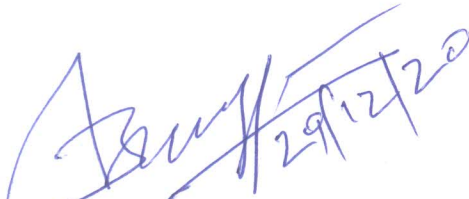
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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Portuguese Impact on Christianity in Kerala with Special Reference to Church Architecture (16TH -18TH Centuries AD)** submitted by **Sinu Rose** bearing Reg. No **15SHPH02** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in History is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

The thesis is free from Plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Parts of the thesis have been

A. Published in the following publications,

1. (2018), *Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress*, ISSN 2229-3671. Paper titled “A Critical Study of Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes as a Historical Source and its Problems and Perspectives.” in the section Historiography and Maritime History .
2. (2019), *Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress*, ISSN 2229-3671, Paper titled “Perceiving the Other: Analyzing the Depiction of the Thomas Christians in the Travel Writings of Ludovico de Varthema” in the section Historiography and Maritime History

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2. 2018 in the Conference titled South Indian History Congress. 38th Annual Session Calicut University, Calicut. 28th -30th January 2018, paper titled “A Critical Study of Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes as a Historical Source and its Problems and Perspectives.” in the section Historiography and Maritime History .

3. 2019 in the Conference titled South Indian History Congress.39th Annual Session Osmania University, Hyderabad, 8th -10th February 2019 paper titled “Perceiving the Other:Analyzing the Depiction of the Thomas Christians in the Travel Writings of Ludovico de Varthema” in the section Historiography and Maritime History.

Further the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of Coursework during MPhil (June –December 2013)

Course Code	Name	Credits	Pass/Fail
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HS703	Seminar Course	4	Pass

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The first three centuries following the dawn of Christianity exposed the newly emerged faith to tumultuous periods of Roman persecution and hostility before being officially recognized as one of the state religion by the Roman Emperor Constantine. From the time of its inception, the doctrines of the religion gained a considerable number of followers and gradually sprawled to various regions of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Despite the cataclysmic circumstances that prevailed in Western Asia during the period, the newly surfaced faith quickly diffused to the social landscapes across these regions due to the missions undertaken under various Apostles of Jesus after the latter's death and resurrection. The recognition of the religion by the Roman Empire in the 4th century CE, accelerated the dissemination of the faith to further regions of Europe and several Roman pockets across Asia and Africa. In other words, the spread of Christianity in the earlier times can be traced along the regions that had either Roman or Jewish presence. The establishment of the Papal See at Rome which served as the power loci of the Roman Empire until its replacement by Constantinople, triggered the process of the centralization and institutionalization of the Church under the Roman patronage. Christianity, therefore, managed to alter its point of importance from the land of its inception, located in Western Asia to Rome, which implied the travel of the religion from the 'East' to the 'West'. The institutionalization of the religion with a rigid hierarchy and its ties with the State had established strong deep networks within the ruling class as well as the common people. Of late, the 'Eastern' or West Asian links of Christianity have been purposefully ignored (although not rejected) and the institutionalization of the religion by the European norms had back-sided the elements of West Asian origin replacing them with refined models from European culture.

In the regions where Christianity had blossomed from the earliest times, especially in the 'East' of the European eye, the religion had evolved by imbibing elements from the local culture to which it was introduced, thus creating a form of Christian cultural space that identified and idealized the doctrines of the religion based on the community's local cultural experience. While the institutionalization of Christianity from the 4th century had managed to create a set of rules that defined and stabilized the religion in Europe, the religion continued to evolve hand in hand with the local culture of the place in the regions of Asia and Africa. The situation best applies to the Thomas Christians of Kerala who had created a cultural

space akin to the indigenous culture following their relatively independent evolution. They were Christian in faith yet Indian in lifestyle and culture. However, after the Portuguese encounter towards the end of the 15th century, the Thomas Christians were measured of their level of Christian faith based on parameters idealized by European Christian traditions and practices which was wholly different from the Thomas Christian conventions. The legacy and legitimacy of the Thomas Christians were questioned and their way of life and religious perceptions were labeled unchristian. Even the architecture of their churches which echoed their historical, cultural, and spiritual understandings, was questioned, challenged, and asked to be redefined. The present research investigates the levels and layers of Portuguese impact on the traditional Thomas Christian architecture in Malabar by highlighting the divergences from the original pre-Portuguese models of church architecture and identifying foreign architectural impositions, architectural acculturations, and retentions of traditional architectural elements.

George Menachery divides the Christian art and architecture of India into three major heads: the pre-European period, dealing with the art and architecture of the region before the European advent; Period between the 16th to 18th centuries, which saw the early European and later the prominent colonial influences; and thirdly, the modern period that showcases vibrant forms of Christian art and architecture¹. While the above division is generalized, there were slight regional variations in the trend mostly along the Malabar coast where Christianity had a very early footing. The research traces the pre-European forms of Christian architecture, precisely pre Portuguese, among the ancient Thomas Christians of Kerala and locates the early influences on their churches following the Portuguese interventions

1.1.0 Title of the chapter

The thesis is entitled '*Portuguese Impact on Christianity in Kerala with Special Reference to Church Architecture 16th-18th Centuries AD*', concise the research rationale specifically and precisely. The colonial experience of the Indian subcontinent began with the arrival of Portuguese on the shores of Kerala by the close of the 15th century. Since then the various forces of European influence had operated within the Indian society and culture in multidimensional ways resulting in the breaking, making, and reformulation of various identities and social ties. The region of Kerala being the pioneer region to have Portuguese experience has a considerable remanent of the influence even till today. Likewise, the

¹ George Menachery, *Facets of Indian Christian Legacy* (Chennai: Notion Press, 2018), Chapter 2.

influence of Europe can not only be seen in the dress food style, and educational system but also in architecture as well. The Portuguese who encountered the Thomas Christians in Kerala were surprised to find them as having different Apostolic and ritualistic tradition from that of theirs. They were able to identify more differences rather than commonalities between themselves and the Thomas Christians. They located these disaccords in their names, ritualistic practices, doctrines as well as in their Church architectural style and setting. The Portuguese who wished to have these Christian brethren purged of their *unchristian* elements designed a Latinization drive that even targeted their Church architecture. The outcome was departures from the traditional modes of architectural conventions and the introduction of European architectural features into the frames of Thomas Christian churches.

1.1.1 Elements of the title and the explanation of various aspects of the title

Space for worship is an integral prospect of every religion, despite the level of organization, institutionalization, or popularity of the faith. Religion demands a specific space to execute the rituals and functions preached by its promulgators, which are designed for providing a better life to mankind. A ‘space’ is regarded as sacred and spiritualistic when it differentiates itself from the profane and materialistic world by certain paradigms. Spaces of worship can exist in both public and private spheres. The public spaces of worship may range from natural elements such as a sacred tree, a stone, a grove, or a building which are exclusively meant and designed for the purpose. The private space for worship can be areas within a private household; a chapel, a *pooja* room, a prayer room, or even a sacred space or a corner within the domestic setting where the statue, relic, or a picture of God is kept. The current research understands ‘church building’ as the space of worship in context to Christianity.

The term ‘Church Architecture’ signifies the architecture of Christian churches. In the context of the research, the author refers the term to the architecture of the churches belonging to the Thomas Christian community of Kerala. The term encompasses the nature, style, and models that were in popular use among the community that created the structures to fulfill the functional demands of the religion in the geographic, political, and social conditions.

The period taken into consideration for the execution of the research marks a historical break for the history of Christianity in India in general and the Thomas Christian community in particular. The last two years of the 15th century were monumental both for

Europe as well as India, as those years saw the encounter between two cultures that had differential roots and origins.

The research is spread across two distinct historical epochs; the period preceding the Portuguese arrival to the Malabar shores and the period that saw the gradual waning of the Portuguese in Kerala following the emergence of the Dutch. While the core period under consideration is confined between the 16th and the 18th centuries, various themes of the research surpass the time frame back to the initial centuries of the Common Era. The period between the 16th and 18th centuries not only introduces these largely isolated Christians to the broader Christian world but also triggers a chain of events that ultimately results in creating differences within the largely monolithic Thomas Christian fold. The encounter with the Portuguese had resulted in the infiltration of ideas, traditions, practices, and rituals that were unknown to the indigenously rooted Thomas Christians, that eventually reshaped the Thomas Christian self-perception.

The Portuguese impact is emphasized as they were the pioneer European Christian entity to establish close connections with the indigenous Thomas Christians of Kerala. Besides, the Portuguese impact was nascent, profound, and determinantal in Thomas Christian history. Although the political supremacy of the Portuguese waned after 1663CE following their defeat by the Dutch, the Portuguese Padroda survived in various degrees up to mid 20th century in India.

In the thesis, various terms and phrases are used synonymously and sometimes interchangeably. The terms Thomas Christians, *Nazranis*, *Malankara Nazrani*, *Mar Thoma* Christians, and Syrian Christians are used to describe the same community unless otherwise specified. The term 'Hindu' is used in the text to describe the non-Christian cultural space and population of the Malabar society and does not have any connection to the practitioners of the religion of Hinduism unless signified. As the concept of 'Hinduism' as a religious category was a colonial contribution, the researcher thinks that the term 'Hindu' does not specify any particular religious category and reflects only the 'non-Abrahamic Malabar society comprising of a conglomeration of Aryan and Dravidian traditions'. The terms Malabar and Kerala are used interchangeably to denote the geographical space of the present-day Kerala state unless quoted otherwise. The current place names and ancient place names are used interchangeably to denote one particular location unless specified.

The researcher has resorted to taking up a more secular periodization based on Common Era(CE) and Before Common Era (BCE). Some dates are mentioned in the Kollam Era which is considered as the basis of the traditional Malayalam calendar. The Kollam Era begins from 825CE and therefore, the year in Kollam Era is converted to the Gregorian Year by adding 825 to the year in Kollam Era.

The text contains a profusion of non-English terms from Malayalam, Syriac, and Portuguese. The corresponding English meanings are provided in the footnotes and further explanations on the term, if required, are provided in the Glossary.

1.1.2. Scope and Limitations of the Research

The churches constitute an important aspect of the material culture of Christians around the world. The study of the material culture of a community can benefit the understanding of the nature and character of a community beyond historical texts, especially for communities that have undergone considerable metamorphosis owing to various historical encounters. The Thomas Christians of Kerala are such a community whose organic evolution into a proliferating Christian community was adulterated by the 15th Portuguese advent.

Despite the antiquity of the Thomas Christians, the amount of scholarship that had been undergone on their churches and their lifestyle is inadequate. Although recent research has shifted focus to new dimensions of Thomas Christian history ranging from their local interactions, responses to the Catholic stimulus and much more, a comparative study of the pre-Portuguese and post-Portuguese existence of these Christians focusing on architecture is advantageous in comprehending the layers of interactions, impositions, and inculturation. Besides systematic research on the impact of the Portuguese interlude in the Thomas Christian history with special reference to their church architecture, has not been attempted focusing on the historical framework. Most significantly, lack of appreciation for the pre-Portuguese Christian legacy has resulted in demolitions of ancient church buildings for the sake of sophisticated models having European architectural superfluities. The alarming trend is gradually resulting in the complete eradication of the pre-European indigenous Christian legacy of the region, which has produced unique models of sacred architecture and art. The research attempts to segregate the alien and indigenous features of Thomas Christian church architecture through a tedious exercise of historical deductions.

Considering the popular living tradition of Apostle Thomas for granted as the point of the commencement of the church building activity in Malabar, the timeline of the research requires an early start from 52CE. Secondly, the availability of sources directly dealing with Thomas Christians and their churches are very few from the ancient period. However as a long timeframe reduces the depth of the research owing to the practical inhibitors, the researcher has focused on architectural changes briefly yet lucidly.

The investigation is relevant and limited to the south Indian state of Kerala which is home to the Thomas Christians. Although the community is spread to various parts of India and the world today, their traditional region of habitation is constricted to the present state of Kerala and parts of southern Tamil Nadu. The present administrative and political boundaries of Kerala were defined in 1956 by the reorganization of Indian states on the linguistic basis integrating the erstwhile Malabar province belonging to the Madras Presidency and the princely states of Travancore and Cochin. However, the present study is limited to the early 18th century, when the region had a different political and administrative mechanism. The Thomas Christian cultural space fell largely under the governance of the Kingdom of Cochin or the *Perumpadappu Swaroopam*, and the Kingdom of Travancore or the *Venad Swaroopam* along with their vassal principalities.

The absence of pre-Portuguese churches in their original form was a major hurdle in the course of primary data collection. Moreover, several old churches have had undergone multiple stages of renovations and reconstructions adding features and elements to their original form following necessities, requirements, and the architectural trend.

The geographical space under the scope of the study extends from Palayoor in Central Kerala to Thiruvithamkode in the present-day Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. This has been a limiting factor in undertaking an in-depth analysis of every aspect of the existing church buildings. Secondly, as the Thomas Christian tradition in Kerala dates to the first century of the Common era, a large period extending almost 1800 years is required to be undertaken. Owing to the importance of the scale of time as well as considering the impracticability in doing so, the research limits the scope to a detailed survey and analysis of the churches of the pre-Portuguese period and a comprehensive study of the Thomas Christian churches post-Portuguese arrival. Thirdly, at present, the Thomas Christian community has undergone numerous schisms and internal divisions based on religious and liturgical differences resulting in the breaking and making of identities and claims to sacred

spaces. The divisions have proved cumbersome for the research as many ancient churches are claimed by various factions of the Thomas Christians, constantly trying to establish each other's superiority. Lastly, due to the incumbent differences within the various parties of the community, many church authorities were reluctant to share and cooperate with the research, possibly suspecting conspiracies.

Natural disasters such as the recent floods of 2018 and 2019 and earthquakes have destroyed many churches as well as the church records which were relevant to the study. Many churches in the study area claimed the loss of important church documents, artifacts, and books following the floods.

1.1.3. The main themes of the thesis

The research intends to remark the historical implication of church architecture rather than enhancing its religious manifestations and implications. The main themes in the discussion would be the impact of Portuguese advent in the cultural sphere of the Malabar, especially on the Thomas Christians. The theme of clash of divergent cultures and colonial cultural hegemony shall be examined in the context of the Thomas Christian traditions and architecture. The role of art and architecture as a mode of establishing and colonizing will also be looked at. Besides, the significance of art and architecture in maintaining and establishing the identity of religion will be discussed. The idea of survival of cultural traits by measuring a community's receptive and intolerant natures will be provided due focus. The thesis will detail the history of Christianity and Christian cultural space in Kerala before the arrival of the Portuguese and the later reorganization that occurred as an outcome. The crux of the work will identify the elements of the Thomas church that came to practice after the Portuguese interventions and their continuity. Acculturation, cultural syncretism, cultural translations, etc are some of the other themes that will be discussed in the discourse.

1.1.4. Main methods employed in the thesis

The main methods used in the research are field surveys and literary analysis. The researcher had employed descriptive and analytical methodologies for the fulfillment of the research laying stress on the methods from Connected history, the idea of confiscated history, political history, cultural history, history of architecture, and history of religion. Since the primary sources used are mainly literary due to the unavailability of surviving pre-Portuguese church structures in their original form, field studies were also undertaken to understand and

locate the nature and situation of the existing church buildings. The first and foremost task was the identification of various church buildings predating the Portuguese arrival and those build before the Synod of Diamper(1599CE. The task was accomplished with the aid of primary sources such as *Jornada* authored by Antonio Gouvea and *Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper*, which forms a major literary source for the study. The dates provided by Thomas Yeates in *Indian Church History*, as well as George Menachery in his various publications, are used to create a more comprehensive output. The investigator also supplemented the data with similar tables prepared by Sunil Edward as part of his doctoral research. The task was followed by corroborating the data with the popular traditions and legends in circulation amongst the Thomas Christians regarding the origin of various churches which were either documented in the annual souvenirs produced by these churches during the occasion of feasts or were surviving as oral traditions. Travel documents produced concerning the area were also examined to crosscheck any missing links. The further research method involved field visits to the enlisted churches to evaluate their current status. Besides personal interviews with the Vicars of the churches, amateur historians involved in writing the history of the church, and local people who have shown interest in preserving the oral traditions of the concerned churches were beneficial in amassing valuable information. Personal observations and photographic documentation was conducted for aiding the research analysis.

1.2.0. Hypothesis

The Portuguese had not only impacted the social spheres but also the religious sphere of the people particularly the Thomas Christians triggering a chain of reactions that broke the Christian monolith from the mid 17th century. The attempts made by the Portuguese to bring the Thomas Christians under the Papal fold to ‘save’ the community from the currents of Reformation, as they thought, did eventually result in the breaking up of the Christian monolith that existed for over thousand five hundred years. The Thomas Christians had a unique existence with their concepts of spirituality and sacred spaces having an original church architectural model. The Portuguese actions impacted every aspect of Thomas Christian religion and culture including their architecture. The models of surviving ancient churches are a result of these interactions.

1.2.1. Aims and Objectives

The research in essentiality is a comparative study of the indigenous architecture of the Thomas Christian churches and the impact of Portuguese interventions on their architectural conventions. The research probes into the architecture of the earliest Christians churches in the region of Malabar. The present research tries to identify and locate the various levels of Portuguese influence specializing in the sphere of church architecture and its larger impact on the Thomas Christian religious and cultural microenvironment. Moreover, tracking the various stages of the Thomas Christian church's architectural progress throws light on the history of the evolution of the Christian cultural life in Kerala. The research will focus on arriving at explanations on the existence of the peculiar model of church buildings, that are partly European and partly indigenous.

While examining the case of the Portuguese intervention on Church architecture a couple of major objectives would be addressed for detailed study

- To locate the significant features of a pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian church and analyze their relevance – ritualistic, aesthetic, or societal
- To identify the changes that resulted in the Thomas Christian church architecture following the 15th-century Portuguese encounters
- To determine if the Portuguese succeed in the complete reformulation of church architecture, or whether their influence was partial and superficial.
- To understand the response of the indigenous Christians as well as the ‘newly converted Christians ‘towards the ‘new initiatives’
- To evaluate how far were the Portuguese influences retained by the Christians of Kerala, both indigenous as well as converted.
- To analyze if the change in the architectural style led to change in the interpretation of Christian religion itself and bring changes in the liturgy and rituals of the Thomas Christians
- To estimate the role of the ‘church’ and its space in the cultural life of the Thomas Christians during the Pre Portuguese and the Post Portuguese times.

1.3.0. A brief survey of the literature

The Thomas Legend, the history of Thomas Christians, their lifestyle, culture, and traditions have been an important subject of interest for historians both academic and church. Evaluating the existing historical corpus, immense contributions are made by both the indigenous as well as foreign historians based on available primary evidence. However, the primary sources belonging to the study period are scarce, especially those created internally by the Thomas Christian themselves. Whatever information that can be derived regarding the community is from the travelogues and other records left by the early Europeans. . Several secondary sources have come up based on the information extracted from these primary sources about the Christian life before the Portuguese advent. Nevertheless, there is a deficiency in the volume of works produced concerning the prospect of Thomas Christian art and architecture.

1.3.1 Survey of the primary sources and their typology

There are numerous issues in dealing with the Primary Sources concerning the systematic historical study on Thomas Christian existence before the Portuguese. The lack of documentary evidence directing to the arrival of Apostle Thomas in South India is a major constrain which is often cited by historians to limit the scope of the Apostle's presence in South India and dismiss it as a mere 'legend'. However as the 'legend' has survived consistently throughout the Thomas Christian history, scholars consider it as a strong oral tradition that can aid in the reconstruction of the Thomas Christian history. Secondly, there does not exist any known primary sources concerning the Thomas Christian life that was produced from their perspectives. If at all any such works ever existed, they might have been destroyed by the Portuguese in the course of their Latinization endeavors, specifically following the Synod of Diamper. Therefore the primary sources used in the current study are mostly created after the Portuguese advent and should be dealt with care for the possible misrepresentations and misinterpretations due to their 'external' perceptions.

Two primary literary sources that form the major source of information regarding the context of the research are *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes* authored by Antonio Gouvea, and *The Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper*. The English version of the Acts of Synod of Diamper first appeared in Michael Geddes' work, *The History of the Church at Malabar*, the researcher has used the translated version produced by Scaria Zacharia from Geddes' original translation. Although both works contextualize the 17th century, they contain a mine of information regarding the Portuguese encounters with the Thomas Christians and aids in

understanding the early attitudes, aversions, and anticipations of the two Christian entities. The works also contain an elaborate description of Thomas Christian history, lifestyle, religious and social practices, attitudes behavioral patterns as well as perceptions of the ‘Christian other’. The work authored by Michael Geddes entitled *The History of the Church of Malabar*, published in 1694CE has a considerable amount of information regarding the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese relations. However, Geddes has never visited India and had based his entire work on the Portuguese records that were accessible to him during his sojourn at Lisbon². Therefore although Geddes’ work belongs to the period under consideration, it is not included as an authentic primary source.

Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes, originally titled as “*Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frei Aleixo de Menezes Primaz da India Orientali, Religioso da Ordem de S. Agostinho. Quando foy as Serras do Malavar,& lugares em que morao os antigos Christaos de S.Thome &os tirou de muytos erros& obdeiencia da Santa Igreja Romana,da qual passava de mil annos que estavao & reduzio a nossa.Sancta Fe Catholica,&obediencia da Santa Igreja Romana,da qual passava de mil annosphe estavao apartados*”, which when translated to English means,” The journey of the Archbishop of Goa, Dom Frei Alexis de Menezes, primate of East India, of the Order of St. Augustine. When he went to the Serras (Mountains) of Malabar and to the places where inhabit the ancient Christians of St. Thomas, he brought them back from many errors and heresies, in which they were found and reduced them to our Holy Catholic Faith and to the Obedience of the Holy Roman Church, from which they had remained separated for a thousand years”, was translated to English from the original Portuguese version by Pius Malekandathil in 2003.

The Synod of Diamper decrees is mentioned by Antonio Gouvea as well as Michael Geddes. The Portuguese version was translated into Latin by Raulin in the 18th century³. Scaria Zacharia identifies disparities between the Malayalam version of the text as well as the

² The original title of the book is *The History of the Church of Malabar From the Time of its Being First Discovered by the Portugezes in the Year 1501 Giving an Account of the Perfecutions and Violent Methods of the Roman Prelates,to Reduce them to the Subjugation of the Church of Rome Together with the Synod of Diamper celebrated in the Year of our Lord 1599 With Fome Remarks upon the Faith and Doctrine of the Christians of St Thomas in the Indies,agreeing with the Church of England,in opposition to that of Rome . Printed at Prince’s Arms at St Pauls Church, London, in 1694.*

³ Joannes Facundui Raulin,*Historia Ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana Synodo* (Rome: 1745).

Portuguese version which contains an extra thirty-five decrees⁴. His understandings as the Malayalam version being the original corpus can be accepted considering the purpose and target of the Synod itself. Besides as all the European versions, including Geddes, are based on the Portuguese version. The researcher understands the possible impact of the disaccord to the rationale of the research and therefore has chosen the version produced by Zacharia, as it demarcates the extra decrees of the Portuguese text with asterisks.

“The Account of Priest Joseph” as provided in the *Voyages of Pedro Alvares Cabral to Brazil and India*⁵ is referred to as a primary source for the reconstruction of pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian history and culture. Along with the text, “The Anonymous Narrative” and the “Letter of King Manuel to Ferdinand and Isabella” are consulted as sources for reconceptualizing the early history of the Portuguese in Malabar. Since Joseph, the Indian supposedly acquainted with the Portuguese within three years of their arrival in Malabar nothing much might have changed nor been the Portuguese able to reach out to the general public to full extend shedding their apprehensions. “The Anonymous Narrative” testifies It also mentions the arrival of two Christian men ‘ who wished to go to Rome and Jerusalem’, as having joined them at Cranganore. This can be the probable lead to the arrival of Joseph the Indian as well as Mathias. But the Anonymous author does specify that they were priests. The date may be between the 1st and 10th of January 1501). He also says that “the captain had great pleasure with these two men”⁶.

Also, the accounts of Ludovico de Varthema⁷ and Durate Barbosa⁸ supplements the information on the society, culture, lifestyle, polity, and geographic specificities of the Malabar Coast during the Portuguese period.

⁴ Scaria Zacharia, Introduction, *The Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper*, (Edamattom: Indian Institute of Christian Studies, 1994), 9.

⁵ William Brooks Greenlee, *The Voyages of Pedro Alvares Cabral to Brazil and India From Contemporary Documents and Narratives* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1937).

⁶ Anonymous Author, 86

⁷ Ludovico de Varthema, *The Travels of Ludovico de Varthema in Egypt Syria Arabia Desserta, Arabia Felix, in Persia, India and Ethiopia*. trans John Winter Jones (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863)

⁸ Durate Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of 16th century*, trans Henbry, E.J Stanley (London: Hakluyt Society, 1866).

Thomas Rambaan Pattu and the *Acts of Thomas* are also employed by the researcher as primary sources to derive inferences about the early history of Apostle Thomas' missionary activities in the region of Malabar. While *Rambaan Pattu* has survived as an oral tradition for centuries until it was lettered in the ...century. The song is supposed to have been composed by the first disciple of Apostle Thomas in Malabar⁹. The song has been reproduced in totality in the work of M M Ninan, *7 ½ Churches of St Thomas*¹⁰. *The Acts of Thomas* is an apocryphal work, possibly dating to the 2nd century CE, which discusses the missions of Apostle Thomas. Originally written in Greek and later translated to Syriac, the work imparts valuable information regarding the episodes of the commissioning of the mission by Jesus, the course of the mission and concludes with the martyrdom of the Apostle¹¹. The content of the *Acts of Thomas* is reflected in the *Thomas Rambaan Pattu*, igniting further scope of debate.

Besides the literary and oral traditions, the archaeological sources remains an integral source for the reconstruction of the Thomas Christian history. The ancient churches themselves are a great repository of Thomas Christian culture and heritage. They are living specimens of the unique identity of the Thomas Christian legitimacy and existence showcasing their peculiar structure and elevation. The various inscriptions concerning the Thomas Christians such as the *Tarisapalli* Copper Plate, *Thazekkad Sasanam* throw broad insights into the shrouded history of the Thomas Christians during the pre-European period.

The scholar has faced difficulties to locate and deal with the primary sources relating to the area of study as there was no direct information provided by these sources that directly refers to the central research concern in detail. Furthermore, whatever information that has been provided is scanty and scattered as well. Besides these primary sources were in European languages which were wholly or partially translated into English. Some other

⁹ Susan Viswanathan, "The Legends of St Thomas in Kerala", *India International Centre Quarterly* 22,no1/3 (Summer-Monsoon,1993):27-44.

¹⁰ "Ramban Pattu"MM Ninan, *7 ½ Churches of St Thomas*(Normal:2016),7-12. A translated version to English is provided in George Menachery,*The Nazranies*.The text is quoted from the "The Song of Thomas Ramban"by TK Joseph and Romeo Thomas . For details see,George Menachery,*The Nazranies*,(Ollur:SARS,1998),520-525.

¹¹ "Acts of St Thomas". *The Apocryphal New Testament*,trans M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

valuable manuscripts that are in archaic Tamil and Malayalam await expert translations¹². Therefore there are chances that much of the information might have distorted or lost in translation. This tendency can easily be detected in the examination of various translations of the original work into different languages where there are departures from the original text and information.

The problem of the authenticity of authorship has been a major determining factor in valuing the sources. The Accounts of Joseph the Indian is an account written by a third person who had heard about Joseph and admits not meeting him in person¹³. His accounts are based on a printed material that contained the details mentioned by Joseph, which is lost. The narratives moreover differ in various translations.

1.3.1. Note on Secondary sources

Numerous scholarly and academically relevant works on the History of Christianity in India have been produced based on the available literary and archaeological evidence creating a huge corpus of secondary works. The pre-Independent era of India witnessed earlier attempts by European as well as Indian scholars to document and compose the history of the Thomas Christians. Special mention in this regard has to be given for Adolph Medlycott whose work on Thomas Christians based on the *Acts of Thomas* is commendable¹⁴. *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* by L K Ananthakrishna Aiyar deals with various aspects of the Thomas Christians of Kerala shedding light on their history and lifestyle in detail¹⁵. Other prominent works dealing with the Thomas Christians of Kerala have come up in profusion in the post-independent period of India such as those by L W Brown¹⁶, Eugene

¹² The researcher came across numerous ancient ollas in the custody of Niranam church, which is supposedly relating to the land grants to the church according to church authorities. These are in ancient Tamil script that requires translations.

¹³ Narratives of Priest Joseph, in book of Cabral, It is given that “.. According to the judgement of those who have seen him and spoken with him....” Which clearly states that the author had not met or spoken to Joseph the Indian and was only trying to put forth details that he had come to know from some sources into the narrative.”The Account of Priest Joseph”, in *The Voyage of Pedro Alvares Cabral to Brazil and India*, trans William Brooks Greenlee (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1937). 99

¹⁴ A E Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas: An Inquiry, with a Critical Analysis of the Acta Thomae*, (London: David Nutt, 1905).

¹⁵ L K Ananthakrishna Aiyar, *Social Anthropology of Syrian Christians* (Cochin: Government Press, 1926).

¹⁶ L W Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).

Tisserant¹⁷, SG Pothan¹⁸, G M Moraes¹⁹, AM Mundadan²⁰, and Placid Podipara. The corpus was enriched later by authors like George Menachery, Stephen Neil, K S Mathew, Pius Malekandathil, Bosco Puthur, etc through various books, articles, and research papers. These are scholarly books and articles discussing the various aspects of the Thomas Christians focusing on their historical, cultural, and liturgical that are available in print.

The studies on the Thomas Christian history of Kerala have achieved varying trends from conventional fashion with several works exploring the layers of the community's cross-cultural, ethnographical, and economic facets. Nathan Katz has brought a novel attempt in studying the Thomas Christian history of Kochi, by exploring the Jewish Christian relations in the place²¹. Studies on the authenticity of the legend of Apostle Thomas has been undertaken by Susan Viswanathan and Richard Garbe, who has put the various debates under the lens to examine their historicity and authenticity²². The Thomas Christian relation with the larger 'Hindu' society of Malabar has been studied exclusively by C J Fuller in his article *Kerala Christians and Caste System*, where the author tries to trace the levels of imbibitions of caste within the community²³.

While most of the above works are produced within the academic fields, the Thomas Christians under the auspicious of interest from their church as well as individuals, ventured into the recording of the history and culture of the community. The author was able to identify various levels of church histories in circulation among the community ranging from family histories and genealogies to history of the local church and the community to the history of the diocese and a pan Christian history of Thomas Christians in Malabar and their

¹⁷ Eugene Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, trans. E J Hambye (Bombay: Longmans, 1957).

¹⁸ S G Pothan, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala* (Bombay: Asian Publishing House, 1963).

¹⁹ George Mark Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India* (Bombay: Manaktales, 1964).

²⁰ A M Mundadan, *The Arrival of Portuguese in India and the St Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob 1498-1552* (Bangalore: Christian Literary Society, 1967).

A.M Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2003).

²¹ Nathan Katz, *Who Are the Jews of India?* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000). also see, Nathan Katz, *Studies of Indian-Jewish Identity*, ed. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995, 2nd ed., 1999)

²² For a comprehensive reading on the debates related to the Thomas tradition refer to Richard Garbe, "St Thomas In India", *The Monist* 25, no 1 (January 1915): 1-27.
Viswanathan, "The Legend of St Thomas", 27-44.

²³ C J Fuller, "Kerala Christians and Caste System", *Man New Series* 11, no 1 (March 1976): 53-70.

settlements and networks on a national and international space. Another trend that the author has noticed in the sources are the various histories produced by the various denominations of the Thomas Christians to establish their distinct and primal place amongst the larger community. Interestingly all such histories, from the family histories to the denominational histories, traces their legacy to the preaching of Thomas the Apostle, which thus form the ‘sun’ or the primal source of legitimacy to these groups.

Recently, historians have reoriented their focus of interest to the Thomas Christian and their relations with the European colonial powers, departing from the mere reproduction of the historical course of the events to the examination and analysis of their social life, self perspectives, changing attitudes, identity question, responses of the community, etc. Ancy M A has conducted an interesting study on the relations between the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese between the 16th to 18th centuries as part of her doctoral research²⁴. Although several studies have been conducted on the Indo Portuguese relations from the economic social political and religious perspectives, there are very few or hardly any direct works on the impact of the Portuguese on the Church architectural style of the region. This has to be viewed from the differential liturgical as well as cultural backgrounds from which the Christians of St Thomas and the Catholic Origins of the Portuguese.

Pioneer research on the art and architecture of the Thomas Christians has been undertaken by scholars such as James Menachery, Andrews Athapally, and George Menachery. James Menachery’s study on church architecture is commendable despite its flaws and imperfections. Although he successfully analyzed the various elements of the architecture, he was unable to arrive at a systematic identification of the various phases that contributed to the unique church structure²⁵. Andrews Athapally has done a surveyal work on the church architecture of Kerala briefing his perceptions and inferences in the paper *Kerala Church Architecture* published in *Thomapedia*²⁶. In the short work, Athapally has succeeded in identifying various stages of the evolution of Thomas Christian church architecture which complements the understandings derived from James Menachery. George Menachery has

²⁴ Ancy M A, ”St Thomas Christians in Kerala,:The Process of Incorporation and Resistance(1599-1786)” (Phd diss.,. University of Calicut,2016)

²⁵ James Menachery, “Thomas Christain Architecture”,in *Thomapedia*.,edited by George Menachery, (Ollur:SARS,,2000)137-151

²⁶ Andrews Athapally, ”Kerala Church Architecture”,in *Thomapedia*, edited by George Menachery(Ollur,2000)151-153

effectively photographed and documented the ancient churches of the Thomas Christians and some of his photographs remain the only surviving element that could help in studying the churches which have been demolished or renovated beyond recognition. Also, Jose Pereira, Helder Carita, and Istvan Perzcal have contributed towards initiating and enriching the domains of knowledge about the community.

Attempts from the field of architecture in placing the Thomas Christian churches and their various features concerning the historical contexts have gained the attention of scholars of the genre. The researcher would like to emphasize the work of S Panjikkaran and R Vedomuthu, which studies the spatial organization of churches of Kerala during the 16th and 17th centuries. The work categorizes the various churches in Kerala based on the levels of European influence in their spatial organization and appearance²⁷. The facades of the Churches of Kerala have been cogitated by Rakhi Mariam Johnson in *Renaissance Church Facades of Kerala: Seeds of Cross-Cultural Alliances*, which analyzes the role of missionaries in introducing the Renaissance style facades to Kerala and their use as a significant aspect for their proselytizing activities²⁸.

A handful of doctoral researches have contributed and enriched the insights into the Thomas Christian church art and architecture. *The Thomas Christian Architecture of Malabar, Ancient and Medieval Periods* by EJ James, completed in 1979 can be considered as the earliest comprehensive research work on the Thomas Christian church architecture. However, the research lacks a detailed analysis of the various pre and post-Portuguese influences on the existing church models. no detailed research on the impact of the external forces on the self-perception and identity question of the Thomas Christians.

Recent doctoral research conducted by Sunil Edwards has contributed a reconstructed plan and model of a typical Thomas Christian church at the time of the Portuguese arrival. He successfully links the pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian architecture to the Jain style that was prevalent in the region rather than pushing it to the Hindu style. However, a detailed

²⁷ S Panjikkaran and R,Vedomuthu, 2013.” An Evaluation of Spatial Organization of the Church Architecture of Kerala during the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries”, *Journal of Institution of Engineers(India)* Series A, 94(2): 123-130.

²⁸ Rakhi Mariam Johnson, “Renaissance Church Facades of Kerala: Seeds of Cross-Cultural Alliances”.*International Journal of Science and Research* 9 ,issue 4 (April 2020):223-228.

comparative study of the Thomas Christian architecture following the Portuguese is not attempted in the work.

Doctoral thesis titled. *Cultural Landscape and Architecture of Medieval Churches of Kerala* by Cyriac Jose, uses archaeological tools and methods coupled with the use of scientific technology to produce exclusive findings on the distribution, elevations, spatial planning, and floor plans of ancient Thomas Christian churches located in South Central Kerala²⁹. The use of X-Ray Diffraction Analysis to study the murals at St Mary's Old Church Kanjirappilly is appreciable and insightful. Nevertheless, despite the vast kaleidoscope of arenas explored in the thesis, it hardly compares the church models before and after the Portuguese incursions.

Although architecture forms a major primary source for the study of Christianity in Kerala and Church architecture had attracted the curiosity of historians it has never been studied with the historical element that accompanied them. In a way, the church architecture mirrors the crusts and troughs of the historical evolution of Thomas Christians.

1.4.0. Limitations of the Research Process

The researcher had encountered several limitations during the research. The researcher was not allowed to enter the altar areas of many churches and had to observe the area from a safe distance which might have resulted in slipping certain minute details about the construction and art. Secondly, many churches had issues in taking photographs due to many unexplained reasons. Thirdly no churches from the 15th and 16th centuries survive in their original form today. Finally, the scarcity of trustworthy literary evidence to corroborate the findings was the greatest hurdle in the course of the study. Also as the field studies were not conducted solely to determine architectural characteristics, no precise measurements using sophisticated technologies were conducted.

1.5.0 Plan and Chapterization of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven Chapters that includes the Introduction and the Conclusion. The core text is supplemented with Appendixes, Glossary, Map, Plates Figures,

²⁹ Cyriac Jose, "Cultural Landscape and Architecture of Medieval Churches of Kerala" (PhD diss., Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute, April 2017).

and Illustrations. A comprehensive bibliography is included at the end of the text which can aid for further reading and research.

Chapter One introduces the research questions and supplements the research rationale. An outline of the research design explaining the aims, objectives, and methods utilized in the course of the research endeavored in brief, A concise survey of literature focusing on the primary and secondary sources employed in the study is attempted to identify and address the research gaps and flaws. Besides addressing the limitations and scope of the research, the Chapter also provides an overview of the Chapterization thereby furnishing the form and content of the thesis in a nutshell. The chapter not only provides an overview of the study but also provides a clear picture of how the study proceeds through the further chapters.

Chapter Two dives further into the geographical, political, and social background of the region of Malabar, which encompasses the study area. The social and political milieu of Kerala at the time of European encounters, the regional particularities, and social composition finds ample focus in the Chapter. The Thomas Christian community is introduced, highlighting their evolution as a unique cultural and religious entity within the Malabar society, focusing on their historical evolution, relationship with domestic and alien communities and cultural domains, liaisons with centers of power, and social positions. The Chapter attempts to place the Thomas Christians and their cultural legacy to the socio-political and cultural background of Malabar before the Portuguese and the various challenges that ensued after the clash of divergent cultures.

Chapter Three discusses the evolution of the church as an institution as well as a space for worship tracing their Biblical and Jewish roots. The development of ideas of sacred space from the inception of the community to the recognition of the religion in the 4th century and the materialization of the ideas into various styles from the Constantine period until the 17th century is briefed in the chapter. Various styles of European church architecture such as the Romanesque, Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque are described in the Chapter that can aid in differentiating the European churches and non-European models of churches.

Chapter Four begins with a condensed socio-political history of Portugal during the 15th century, their pursuit in discovering new lands as well as their encounter with the new cultures and the people. A survey of historical events that happened in Kerala following the Portuguese arrival and their initial encounters and interactions with the Thomas Christians finds a comprehensive discussion in the Chapter. The changing Portuguese conception of the

Thomas Christians in the context of the waves of Reformation, the convening of the Synod of Diamper as well as the Thomas Christian response to the Portuguese intervention is elaborately explained in the Chapter. The chapter details the forms of control exercised by the Portuguese over the Thomas Christians as well as the various techniques through which they accomplished their targets.

Chapters Five and Six form the core chapters of the thesis dealing with the structure of the indigenous Thomas Christian churches in Kerala and the changes that occurred due to the Portuguese intervention respectively. Chapter Five identifies the various elements of a typical Thomas Christian church and its premises, riveting on the appearance, plan, spatial organization, etc. An analytical; discussion on the evolution of various characteristic elements of the church and the purpose of their inclusion is undertaken.

Chapter Six, on a contradictory note, discusses the various changes brought out in the Church architectural traditions of Thomas Christians resulting from the Portuguese interferences analyzing and evaluating the features in detail. This chapter also tries to identify the break and continuity in the models of the church architecture and attempts to contextualize the new features with the changing Thomas Christian practices.

Chapter Seven concludes and summarizes the key findings of the study. The inferences derived in the course of the study based on the findings are portrayed in a lucid style. Recommendations for further research and prospective research areas concerning the broader study area is included to create new research insights.

CHAPTER TWO

LOCATING THE THOMAS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF KERALA-HISTORICAL CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The chapter provides the background sketch of the historical cultural and social aspects of the lands and the people of Kerala. The emergence of Kerala as a separate yet unique entity and its gradual distinction from the ancient *Tamizhakam* is discussed. The chapter aims to establish how the various aspects of the historical and social developments resulted in providing an ideal breeding ground for Christianity and other West Asian religions to flourish evolve and integrate into the cultural fabric of Kerala. The chapter also deals with the changing understanding and representation of the cultural and territorial space during various historical epochs through historiography.

2.1.0 References to Kerala and Synonyms through History

The region of Kerala belonged to the macro space of ancient *Tamizhakam* from the Sangam up to the early medieval period. *Tamizhakam*, according to *Silappathikaram* and *Tolkappiyam*, is a lingo cultural macro space that is comprised of the Tamil speaking regions between the Tirupathi hills towards the north and Kanyakumari to the southern side thus encompassing the lands between the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to the western and the eastern sides¹. The perception of Kerala as a separate region with specifically defined boundaries on a linguistic and cultural basis is a recent phenomenon². The lack of the existence of a defined bounded space does not signify the non-existence of the notion of the region and space of Kerala in ancient times. What were the actual boundaries that demarcated the land and the people from ancient *Tamizhakam* needs scrutinization? It can be concluded that a porous cultural border differentiated the land from the Tamil macro-region. The geographic setting of Kerala indeed gave it a 'reclusion' from the region of *Tamizhakam*, but the differentiation based on a separate culture and lifestyle of the region from that of *Tamizhakam* and its establishment as a distinct

¹ Hikosaka Shu, *Buddhism in Tamil Nadu A New Perspective* (Chennai:Institute of Asian Studies,1989),3.

² For a detailed reading on the formation of the present day Kerala State, following the reorganization of Indian States on linguistic basis,read, VP Menon,*Story of the Integration of States* (Bombay:1956),274-291.

cultural entity came largely following the gradual evolution of the language of Malayalam³. In other words, the synthesis of the Malayalam language from the amalgamation of Sanskrit and Tamil and its evolution into a separate language gradually simmered the consciousness of ‘otherness’ amongst the people of ancient Kerala creating a unique and exclusive cultural space within the region.

From the Mauryan period, Kerala has found references in various texts: both indigenous as well as foreign. The region is referred to either as *Kerala*, *Chera*, *Male*⁴, *Malayalam*⁵, or ‘Malabar’ with several theories supporting the origin of these words. These contradicting theories are for the reason of inadequate direct references relating to the origin of the name. Yet scholars have postulated numerous theories based on the unique geographical and physiographic features that constitute mountains, plains, thick vegetation, and proximity to the seas. According to Sreedhara Menon, the coastal strip of land deep down the Indian peninsula lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea was referred to as *Kerala* in ancient Sanskrit texts⁶. The various terms referring to Kerala in the ancient texts do not define the exact confinement of these regions as ascribed with these names⁷. The Kerala coast is known to Arab navigators of 6th

³ For a brief reading on the formation and evolution of the language of Malayalam, read, S V Shanmugham, . "Formation and Development of Malayalam.". *Indian Literature* 19, no. 3 (1976): 5-30. There are numerous debates on the origin of the language. While some scholars consider its separation from the ancient Tamil after 7th century, there is another view that pushes back the separation of the two languages to the prehistoric period.

⁴ *Male* was the term used for Malabar from the time of Cosmos till 11th or 12th centuries by the Arab navigators and others who came to the shores to trade spices. Refer William Logan, *Malabar Manuel, Vol I* (Thiruvannanthapuram :Kerala Gazetteers, 1887), 1.

⁵ According to William Logan, this term was used by the ordinary native people of Malabar to describe their land. The term *Malayalam* means the hill country. Refer, Logan, *Malabar Manuel Vol I*, 1.

⁶ A Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (Kottayam:DC Books,2012),21.

⁷ The case is slightly different when it comes to the colonial period and the later post independent period.. For instance, the region of Malabar in the present Kerala state is a non-political term that simply resonates with the colonial idea as opposed to the status of Malabar as an administrative district of the Madras Presidency during the British colonial period (1792-1957). Malabar during the British colonial period comprised the regions of the present districts of Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Malappuram, Palakkad, and some areas of Chavakkad Taluk in the present day Thrissur district.

century CE as *Male*⁸. Kerala is also referred to as Malabar in some of the ancient works that come in the post-Common Era. Sreedhara Menon believes that Albiruni (973-1048 AD) was perhaps the first Arab writer to call the region by the name Malabar⁹. The Arab travelers have used a variety of forms of the term Malabar. These terms include *Malibar*, *Manibar*, *Mulibar*, and *Munibar*, all these terms being reminiscent of the word *Malanadu* or the hill country¹⁰. The status of the term Malabar during the period of Arab travelers signified a broader region consisting of the coastal areas ranging from Mangaluru to Kanyakumari. In brief, the coast of present-day Kerala, along with the coasts of South Canara and Kanyakumari (in present-day Tamil Nadu state) were referred to as Malabar by the Arabs. The Portuguese writer Durate Barbosa notes that the land of Malabar ends at Cape of Kumari (Kanyakumari)¹¹. The term has geographical, political, and administrative bearings associated with it. In particular, the term Malabar has gone through a state of metamorphosis on account of its description and inclusion of geographical space. The Persio Arabic sources mention the term *M'bar* referring to the present-day Madurai. This term has been sometimes used mistakenly to denote Malabar by some scholars, although *M'bar* did not gain popularity and the term *Pandinandu* (land of Pandyas) served to signify the region. This may be because of the similarities between the terms Malabar and *M'bar*, which might have resulted in practical difficulties during the later years.

The term *Keralam* was used in prominence to explain and describe the land of Malabar by the indigenous people¹². Various theories are postulated by scholars on the etymology of the term. Some scholars have attempted to derive the term *Kerala* from the word *Kera*, which means coconut in Malayalam. This argument is supported by the fact that coconuts are grown

⁸ Logan, *Malabar Manuel*,1.

⁹ Menon ,*Survey of Kerala History*,22.

¹⁰ Sreedhara Menon does not completely agree with Logan's claim of the term Malabar having a semi foreign origin. According to Logan, the term Malabar comes from the combination of two words; *Mal*, which is a Dravidian word for hill or mountain and, *bar*, which either, is an Arabic word meaning 'continent', or a Persian word which means 'country'. Sreedhara Menon states that the term can also possibly be a corrupted form of the term *Malavaram* which means hilly land. See,Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*,22

¹¹ Durate Barbosa,*The Book of Durate Barbosa,An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitans*Vol II,trans,Mansel Longworth Dames(London:Hakluyt Society,1921) ,102

¹²Logan , *Malabar Manuel*, Vol I,1.

abundantly in the region being the primal produce from this area. Therefore, the term *Keralam* as the ‘land of coconuts’ can be most appropriate¹³.

References to Kerala are found in literary sources of both indigenous as well as foreign origin. The indigenous references come in the ancient Sanskrit, Tamil, and the later Malayalam literature. The foreign accounts on Kerala are found in the classical records, the travelogues of Chinese and Arab writers, etc. References to the land become abundant in the European records following the 15th century, with elaborate information on the topography, vegetation, culture, and polity of the land.

The earliest Sanskrit text concerning Kerala is the *Aitareya Aranyaka*. It mentions that the people of *Cherapadah* were one among the three people who went astray from the ancient injunctions and values. References to the region of Kerala can also be found in the great epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as well as in the Puranas such as *Vayu*, *Matsya*, *Padma*, and *Skanda* and *Markandeya*, although these were written down and compiled at a later period. There is a gradual increase in the references to the region from the Mauryan times¹⁴ which is suggestive of the expanding geographical knowledge about the southern parts of the Indian subcontinent.

¹³ Another group of scholars hypothesizes that the term has evolved from the Tamil term *Charal*, which means a mountain slope. This theory stands on the ground of the largely mountainous terrain and topography of Kerala. The theory has gained less currency owing to the lack of references to *Charal* in any of the ancient texts. There is another view suggesting the term *Keralam* or *Cheralam* as evolved out of the amalgamation of two words *cher*, which means sand and *alam* that means region when combined means slushy land..Refer, K Achutha Menon, *Ancient Kerala*,7.

Sreedhara Menon finds another interpretation that can be attributed to the term *Cheralam*. as *Cher* or *Chernta* meaning ‘added’, which means the land that is added to the existing regions of mountains and hills. This interpretation supports the geological interpretation given to the Parasurama legend, see, Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 21.

¹⁴ Early references to the land are also found in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, a 4th century BCE work on statecraft. It mentions the Churni river (identified as Periyar river), as a place where pearls can be found. The Ashokan inscriptions also have references for Keralaputras as one of the kingdoms bordering the Mauryan Empire, For details see, D C Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka* (Archaeological Survey of India, 1956), 14. Sreedhara Menon points out that although Katyayana and Pathanjali, who lived in the 4th and 2nd centuries respectively before Common Era, were acquainted with the land of Kerala, Panini who lived in 6th century BCE or earlier was never aware of the region Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, 26. This suggests the knowledge of the southern parts of the subcontinent

The Tamil Sangam works are a treasure trove of sources on the ancient history of Kerala. The Sangam period which flourished during the first five centuries of the Common Era depicts the lands and people, the rulers as well as the culture of the region in a detail. The Sangam works such as *Patittupattu*¹⁵, the *Agananuru*¹⁶, the *Purananuru*, and the *Silappathikkaram*¹⁷. have direct references to the land. The poems of Paranar, Kapilar, and Auvvaiyar need special mention in the case as their poems mainly deal with the life and culture of Kerala¹⁸. Other Sangam works that can be cited in reconstructing the history of Kerala include *Kurumtokai* and *Nattinai* which are collections of love poems. Post-Sangam works such as *Muthollayiram*¹⁹ and the collection of hymns by the *Bhakti* saints too add up to the knowledge of the region²⁰.

The references to Kerala in the predominant language of the region; Malayalam, have come up only after the 12th and 13th centuries. This was because Malayalam emerged as a distinct language from the Tamil bearings only by the 9th century CE. As most of these literary works were composed under the patronage of the ruling class, the authenticity of the texts needs to be doubted. Nevertheless, the very little amount of historical information available from these works is a great source of light to the shady times.

spreading into the Northern parts in the post-Buddhist times. Interestingly surety about the geographical boundaries that actually defined the region of ‘Cherapadhah’, as it was known in ancient times to the people of the pre-Christian era is doubtful.

¹⁵The *Patittupattu*(Ten Decards), is an anthology of 100 poems, subdivided into 10 equal sections, each of the section composed by a particular poet in praise of a Chera King, thus becoming the most important work for the reconstruction of the political history of Kerala during the Sangam age

¹⁶ The *Agananuru* is a collection of 400 love poems whereas the *Purananuru* is a collection of 400 poems, that deals with external affairs like war, government and administration.

¹⁷ *Silappathikkaram* narrates the story of Kannaki despite referring to the Chera king Senguttavan and the history and geography of the region.

¹⁸ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History* 29.

¹⁹ The *Muthollayiram* which was composed in 800 CE makes references to the Cheras and their capital city of Vanchi.

²⁰ Several other references to the region of Kerala can be found in the hymns of the Alwar and Nayanar Bhakti saints like the Kulashekhara Alwar, Nammalvar, Sekkilar, etc

The accounts of foreign travelers provide invaluable information regarding the lands and the people of Malabar from the perspective of an observer. The pre-Portuguese travel writings and narratives had a surge from the 13th century beginning with accounts of Marco Polo. Even before the Portuguese advent, there had been several travelers who had ventured to Kerala for various purposes producing numerous accounts. John of Monte Corvino, (13th century), Friar Odoric of Pordenone (visited Quilon in 1322 CE), Friar Jordanus of Severic²¹ (visited Quilon in 1324 CE for doing missionary activities among the local Thomas Christians), John Marignolli of Florence (visited Quilon) are some of the travelers who had left valuable impressions of the land before the Portuguese.

Other travelers who visited the Malabar Coast in the 15th century include the Italian traveler Nicolo Conti, whose description of the Cochin port remains as the 'earliest foreign notice of the port'²² Abdur Razzak, the Persian ambassador who visited the Zamorin of Calicut towards the middle of the 15th century provides a good description of the region of Kerala and records on the role played by the Arab community in the Malabar trade²³. Travelers who visited the Malabar coast in the 15th century and left valuable notes of the region especially of the Calicut port are the Russian traveler Athanasius Nikitin, the Genoese traveler Hieronimo Di Santa Stefano, and lastly, the Portuguese diplomat who arrived in an Arab ship to Calicut in the guise of a Muslim, Pero De Covilham. He arrived in the Malabar Coast almost a decade before the arrival of Vasco de Gama²⁴.

The Portuguese period has many sources referring to the region of Kerala. Since the Malabar coast was their first point of contact with India, numerous observations on the region were produced. The works of Ludovico de Varthema, Duarte Barbosa, Caesar Frederick, and Ralph Fitch provide enormous information about Kerala in the 16th century. It was Barbosa

²¹ He was the first foreign author to give an account on the Marumakkathayam system that existed in Kerala.

²² Nicolo Conti, "The Travels of Nicolo Conti in the East in the Early Part of the 15th Century", trans, J Winter in *India in 15th Century Being A Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India in the Century Preceding the Portuguese Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope*, edited by R H Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857), 19. Also see Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 35.

²³ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 35.

²⁴ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 35.

who commented that the common tongue prevalent in Malabar was *Maliama*²⁵, which might be perhaps the earliest reference to the language in a foreign account. Also, there are accounts of the travelers who left descriptions of the region in the 17th century such as those of Pyrard de Laval and Pietro Delle Velle.

Different travelers throughout the ages had different ideas on the stretch of Malabar. According to Barbosa, the Malabar region began from the place called Cumbola near the Hill Dely and ended at the Cape of Comorin²⁶. For the British, the land of Malabar began from a place called Kavayu which is located almost a mile north of Mount Dely²⁷. In general, the early Portuguese writers used the term Malabar to describe the region of present-day Kerala and Southern Karnataka.

2.1.1 Early History of Kerala and the idea of Ecozone

The birth of Kerala is popularly attributed to the legend of Parasurama that explains Kerala as the region that was made by parting the seas. Analyzing the legend can hint at a possible retreat of the seas that might have exposed the region. However, the early history of Kerala before the age of Sangam is not comprehensively reconstructed. Scholars like H D Sankalia believe that the presence of Paleolithic man is almost impossible in the region owing to the absence of quartzite which was the main stone type used for the tool making as well as due to dense impregnable forests²⁸. However archaeological pieces of evidence suggest the presence of the settlements that can be ascribed to the Mesolithic and the Neolithic man. Archaeological research since 1988CE in the various districts of Kerala has led to the discovery of two Mesolithic sites, one Neolithic site, and eleven Megalithic sites in Thiruvananthapuram,

²⁵ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 6.

²⁶ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 2. Cumbola is the place near Chandragiri river where the Vijayanagar kingdom is said to end. Mount Dely is the present day Ezhimala, which was one of the prominent land falls considered by the early Arab and European travelers.

²⁷ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, footnote 1.

²⁸ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 50.

Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Kannur²⁹. The Iron Age of Kerala coincides with the Megalithic age, where the material culture of the Megalithic people is characterized by the erection of huge stone monuments like capstones, umbrella stones, menhirs, dolmens, cists, as well as urn burials. Such practices are associated with the dead and the burial monuments are either made with laterite or granite or are modeled as pottery³⁰. The variation in the typology of these monuments differs according to the physiography of the region. While the eastern mountainous regions of Kerala have an abundance of granite and charnockite, dolmens are seen in plenty. The rock-cut chambers, menhirs, and umbrella stones are found in the laterite plains of the region, and the urn burials with menhirs are seen in the alluvial beds³¹. Interestingly, the megalithic culture (300BCE -1ST century CE) of the region partially overlaps with the Sangam period (1ST -5TH century CE)³².

The life and culture of the megalithic people of Kerala before the Sangam era are largely obscure. But scholars have been extensively depending on the Tamil Sangam works to reconstruct the political social and cultural life of the people during the Sangam age. Kerala being a part of the ancient *Tamizhakam* comes under the concept of *Tinai*s which was extensively deployed by historians to reconstruct the economic activities and production pattern of Kerala too. The *Tinai* concept divided the physiographic region of *Tamizhakam* into five distinct ecozones which were marked with their geographic features and occupational pattern. These five *Tinai*s were; *Kurunji* (hills and forests), *Mullai* (pastures and meadows), *Palai* (dry and parched lands), *Marutam* (agricultural lands), and *Neytal* (coastal regions). These specific

²⁹ For a detailed reading on the findings and typology of the discoveries, read, P Rajendran, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries from South Kerala", in, *Currents in Indian History, Art and Archaeology*, edited by UP Arora, AK Sinha, AK Singh (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 1999), 115-124.

³⁰ For further reading on the Megalithic culture of Kerala and the various archaeological findings associated with the culture, refer, L A Krishna Iyer, *Kerala Megalithis and Their Builders* (Madras: University of Madras, 1967).

³¹ V Vinod & Athira R Pillai, "Iron Age in Kerala, A Short Summary", in *ICON, Journal of Archaeology and Culture*, ed, Amly Chandra, J N Pal, Brijesh Rawat (2016), 100.

³² Although the initial findings on the Iron Age culture in Kerala began with the British, it was only in 1940 CE that systematic studies and excavations began under Krishnaswami and Anujan Achan. Recent researches under Rajendran and Peter in various regions of Kerala have revealed new insights into the chronology and typology of the culture. Researches are still underway to determine the exact period of the Iron Age culture in Kerala. For a brief summative reading on the Iron Age Culture in Kerala, read, Vinod and Pillai, "Iron Age in Kerala", 99-109.

regions had their deities for worship and also engaged in occupations suitable to the geography and topography of the region³³. However, recent scholarships by Manu V Devadevan has contested the idea of *Tinai* as a yardstick in determining the economic activity of a specific region and had brought new insights into the concept. According to him, *Tinai*s are imaginative and figurative spaces created by poetic imaginations without having an actual defined geographical existence with specificities. The author argues by taking up the example of the region of Kodumanal which despite being coming under the *Palai tinai* had the archaeological findings confirming mining and trading. Besides according to him, the landscapes that the *tinai* evoke can be connected to across the countries and continents of the earth and therefore is not unique to *Tamizhakam*. He states numerous examples from various Sangam works to conclude that the *Tinai*s were figurative structures that were “employed as metaphors for expressing the moods and moments of love”³⁴.

Politically, the ancient *Tamizhakam* was divided between the *Muvasar*; *Cheras*, *Cholas*, and the *Pandyas* with the *Cheras* ruling the major chunk of present-day central Kerala. The northern region of the present-day geographical space of Kerala was ruled by the *Mushikas* of Ezhimala, and the southern portion of the space by the *Ay* kings leaving the central region to the *Cheras*³⁵. Besides, there were many unmarked spaces, especially in the thickly forested mountainous regions of the Western Ghats that were not under the direct domain of any major political powers of the region. Such communities have evolved as a subculture with little cultural interactions with the changing political, social and economic sectors thus resulting in the formation of the hill people ‘or the ‘forest people’, who we recognize today as the *Adivasis*.

The concept of ecozone is invariably related to ecology and the environment. Ecozone is defined as a biostratigraphic zone with distinct ecological features³⁶. While ecozones represent large areas of the earth surface that are separated from each other by physiographic elements thus

³³ For a detailed reading on the *Tinai* Concept, refer K Sivathamby, “Early South Indian Society and Economy: The *Tinai* Concept”. *Social Scientist* 3, no.5 (December 1974): 20-37.

³⁴ Manu Devadevan, “Lying on the Edge of the Burning Ground: Rethinking *Tinai*s”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, no 2, (2006): 199-218.

³⁵ For brief insights into the polity of the region, read A Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala History and its Makers* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2008), 20-36 (Three Chapters)

³⁶ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/ecozone>

creating a distinct space of isolation for the evolution of plants and animals over long periods. These physiographic features act as natural barriers and inhibitors in facilitating the migration of species to the neighboring ecozones thus creating unique evolutionary and developmental history for the flora and fauna present there. Taking into consideration the above facts, it is not rightful to consider Kerala as an ecozone neither in the ecological sense nor in the cultural sense. The geographical features of the land, especially the Western Ghats had undoubtedly shielded the region from being a highly accessible region, however, it had not prevented the region from developing strong cultural and commercial networks across the Arabian Sea as well as the Indian subcontinent. An analysis of the various geographical features and the role of human agency in transforming the space may provide further light in this regard.

2.2.0 An Examination of the regional particularity of Kerala: Some features

Kerala is located in the southernmost part of the Indian subcontinent as a narrow strip of land with the Arabian Sea bordering the West and the Western Ghats lining its Eastern borders. The region was covered largely with forests right from ancient times with an abundance of tropical flora and fauna still boasting its richness, uniqueness, and distinctiveness. The rainfall has played a key role in sustaining the vegetation of the land as the region enjoys the influence of two monsoon seasons. The Southwest monsoon season (known in the region of *Edavapathy*) that begins from June and extends for over two months contribute to the major share of rainfall received by the land. The North East monsoon (*Tulavarsham*) which commences from October, despite having its influence more in the southern region of Kerala, North-East monsoon contributes to the overall rainfall impact on the state³⁷. The tropical climate together with the influence of South West Monsoon had enabled the growth and sustenance of vegetation and wildlife thus making the region one of the biodiversity-rich divisions³⁸.

The abundance of water bodies and the influence of monsoon makes the region lush and green throughout the year. The topographical, as well as the climatic condition of Kerala, had facilitated the growth of multiple crops such as spices, coconuts, and food grains. Despite its

³⁷ Srikumar Chattopadhyaya and Richard W Franke. *Striving for Sustainability: Environmental Stress and Democratic Initiatives in Kerala* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2006), 37.

³⁸ Human activity resulting in the depletion of the animal and plant wealth of the region has made the area and its biodiversity threatened, thus listing it under one of the Biodiversity Hot Spots of India.

small geographical size, the availability of raw materials and its proximity to the sea had attracted the attention of ancient traders, thereby making Kerala one of the indispensable destinations of spice trading ships during ancient times.

The land of Kerala is divided based on its physiography into High Land, Middle Land, and Low Land. This longitudinal division is now considered the best way to describe the physiography of the land. These divisions are based on the topography and the natural features associated. The Low land has backwaters and lagoons and is known for the paddy fields and coconut groves. The Middle land or the Midland region is abundant with tropical flora and paddy fields. The Highlands are relatively elevated and has a mountainous terrain with thick rain forest cover. Today the Highlands is known for the cultivation of tea, coffee, and rubber.

The understanding of geography is integral for studying the history of a particular region due to the role played by the geographical and climatic factors in contributing to the historical progress of the people residing in that specific region. While geography is never the determining factor when it comes to cultural progression, it is an influencing agent in aiding the human agent who determines the course. As with the case of Kerala, it's peculiar geographical positioning with the protection of Western Ghats along its Eastern borders, and the vast Arabian Sea lashing along its Western side had provided Kerala with a separate yet unique existence. The mighty Western Ghats gave Kerala limited access to other parts of the Indian subcontinent facilitating the development of a political and cultural system fairly different from the rest of the country. The settlement pattern that developed in Kerala had the direct influence of its regional particularity. The presence of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean in its Western and Southern region respectively had saved it from the harm of isolation that could have shrouded its existence due to its geographical inaccessibility from the Eastern and Northern sides. The thriving trade and commerce through the Arabian Sea had linked Kerala with the regions of West Asia, the Arabian Worlds, Europe, and Africa, to a greater degree than with the rest of the Indian subcontinent. The cultural exchange between Kerala and the rest of the Indian subcontinent was limited to the various passes within the Western Ghats, the cultural elements from the north took more time to penetrate and gain roots in Kerala than the elements from the lands beyond the seas.

The Aryanization³⁹ of the land was a later phenomenon and was a slow process as compared to the northern parts of India.

A brief examination of the various geographical factors that provided Kerala with its unique regional particularity needs a special concern in the course of the discussion as the cultural milieu that developed in Kerala during the 1st century BC and 1st century BCE directed the growth and evolution of Christianity and Christian cultural space in Kerala.

The Mountains and Hills

The Western Ghats borders Kerala on its Eastern side exists as a continuous chain of mountains protecting Kerala like a natural fort. Like the mighty Himalayas that protect India from the Northern side against the Central Asian attacks as well as the Cold Winds, the Western Ghats provided limited access to the political forces from the rest of the subcontinent to penetrate and invade the region of Kerala, thus providing it political security. It also acts as a climatic shield that blocks the South West Monsoon winds from crossing to the region of Tamil Nadu thus making the rear lands a rain shadow region. The presence of the Western Ghats gives Kerala the benefit of ample rainfall that adds to the floral and faunal abundance of the region.

The political security provided by the Western Ghats kept it aloof from the external invasions and Kerala had to worry only about the internal distractions and political mess, which was not worsened by the inter-regional power plays. This moderate political stability meant the establishment of safe trading links, both within the geographical region of present-day Kerala as well as beyond the seas. The Western Ghats not only acts as a protector but also as a rejuvenator and a nurturer too. With the region receiving copious rainfall facilitated by the southwest monsoon, the region becomes favorable for farming and agriculture.

The presence of several passes within the Western Ghats, like the Palghat gap, Perambadi pass, Periya pass, Tamarasseri pass, Bodhinaykannur pass, Aryankavu pass, and the Kambam pass facilitates Kerala's connection with her neighboring states. The existence of these passes therefore did not leave Kerala to remain completely aloof and culturally isolated from the larger

³⁹ The term Aryanization is used here to signify the spread of northern cultural influences such as the Vedic culture, Jain and Buddhist elements and not understood exclusively as the movement of people.

subcontinent. Furthermore, it might have been through these passes that the primitive penetration into Kerala was possible.

The Seas, Backwaters, and the River Systems

The coastline of Kerala, which is about 580kms is flanked by the Arabian Sea, has played an integral part in shaping the history of the region. The proximity of the region to the sea had been instrumental in establishing most of its external contacts with foreign nations.

It is estimated that at least forty-four rivers are crisscrossing Kerala, many of which build into numerous small deltas that assure ample space for human habitation and cultural progression⁴⁰. *Bharatapuzha* or *Nila* is the longest river that flows through the land and is one of the primal valleys that witnessed human habitation. Other famous rivers in the region are Periyar, Meenachilar, Pamba, Kabani, etc. The most important characteristic feature of these rivers is their perennial feature which is the result of the abundance of rainfall received by the state. Further to the river system, the network of backwaters that run parallel to the coastline in the forms of lagoons, lakes, and estuaries play a key role in enriching the water resources of the land and adds to the nutrient quotient of the surroundings with deposits brought in by the rivers which pass through these backwaters. The presence of numerous rivers and backwaters has facilitated the transportation of goods and commodities from the hills and mountains to the midlands and the plains. The rivers and backwaters have acted as connecting links between the various terrains and the people by serving as the channel for the transportation of cultural elements. The rivers had functioned as the arteries for inland trade and transport until the emergence of modern-day road and rail transport. Even today, the waterways of Kerala are utilized for the transportation of goods and people into the interior regions as well as in the region of Kuttanad.

2.2.1 The limits of assigning regional particularities

It is true to the point that Kerala has natural boundaries that give it a unique regional character, but there is enough proof of cultural syncretism and acculturation that had happened over the ages in this narrow strip of land. Going by the idea of a ‘crossroads’ put forth by Sanjay Subrahmaniam on referring to the case of India. He says that India has to be seen not as a

⁴⁰ For details regarding the river system in Kerala, see, Chattopadhyaya and Franke, *Striving for Sustainability*, 41

civilization, but as crossroads or a space that is open to external influences rather than as an exporter of its culture to other neighboring countries⁴¹. This is true in the context of Kerala to an extent as it did not claim to vividly exporting its culture to any countries but had indeed remained as a crossroad for various cultures and traditions to breed and sustain.

The presence of various passes or gaps as mentioned in the previous section along the Western Ghats had allowed Kerala's contacts with her neighboring regions. The Palghat gap which connects the region of Palakkad with the plains of Coimbatore has not only acted as a channel for contact but has also acted as a regulator of rainfall to the plains of Coimbatore. It was through these gaps that the Chola powers expanded into Kerala and the Chera powers had expanded themselves to the Tamil region during the earlier times. The gap has also acted as a trade link between the two regions even from ancient times which could be understood from the discovery of Roman coins from around the region⁴². The invasions of the Mysore rulers like Tipu Sultan and Haidar Ali were facilitated through the gap. The gap has also existed as a channel for cultural exchange, which is perceived by the nature of the culture and lifestyle of the region, having a mix of Kerala and Tamil elements⁴³. Likewise the Periyambadi pass provides a connection of the Kerala region to Coorg whereas the Tamarasseri and Periya pass connects Kerala to Wyanad and Mysore. The presence of other passes like the Bodhinayakkannur pass links the high ranges of Idukki with the Madurai region. The Aryankavu as well as the Kambam passes deliver accessibility to Idukki with the regions of Theni and Tirunelveli. Honourable mention needs to be given to the region of Nanjilnadu in the Kanyakumari district of present-day Tamilnadu, which was the locus point for the emergence of the Travancore state. The region can be considered as a hybrid cultural zone with elements of Kerala and Tamil culture in complete coexistence. However after the reorganization of the states the region has been added to the Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu.

⁴¹ Sanjay Subrahmaniyam, *Is Indian Civilization a Myth?*(Permanent Black, 2016,), 4

⁴² For a detailed reading on the various Roman objects that were discovered from India read, S Suresh,*Symbols of Trade: Roman and Pseudo Roman Objects Found in India*(New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 2004). Also see, Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 16.

⁴³ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 16.

2.2.2. Human agency and the transformation of the physiographic of Kerala and its effect on the production pattern and reorganization of society

Interestingly the demographic pattern of Kerala is directly linked with the physiography of the region. Although the present state of Kerala is one of the most densely populated states in India with a population of 3.34 crores, the demographic distribution in ancient times followed a different pattern in response to the physiography and climate. The transformation of the physiography of Kerala is often centered around the paradigm of the Brahmin village settlements that are considered pivotal in bringing changes in the production pattern and distribution of land. The idea is primarily rooted in the legend of *Parasurama* who is credited as the creator of the land. The *Parasurama* legend says that after creating the land of Kerala, the sage supposedly brought around 64 Brahmin families of which 32 were made to inhabit the region of present-day Kerala. These families were the pioneers in starting the transformation of the Malabar region. Out of these, 24 Brahmin settlements in Kerala are on the banks of the rivers like Churni, Pampa, and Nila. Like other cultures and civilizations across the world, the rivers were the region of inception of civilization in Kerala too. However, K S Madhavan in his thesis argues that the concept of considering Brahmins as the sole human agency to bring the transformation of the region and the catalyst for the subsequent state formation is done at the expense of completely ignoring the earlier settler cultivators of the land who had begun the process of production in the region. He argues that although the donations and surplus generated by the earlier settler cultivators of the land were instrumental in nurturing the temple centered Brahmin settlements, there has been a ‘historiographical silence’ on the non-Brahminical cultivator settlements⁴⁴

Keeping the legends apart, the habitation of Kerala was rather slow due to the presence of the Western Ghats and dense forests. Even though ancient Kerala belonged to the Tamil macro-region, the region had considerable characteristics that made it distinct from *Tamizhakam*. The presence of many water bodies transversing the strip of land as well as its privilege in enjoying both the southwest as well as the northeast monsoon made Kerala a distinctive entity within the Tamil macro-region. Besides, Kerala was abundant with thick tropical rain forests which were habited by exotic flora and wild fauna. Except for the coastline that ran along the length of

⁴⁴ K S Madhavan, "Primary Producing Groups in Early and Early Medieval Kerala: Production Process and Historical Roots of Transition to Castes (300-1300CE)" (PhD diss., University of Calicut, 2012), 1-4.

Kerala, the whole region between the Western Ghats and the coastline was forested. Therefore the settlements were mostly limited to the plains. Moreover, Kerala's brisk trade contacts with the West Asian region gave different cultural exposure. This resulted in the formation of different socio-political and economic structures, diverse from, the cultural formation of the original special entity to which it belonged.

The topography and physiography of Kerala might have differed considerably from that of today. The recurring floods and landslides to which Kerala is still prone might have had a considerable impact on the geography of Kerala throughout its existence in time and space. The transformation of the physiographic of the region of Kerala owes much to the gradual settlement of the Neolithic men, who might have percolated into the Western Ghats of Kerala through the Southern Canara and Palghat gap⁴⁵. These early migrant settlers chose to confine their activities between the belt of river Bharatapuzha to the northern side and Pamba towards the southern side. The large-scale expansion of these primitive people to the rather midland and coastal regions might have occurred in the Iron Age or the Megalithic Age, during which the subsistence production was not enough to meet the requirements of their increasing needs. The use of iron tools helped these people to clear the forests to bring more areas under cultivation. Megalithic remains of agricultural tools such as plows, sickles, bill hooks, cutting knives suggest agricultural practices at an advanced state in the region⁴⁶. Field agriculture was prevalent in the plains or the lowlands of Kerala. Rajendran and Iyer opine that cultivation by clearing the forests might have been practiced by the Megalithic people in the midlands and the highlands with the aid of iron implements⁴⁷. Therefore, there was a gradual movement of people from the highlands to the midlands and the lowlands which also resulted in the formation of settlements in these regions. The steady shift of the people from the mountains to the lower elevations resulted in the transition of various crops and their introduction to the plains. These crops included spices which began to be profusely produced in the region during the later period.

⁴⁵ K N Ganesh, *State Formation in Kerala, A Critical Overview*(Banglore:ICHR,2010),35

⁴⁶ Vinod and Pillai,"Iron Age in Kerala",105.

⁴⁷ P.Rajendran and CSP Iyer, *A Preliminary Report on the Characterization of Copper and Gold Ornaments of the Aripa Megalithic Culture*(1997),61-66.

The impact of trade in transforming the physiography of Kerala should be understood from the fact that the surging demands for spices might have resulted in the clearing of more forested lands to create agricultural spaces. The Roman and West Asian connections of the coast, coupled with the rising demand for spices and other tropical raw materials demanded expansion of the areas under cultivation.

The development of agriculture saw the evolution of a society and cultural space that was related to the system with several occupations associated with agriculture and farming forming the spaces called the *nadus*. While the term *nadu* is never associated with an administrative or political nomenclature in modern times, it had an association with the agrarian system. Gundert Malayalam Dictionary clearly defines the term *nadu* as cultivated land⁴⁸ which signifies this rhetoric. However, the word is simply translated as *Rajya*(country) and *dikku* (direction) in the Malayalam dictionary titled *Shabdhatavali* produced in the 1930s⁴⁹. The creation and appropriation of the surplus generated from the agrarian activities by various communities gave ample scope for the development of an economy and social structure based on a power hierarchy. The *Nadus*, therefore was a geo-cultural area that formed the basis for the social and political formation of the pre-modern Kerala. Thus the early medieval period in Kerala saw the gradual transformation of its landscape from *Kadu* to *Nadus*

2.2.3. Certain concepts and categories affirming the regional particularity

Like the topography of Kerala, the social systems of Kerala have particularities. Owing to its isolation from the onslaughts of the north Indian social and political transformation, Kerala developed a unique style of social structure. The matrilineal system of inheritance (*Marumakkathayam*) and the system of *sambhandham* are such systems particular to the region. The fencing practice of *Kalari* and the *Panikkars* held prominent status in the society. True to the core *Kalari* was practiced by all the communities despite their religion. Jornada notes of finding Christian *Kalaris* and Christian *Panikkars*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Herman Gundert, *A Malayalam and English Dictionary*, Manglore: C Stolz, Basel Mission Book & Tract Depository, 1872), 539.

⁴⁹ *Shabdhatavali Vol 2* (1930), 1146.

⁵⁰ Antonio Gouvea, *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, trans. Pius Malekandathil (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2003)

The distinct style of Kerala architecture is another particularity that was resultant of the peculiar existence of the land. The style exhibited notable differences from the Dravidian style common to the region of *Tamizakam* and the larger parts of Southern India. The determinant factor for the choice of such an architectural style being the abundance of rainfall that required the slanting roofs to prevent waterlogging. The *Kathakali*, *Koodiyattam*, *Teyyam*, and other related dance forms reflect the signature style of Kerala. The regional particularity of Kerala thus facilitated the evolution of its unique style of art architecture and culture

2.2.4. Elements of Regional Particularity in the Architecture of Kerala- Vernacular and Religious

Geography, climate, and availability of raw materials are the primary deciding factors of the architecture of any region. Yet some secondary factors influence the architectural style of a region, such as the lifestyle, belief systems, general occupation, etc. Likewise, certain tertiary factors are defining and limiting architectural rules. While the primary factors are arbitrated by laws of nature and the secondary factors by cultural elements, the tertiary factors are a direct reflection of the social structure and economic status of individuals. It is the secondary and tertiary factors that bring variations in the broad architectural style of a particular region.

The general architecture of Kerala, like any other region, was modeled in a way that complied with the geographical and climatic conditions. Situated in a region with a tropical climate and relatively heavy rainfall, the buildings of Kerala were fashioned to suit the challenges of the excessive downpour during monsoon yet not compromising resistance to the scorching summer heat. While the highlands experience a cool climate, the midlands and the lowland regions of Kerala are relatively hot and humid. The region also experiences both southwest as well as northeast monsoon thus making the land prone to almost six months of rain⁵¹. The challenges posed by nature are tackled by constructing ancient buildings with wood, mud, stones, and palm leaves. In a 13th century letter attributed to John of Monte Corvino, it is mentioned that "... the houses are wretched, being built of sandy mud and usually thatched with

⁵¹ The early Portuguese travelers considered it as the 'winter' season of the Malabar Coast.

leaves of trees”⁵². The roofs were made with slopes so that the rainwater hardly gets stagnated. The sloping roofs reduced the area of direct sun exposure, thus minimizing the surface area getting direct sunrays especially during the noontime when the sun is positioned overhead. Owing to its equatorial proximity the Malabar region receives direct sun rays all around the year. Therefore thatching of the roofs with palm leaves and plastering with mud was important to ensure the regulation of the internal temperature of the buildings to a pleasant state.

An important secondary factor that shaped the idea of architecture was the belief in *Vastusastra*. Even today a staunch belief in the *Vastusastra* rule the construction of almost all buildings in Kerala, religious or secular. Ashalatha Tampuratti, who has worked on the traditional architectural forms of Kerala focusing on the residential buildings have noted that the people of rural Kerala are attached to the traditional architectural practices and tend to follow some ancient principles like the positioning of the building within the area of construction, auspicious perimeters and measures, location of the kitchen and the heath, point of entry to the building, and many more⁵³. The traditions are often considered as essentialist conventions during building residential as well as non-residential buildings. Traditionally the village architect or the *Asari* was responsible for laying out the plan of the buildings. Even in modern times, the people tend to stick to these traditional values so much so that even a plan created by the modern architects are presented to the traditional architect or the *Asari*, to verify whether the plan suits the idealities of the traditional *Vastu* principles. Interestingly these practices are followed by people irrespective of their religion and castes⁵⁴. The role of *Asaris* in the construction of religious structures was considered indispensable and unavoidable.

⁵² “Letter from Friar Menentillu, A Dominican, Forwarding Copy of A Letter from John of Monte Corvino”, *Letters from Friars*, 61.

⁵³ Ashalatha Tampuratti, “Study of traditional architectural forms in Malabar Coast “. (PhD diss., University of Kerala, 1994). 18.

⁵⁴ Even today auspicious days or naals are observed before beginning the stone laying ceremony of the buildings, may it be religious or secular. In addition people go to the *Asaris* and seek their assistance in examination of the chosen land, the plan and the *vastu*.

Stella Kramrisch prefers to term the architectural style as the Kerala School of art owing to its distinctiveness from the larger Dravidian style characteristic of southern India⁵⁵. Ferguson compares the architecture of the Jains in the Canara and Kerala region with the style followed in Nepal, thus linking two patterns with each other⁵⁶. The researcher is not certain about the ancient architectural styles followed in Nepal and hence consider it beyond the scope of commenting and analysis. However considering Nepal's connection with the Jain monk Badrabahu, the founder of the Digambara sect popular in South India⁵⁷, the possibility for the link between the two styles can never be wholly denied. James Menachery is convinced of Ferguson's argument and finds resembling traits between the ancient Thomas Christian churches and the styles of Nepal referring to the similarities in appearance of the reverse slope of the eaves above the verandah and the wooden sloping roofs of the verandah ⁵⁸.

The Anonymous Writer in the Ship of Cabral has some interesting observations about the houses of Kerala during the initial year of the 16th century. The structure and position of the houses are mentioned briefly by the author. The houses in Calicut are placed at a distance from one another. They are build of stone and lime and are covered with palm leaves on top. The doors are large and well-worked. Around the house, there is an encompassing wall within which there are many trees as well as lakes to bath and wells to drink water from⁵⁹. A typical Kerala house is fashioned to suit the requirement of the climatic conditions. The houses had low sloping roofs with verandas around the structure to minimize the direct impact of sun rays on the lateral walls. The houses had an open internal courtyard or *nadumuttam* or *naduthalam* around which other rooms of the house were positioned to allow ample ventilation. The houses which had a single *nadumuttam* enclosed by four blocks is termed as a *Nalukettu*. More elaborate and huge residences and palaces had two or four *nadumuttams* were termed as *Ettukettu* and *Pathinaru kettu* respectively. Traditional houses had small windows with wooden jails that let in the required light to lit the interiors of the room.

⁵⁵ Stella Kramrisch, "Dravida and Kerala in the Art of Travancore". *Artibus Asiae Supplementul 11*: 1-3-+5-47+49-51.

⁵⁶ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 140.

⁵⁷ Badrabahu, the Jain monk is said to have been lived in seclusion in Nepal for 12 years around the 2nd century BCE.

⁵⁸ James Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 140

⁵⁹ "The Anonymous Narrative", 78.

The floors of the houses varied according to the economic and social status of the people. While residences of *rajas* and landlords had black colored flooring prepared by mixing crushed and powdered jaggery, coconut shell, sand, and lime in egg whites, coconut water, and vegetable juices into a paste. The prepared paste was applied on the leveled floor and polished with a variety of banana. Timber panels were also used to make floorings specially to make floors of the upper stories. However, the houses of those down the economic and social ladder were plastered with clay mixed with cow-dung and cow urine.

The religious architecture of Kerala in the ancient period can be divided into the Jain, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic. The temples of Kerala differed in style and model from the Dravidian architectural characteristics to a great degree despite occupying the same region of southern India that saw the development of the Dravidian school of art and architecture.

Due to the climatic condition of the region and the copious availability of raw materials, most of the buildings were made of wood, mud, and stone. Therefore, the geographical setting and the climate pattern of Kerala, together with their cultural exposure have played a major role in shaping the architectural models of the land; both secular as well as religious

2.2.5. Elements of regional particularity in religious tradition

Traditions are sometimes accompanied by regional specificities. The religious traditions often adapt to the regional particularities and assimilate to them by inventing or reforming their legacy. The abundance of forested lands in Kerala with the profusion of snakes resulted in the formation of *Kavus* or sacred groves that are particular to the Hindu culture and faith. In some instances, the traditions overlap regional particularities and encroach the contagious spaces and cultures. The tradition of the Thomas legend that remains as the backbone of the Kerala Christian antiquity and existence in general, and the Thomas Christians in particular is bound to certain regional specificities. The idea of sacred geography as exhibited by the Thomas Christians is bound to the areas that were assumed to have had the consecrated churches by Thomas the Apostle. Interestingly until the 20th-century migration of Thomas Christians from Travancore to Malabar, the Thomas Christians had lived and inhabited lands that were near to the locations of the seven churches. Barbosa mentions finding their settlements at Caymcolan (Kayamkulam) in

the Kingdom of Coulam (Kollam) and states that many of these Christians live in the in-lands with ‘Gentiles’⁶⁰. For them, although the above places were sacred, we are not sure of the extent to which the sacredness meant.

The Thomas Christian concept of sacredness might have been directly influenced by the ideas of sacredness nurtured by the religious communities such as the Hindus, the Jews, Buddhists as well as Jains. The concept of sacredness has varied according to the historical and political evolution of the Jews. In pre-Temple times, the Jews have conceived and developed the idea of vertical sacredness wherein the world was considered holier in proximity to its position to the mountains. However after the temple was built, their sacred space was confined to it until being taken over by the Torah after the destruction of the temple and further later to individual Jewish homes and their synagogues in the diasporic times⁶¹. Early Christianity also shared the shifting concept of sacredness with the Jews partly due to the political and social circumstances that affected its existence as well as partly due to the development and spiritual development of the religion through the ages. Nonetheless, the Christian concept of sacredness is extended to the locations that are characterized and associated with the preachings, healings, and martyrdoms of important individuals belonging to the religion⁶². Hinduism on the other hand does not draw sharp lines of differentiation between the sacred and the profane spaces. Unlike the other Indic religions like Hinduism, which had defined forms of nature, spaces, and in some cases, nature itself as sacred; Thomas Christians had their ‘sacred place’ as manifested in the tomb of Thomas the Apostle located at Mylapore near Chennai. Another ‘mount’ that had been considered sacred by the community is the mount of Malayattoor, which is assumed as the place of refuge by the Apostle as a refuge when he was chased and attacked by the ‘Brahmins’. Thomas traditions say that the Apostle managed to escape to the Pandyan Kingdom later through this route⁶³. Malayattoor and Mylapore sound similar although they occupy different geographical and spatial positions. Besides, both regions have different etymology where Mylapore means the land of peacocks –*mayil*-peacock and *poorvam* means land

⁶⁰ Durate Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, trans. Henry E J Stanley (London: Hakluyt Society) 157.

⁶¹ Geoffrey Simminis, *Sacred Spaces and Sacred Places* (University of Calgary), 27

⁶² Simminis, *Sacred Spaces*, 30-31

For the Christians in general, the term ‘mount’ has a lot of significance. This is because Jesus had several episodes of his life over and near the mountains⁶⁴. The Bible contains numerous references to mountains and hills in both the Old⁶⁵ and New Testaments. This can be attributed to the general topography of the lands of Israel and Palestine which has a hilly terrain. The mountains are significant and considered as structures that are ‘closer to heaven and God, owing to its elevated position. The hills and mountains were not only a source of water but also served as the only features that gave a distinction to the otherwise plain topography of the lands that were filled with clay and reeds.

Thus the Thomas Christians might have translated the idea of considering ‘mount’ as a sacred geographical feature. The Highlands of Kerala which is hilly in terrain contained the shrine of Malayattor that was considered an important sacred place by these Christians.

2.3.0 A note on the religious makeup of Kerala during the period

Religion has played a key role in shaping the Kerala society and culture throughout history. Other than the Indic religions of ‘Hinduism’, Buddhism and Jainism, Kerala also experienced the influx of foreign religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Kerala during the 1st century CE was a composite society with multidimensional networks of interactions spreading across the social-cultural and economic platforms. The extensive trade relations with the Roman and the Arab world have exposed it to the various peoples, cultures, and faiths. The commercial connections and networks of Kerala had been pivotal in the introduction of various West Asian religions to the land. The region had a considerable number of Jews, Greeks, and Romans who had already arrived and settled in these parts on account of the commercial activities. Moreover, the arrival of Buddhism and Jainism into the southern parts of Karnataka by the 3rd century BCE and its gradual percolation into Kerala had a further impact in shaping up

⁶⁴ References to the various incidents in the life of Jesus over and near the mountains are mentioned in the Gospels of Mathew and Luke. These are , The Temptations of Jesus (Mathew, 4:8) , The Sermon the Mount (Mathew, 5: 1-12),Healings (Mathew, 15:29-31), The Transfiguration of Jesus to Mosses and Elijah (Mathew, 17:1-13) ,The final discourse of Jesus (Mathew, 24:3, Luke 22: 39-49),The Commissioning of the Apostles (Mathew , 28: 16-20) , Ascend to Heaven (Acts ,1 :9-11)

⁶⁵ References to mounts in Old testaments are plentiful. Some of them being Resting of Noah’s Ark (Genesis ,8 : 1-5),Reception of the Ten Commandments by Moses (Exodus ,20: 1-17) , Sacrifice of Issac (Genesis, 22: 1-19)

the belief systems of the people. The presence of Buddhist and Jain ruins in the region between Palayur and Quilon⁶⁶ (which was indeed the borderlines of the ancient Thomas Christian demography) throws an interesting light on the people and their beliefs. It should be noted that the belt is located between the two major rivers of Kerala, the Bharatapuzha in the north and the Pamba towards the south, which has been the regions that contained trading ports and considerable human settlements.

Jainism had reached Kerala through the Tamil country, into where the faith was introduced by the Jain monks who proceeded to southern India along with Chandragupta Maurya. In Kerala, Jainism became popular in the regions of Wayanad, Palakkad as well as in the interior regions of Travancore⁶⁷. The revamp of Brahminism and the *Bakthi* movement had a detrimental impact on the Jain faith leading to the gradual disappearance of the religion from the Malabar coast.

Buddhism, on the other hand, had more acceptance and popularity in Kerala than Jainism. The arrival of Buddhism to the Malabar coast is considered as an effect of the initiatives by Asoka⁶⁸. The Sangam works like *Manimekhalai* discuss several Buddhist doctrines in addition to giving details on various kings who had embraced and patronized Buddhism for good⁶⁹. The prevalence of the religion in some areas of Kollam and Allapuzha districts are ascertained by the finding of numerous Buddhist images from these areas. Incidents of finding Buddhist images from places such as Onaampilly (near Kalady), Kottapuram (near Kodungaloor), Karumadi(near Ambalapuzha), Baranikkavu (near Kodungaloor), Mavelikkara, Marudurkulangarai (near Karunagapalli, Pallikkal, Ramapuram (near Palai) and Kovilkadavu near Marayoor throws

⁶⁶ Pius Malekandathil, St Thomas Christians: A Historical Analysis of their Origin and Development up to 9th Century AD". In *St Thomas Christians and Nambudiris Jews And Sangam Literature*. Edited by Bosco Puthur(Kochi:LRC Publications,2006). 8.

⁶⁷ KKN Kurup, *Aspects of Kerala History and Culture*(Collage Book House, 1977), 11

⁶⁸ There are evidences from the Asokan inscription that point to the arrangements done by the Cholas, Pandyas and Keralaputras for the well being of people and animals of their countries, For Details see, Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism, A Historical Sketch, Vol I* (London, 1921), 89.

⁶⁹ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 86.

significant light on the existence of Buddhism in the region⁷⁰ Hindu temples such as the Kuruumba Bagvati Temple at Kondungaloor is believed to be Buddhist shrines before they were incorporated into the Hindu religion⁷¹. However, the religion started declining gradually from the 8th century following the ‘Hindu revivalism’ completely disappearing from the region by the 12th century⁷².

The exact period of the arrival of Brahmins to Kerala is still an open-ended debate, While the 8th century CE is often considered as the period that marked the mass entry of Brahmins to Kerala, many scholars assert the possibility for having a small presence of Brahmins in the region before the period. Scholars believe that the Brahmins might have reached the region either via the Konkan coast through South Canara or through the *Dakshinapada* that connected North India to Southern India, especially to the ancient *Tamizhakam*. It should be assumed that the Brahmin migration might have happened by various waves and phases at a gradual yet steady pace.

2.3.1. A note on the non-Indic religions of early Kerala and the problem of using the term ‘religious communities’ in describing them

The regional particularity of Kerala not only belated its Aryanization process but also provided a breeding ground for religions that originated in the West Asian region. It has been a case of immense interest for the social scientists of Kerala to understand the causes of the unique popularity and development of West Asian religions in the land of Kerala. The location and the late Aryanization of the region are often considered as the prime reasons. The seeds of Judaism, Christianity, and later Islam had reached Kerala through the ‘seas’ that had facilitated active trade links to West Asia, Africa East Asia, and Europe. Although Judaism had hardly any scope of proselytizing it couldn’t expand as Christianity and Islam did in the years to come. Till today a considerable number of Kerala populations are comprised of Christians and Muslims⁷³.

⁷⁰ Ajith Kumar, “Buddhism in Kerala and its Socio Cultural Ramification”, in *History Today, Journal of History and Historical Archaeology* (New Delhi: The History and Culture Society, Nov, 19, 2018).

⁷¹ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 86.

⁷² Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 87.

⁷³ Refer to the 2011 census report for the actual figures. The figures might have slightly differed at present owing to the almost 9 year lapse from the period of last census.

It is largely accepted that the Jews had arrived on the Malabar coast long before the arrival of Christianity to Kerala. The claim is held based on the reference in the Bible which infers the earliest Jews to arrive on the Malabar coast are the sailors in the ship of King Solomon who ruled over Israel in the 10th century BCE. PM Jussay supports the theory by stating that the earliest Jews might have reached Malabar Coast by these ships. He supports his argument by pointing out the presence of words of Tamil origins in the Hebrew Bible⁷⁴.

“{10:22} For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.”⁷⁵

Although it is hard to arrive at a conclusive inference on the arrival of Jews to Kerala during the times, owing to the ambiguity of place names henceforth mentioned, which is solely deduced from the flora and fauna mentioned here. Such exotic flora and fauna are rightfully seen on the Malabar coast only⁷⁶. Mundadan suggests that the reference to flora and fauna of the region of Malabar cannot prove the existence of the Jewish colonies in the region, but can give satisfactory evidence on the possible Jewish trade contact with the land⁷⁷.

Kerala was also the cradle for the development of Christianity long before it could establish in Europe. Interestingly Kerala is the adobe to the oldest Christian community in India as well as has the largest population of Christians living in India⁷⁸. Christianity might have reached Kerala through the trade routes that were functional in the early years of the Common era. Tradition associates the arrival of Thomas the Apostle to Kerala as the key ‘event’ that led to the formation of the Christian community in the land. Christianity had always utilized the trade

⁷⁴ PM Jussay, “A Jewish Settlement in Medieval Kerala”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 57, (1996): 277

⁷⁵ 1 Kings 10:22, Kings James Bible eCopy, p 203

⁷⁶ Mathias Mundadan considers the argument of Jewish existence in Kerala during the time of Solomon as a mere speculation. He put forth the verses from various translations of Bible into scrutiny to arrive at the conclusion. For further reading, see Mathias Mundadan, “The Jews in Kerala- A Response”, in *St Thomas Christians, Jews Nambudiris and Sangam Literature* (Kochi: LRC Publications, 2006), 142-145.

⁷⁷ Mundadan, “Jews-A Response”, 145.

⁷⁸ Zoe C Sherinian and Qambel Maran, “Syric Chants from South India” (review), *Asian Music* 37, no 2 (Summer/Fall 2006): 158-161.

routes for its expansion. It has reached various pockets along the Indian Ocean region especially to areas that had a Jewish presence. A detailed discussion on the genesis, evolution, and expansion of the community is discussed in the subsequent sections.

More or less amalgamated to Kerala society- a faith becomes a religion once it gets organized. As far as the Christians are concerned, they lived a life not very different from the indigenous population of the Malabar coast. The Jews and later the Christians held their existence in a land that hardly had anything to do with the Abrahamic heritage. Therefore, these religions having uprooted from their birthplace and allowed to thrive in a foreign land were influenced by the 'Hindu' or in a broader sense the Dravidian or the Indic' beliefs and conceptions while retaining a distinctive faith in their religions. While the base of these faiths had roots in the original teaching and tenets of the religion, the superstructure of the religious community was created by the environs in which these religions developed and thrived in India.

Most importantly, in the Sangam and post-Sangam period, the religious plurality was very common. Unlike today when the religious conversion is synonyms to switching of a person's complete identity including their name and family name, the social structure of the region of Kerala did not consider the conversion to a particular religion as an 'identity revolution'. For them, different religions were different paths of spirituality. It should be noted that the early term used for this different way was *Margam*, which means way. Therefore the way to salvation can be any way provided it is rooted in goodwill. The idea explains the integration of the Thomas Christians to the social fabric of the Malabar society despite departing in their faith.

To understand the influence of Judaism on the Thomas Christians and its role in nourishing the Thomas Christian community by direct as well as indirect means, it is important to grasp the early history of Jews in Israel, the creation of the diaspora, reflections on their homeland and their ideas of Messiah. The following sections condense the ideas in a concise yet lucid fashion.

2.4.0. Early history of the Jews in Israel

The Jews in Israel trace their lineage and legacy to Abraham, who is said to have proceeded to the land of Canan following a divine call. Abraham, his son Issac and grandson

Jacob lived a nomadic pastoral life throughout the land of Canan before finally settling in the border of Egypt⁷⁹. Jacob and his 12 children are considered as the inceptors of the 12 tribes of Israel. Though Jacob and his twelve sons had been favored by the Pharaoh and flourished in Egypt, they had lost their privilege and became enslaved in the long run⁸⁰. The Israelites over time were slaved by the Pharaohs of Egypt under whom they had to endure immense troubles. The rise of Moses as a liberator of Israelites from Egyptian slavery and their crossing of the Red Sea into the land of Canan forms a major part in the Jewish discourse on Exodus. Paul Goodman places the approximate date of the Exodus to 1220 BCE⁸¹. This event is considered as the central pole into which the Jewish history and culture cling, as the people were now free to live as a nation and attain their promise land and accomplish their providential mission.

The backbone of the early Jewish life was centered around the Torah, which contained the Ten Words (Ten Commandments in the Bible) that were delivered to Moses by ‘Yehohwah’, their God. These Ten Words along with the inclusion of certain rites, observations, guidelines, and laws comprised the Torah. The book was the guiding light for the Jews in all aspects, religious, political, social, and moral. The Israelites progressed to their mission of invading the land of Canan under the leadership of Joshua, who had succeeded Moses⁸². Although the Jews were able to overrun the country of Canana and subdue its inhabitants, they had to face constant threats from their enemies. It was at this juncture that the rise of a section of leaders or commanders called Judges emerged. They were known for their leadership abilities as well as their physical strength and prowess and were considered protectors against the ravages of rebels and enemies⁸³. However, the rising disparities within the various tribes of the Israelites and the increasing threats from the external enemies made the Israelites consider the importance of a single ruler or King who can unite the tribes and ensure peace and prosperity for the people. It was thus that the monarchy incepted among the Israelites, with the first ruler being Saul.

⁷⁹ Paul Goodman, *History of the Jews* (Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1945) 1, -2

⁸⁰ Edward Henry Palmer, *A History of the Jewish Nation from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Centre for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1883), 21

⁸¹ Goodman, *History of Jews*, 3.

⁸² Palmer, *History of Jewish Nation*, 30-31. Also read Goodman places the date of the invasion of Canan to 1160 BCE, Goodman, *History of Jews*, 5.

⁸³ Goodman, *History of Jews*, 6-7.

Nevertheless, it is the reign of David, who succeeded Saul that is celebrated by the Israelites for peace and prosperity. King David was a man of great prudence and power that his capture of Jerusalem and making it the eternal city of the Jews was a remarkable event in their history itself. It was David who made Israel a major political power and made his dynasty the legitimate dynasty of Jewish rulers. David's son and successor to the throne, Solomon was equally meritorious as his father who exalted the prestige of the Israelites by building the temple at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah⁸⁴. However, the policies and politics of Solomon did more harm than good to the young kingdom of Israelites which ultimately resulted in the division of the kingdom into two; Kingdom of Israel and Kingdom of Judea.

The kingdom of Israel had to face numerous challenges in the form of tribal disturbances and also foreign encroachments. This political insecurity ultimately culminated in the invasion of the Kingdom by the Assyrians and the subsequent capture of numerous Israelites as slaves. These captives could not hold on to their Jewish identity and subsequently amalgamated into the host culture, thus making them unknown to history as well as marking the end of the Kingdom of Israel. There have been recent claims by various peoples and tribes to the legacy of the lost tribes. The modern revelation of connecting the myth to one of the lost tribes in North East India has sparked fresh debates on the issue⁸⁵. Although the historians have not agreed upon the possibility, the Rabbinate in Israel accepts the claims.

Contrary to the above case, the Kingdom of Judea positioned on the other side of the river Jordan had better sustainability although it endured frequent political instabilities. The kingdom of Judea acted as a buffer state between the powerful empires of Egypt and Babylonia resulting in its survival at the mercy of either of the parties. However, it was difficult for the Kingdom of Judea to keep its stability being a buffer state and this ultimately resulted in its complete downfall. Failure to provide military transit to King Necho of Egypt against the Babylonians and Necho's subsequent razing of Judea in retaliation marked the onset of its fall. Judea thus fell into the political race instigated by Egypt, wherein Judea rebelled against Babylonia inviting her wrath. The ultimate ravaging of Judea under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

⁸⁴ Goodman, *History of Jews*, 8.

⁸⁵ The Bnei Manesha people of Manipur

and the capture of a large population of Judea led to the ultimate fall of the once-prosperous and flourishing nation.

2.4.1. The destruction of the first temple of Jerusalem and the nature of the Diaspora and recreation in the Jewish Diaspora today

The vandalization of the city of Jerusalem and the destruction of the First Temple left a deep memory of pain and sorrow in the minds of the Jewish people. The capture of a considerable number of populations by Babylonia and their subsequent life in the unknown land had them longing for the Promised Land. Although the condition of the Jews in Babylonia was not as pathetic as it was in Egypt, the community was no longer living in the Promised Land nor offering sacrifices in their Temple. The Temple of Jerusalem was indeed an important aspect of the Jewish religious rituals and much of their social existence. However, the Jewish people began to adjust to their doom by creating houses of prayer at various places of their residence. They also eradicated the practice of idolatry and upheld the practice of monotheism. The Jewish state of existence had emancipation following the rise of Persia under Cyrus and the downfall of Babylonia. Although some Jews under the leadership of Prince Seshbazzar returned to Jerusalem after the fall of Babylonia, many others resorted to staying back in Babylonia where they had gone attached. The importance of this period is stressed in the context of the 'reminiscent history' being propagated in today's Iran where the region existed. The attempts to build the Second Temple of Jerusalem although started with the arrival of the first batch of Jews from Babylonia, the construction was completed only after the arrival of another group under the supervision of the High Priest Joshua in 516 BCE⁸⁶. Although the Jews had made enemies with the Samaritans due to religious and ideological differences, the Jewish social and religious life became more or less stable following the efforts and reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. The contact with the Hellenic world following the arrival of Alexander had brought the Jews not only into the game of larger power politics but also to the realm of commercial activities. Gradually Judaism had its branches spread to the Greek-speaking world, with Alexandria being an important center,

⁸⁶ Goodman, *History of Jews*, 18.

to Babylonia with Aramaic as the lingua franca as well as sustenance in its homeland Judea in Palestine⁸⁷.

The entry of Antiochus Epiphanes into the Jewish internal affairs had resulted in them being subjected to religious persecution for the first time⁸⁸. The Maccabean Revolt against the Syrians although had gained the Jews some extend of independence, their struggle with the Syrians continued to persist⁸⁹. This ultimately forced them to enter into a treaty of alliance with Rome which was gaining political and commercial success during the time. The Roman intervention in the political affairs of Judea resulted in the fall of the Hasmonean dynasty which was established after the Maccabean Revolt and in the rise of the Herodian dynasty. The political anarchy that followed after the death of Herod had plunged the Jews into a period of instability. The period also saw the rise of various sections within Judaism- Pharisees(the conservatives), Sadducees(Hellenic influences), and the Essenes (precursors to the rise of Christianity)⁹⁰.

The rise of Christianity on one hand and the Roman authority over the Jews had considerably affected the Jewish population, with many of the Jews embracing Christianity and many others fleeing the land in fear of Roman assaults. The final blow to the Jewish independence came after the short yet peaceful reign of Agrippa I and the succession of his son Agrippa II, during whose time rebellion and war with Rome broke out. Despite the strong Jewish resistance, Judea fell to the Roman sword after which follow the massacres and finally the burning of the Second Temple (70CE)⁹¹. The subsequent destruction and annihilation of Jerusalem that occurred in the 2nd century CE, following the Second Jewish War against the Romans had ended the Jewish struggle for independence from Rome⁹². The result was the dispersion of the Jews into different parts of the then known world, away from their foes. The Jews who escaped the Roman tyranny of the war had to face formidable treatment from the

⁸⁷ Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and Origins of Christianity* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2002),19.

⁸⁸ Goodman,*History of Jews*, 24.

⁸⁹ Burkett,*Introduction to New Testament*,19-20.

⁹⁰ Goodman,*History of Jews*, 29-31.

⁹¹ Goodman, *History of Jews*, 47.

⁹² Delbert Burkett,*Introduction to New Testament*, 26-27.

Syrians, Egyptians, Greeks as well as Roman neighbors. Therefore, they chose to flee to regions where they were more strangers expecting a better tolerance.

The Jewish dispersion had started from the time of their life in Egypt. Slowly had they spread in the region of Egypt. A great number of them had remained in Babylonia after the end of their captivity. Those who remained in Egypt had gradually spread to the neighboring region of Crynacea as well. It was from Alexandria that they were able to reach out to the larger world through the established trade routes. By the time they had established contacts with Rome, the Jews had already spread to Syria as well as to the Greek Islands⁹³. Most Jews who had moved out of Israel and came in direct contact with the Greek culture especially in the region of Alexandria had become Hellenized. The term Hellenization first comes in the book of Macaberes. It was after the war with Rome that the Jewish dispersion reached its zenith, making them scatter to regions far and wide including Spain and Gaul. .The Jews had also found their way to the Malabar coast as settlers around the same time.

2.4.2. Medieval Jewish identity in Kerala and their references to Christianization and others.

The arrival of Jews to the Malabar Coast was through the commercial networks that were operating from the region across the Arabian sea. The Jews who were based in Alexandria and formed a part of the trading system would have been well acquainted with the region of the Malabar coast and its prospectus of becoming an ideal land for settlement. In all probability, the Jews might have taken the sea route to reach the Malabar Coast along with their families. The Jews being traders settled and operated from the towns which were close to the coastline. The Jewish traditions mention places like Palur, Pullout, Maliankara, and Madai as their earliest settlements⁹⁴. Although the Jews gradually withdrew from the regions of Palur and Pullout, the

⁹³ Goodman,*History of Jews*,52

⁹⁴ P M Jussay, "The Jews in Kerala",in *St Thomas Christians and Nambudiris Jews And Sangam Literature*, ed Bosco Puthur.(Kochi:LRC Publications,2006), 128.

various place names near these places still bear the epithets relating to their erstwhile Jewish connections⁹⁵.

The Jews were known to be good merchants and traders with considerable wealth accumulated with them. They were organized into trade guilds or *Anjuvanams* and enjoyed great privilege owing to their excellence as traders. They were given various copper plates by the local rulers entitling them to trade and other privileges. The earliest and the most important document reflecting the grants made to the Jewish community is the 11th century CE⁹⁶, Jewish Copper Plate, which was a Royal Deed issued by the local ruler Bhaskara Ravi Varman Kulashekhara to the Jewish merchant Joseph Rabban granting him 72 privileges and prerogatives of the aristocracy⁹⁷. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai has made extensive studies on the grant and its relevance in the politico-social and strategic contexts of the time and had brought out the real cause of granting these privileges as a way to acquire support from the Jews in the intermitted war with the Cholas⁹⁸.

The Jews on the other hand had accepted the social structure and the customs of the land to a great extent. They had adopted the matrilineal system of succession and marriage between the cousins was common. They also adopted the Hindu custom of tying of *tali* differently. The sister of the bridegroom used to tie the *tali* to the neck of the bride just before she left her house for the wedding ceremonies in the synagogue⁹⁹.

⁹⁵ A hill near Palayur known as *Joothakunnu* and a pond by the name *Joothakulam* are still known by the same names by the local people. This is a clear indicator of the Jewish connection of the place. Moreover it should be noted that most of these places like Palur, Maliankara etc were among the places where Thomas the Apostle consecrated the churches. Furthermore these places still have a strong Christian presence. Palur located near the present day Guruvayoor and Chavakkad was the last outpost of the Thomas Christians prior to their mass migration to the Malabar in the beginning of the 20th century CE.

⁹⁶ The exact date of issue of the plate is debated. However the most accepted date was determined by MGS Narayanan .

⁹⁷ For reading the Copper Plate, see *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol III 1984-95 (1973) 66-69.

⁹⁸ For more details and further reading on the Copper Plate grant the context of issuing it ,read, Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*(Kottayam;National Book Stall,1970)

⁹⁹ Samuel Hallegua, “The Jews of Kerala, A Response”, *St Thomas Christians, Jews Nambudiris and Sangam Literature*.ed. Bosco Puthur,(Kochi:LRC Publications,2006),139.

The fame of the Jews as excellent traders, their knowledge of the world as well as their proficiency in various languages made them cordial to the rulers. The flow of the European Jews to Malabar depreciated after the death of Joseph Rabban. The disintegration of the Chera empire by the 12th century gave rise to smaller states and principalities called the *natturajyams* which were in constant fights with each other. The political instability caused due to the fall of the Chera Empire had therefore created less favorable situations for trade and commerce that gradually decreased the Jewish migrations. The subsequent rise of the Zamorin and his zest for expansion to the port of Cranganore was checked by the Raja of Cochin with the support of the Jews. The Zamorin on the other hand joined hands with the Arab Muslims who were the greatest enemies of the Jews in trade to plan a Jews ravage. The onslaughts on the Jews by the Muslims claiming their interference in the pepper trade harmed the Jewish population in Cranganore. This situation was followed by the massive flood of the river Periyar in 1341 CE that silted the estuary at Cranganore forming another smaller estuary near the present-day Cochin. This shift in the course of the river dramatically shifted the Jewish trading hub from Cranganore to Cochin. The bombarding of Cranganore¹⁰⁰ by the Arabs destroyed the major trade outpost of the Jews. This was followed by the massacre and annihilation of the Jewish life and property in 1524CE¹⁰¹. However, it was the Portuguese attack at Cranganore in 1566CE that completely halted the Jewish occupancy of the place¹⁰². These unfortunate incidents made the Jews completely abandon their operations at Cranganore and escape to regions under the strong control of the Raja of Cochin. Therefore, by half of the 16th century, most of them shifted into the region of Cochin where they build their synagogue near the palace of the king.

The Jews were never a homogenous community by itself. There were divisions based on birth into *Meyuhasim* and *Meshuhararin*. The *Meyuhasims* were pure-blooded Jews, whereas the *Meshuhararins* were those with a mixed origin as having been born out of the concubines of the *Meyuhasims*. The group also comprised of slaves who were working under the purebloods. The *Meshuharains* were always looked upon by the *Meyuhasims* despite some of the former having gained better fortunes. This has resulted in contestations and quarrels amongst the Jewish

¹⁰⁰ For further reading on the bombardment of Cranganore, refer Sheik Zaynuddin, Tulfat-al-Mujajiddin, chapter IV

¹⁰¹ Jussay, "Jews in Kerala", 133.

¹⁰² Jussay, "Jews in Kerala", 133.

community¹⁰³. The situation further worsened following the dispute within the *Meyuhasims* between the two descendants of Joseph Rabban on the matter of succession. The Zamorin of Calicut was approached by the two parties to intervene, Utilizing the situation, the *Meshuharains* plotted against the *Meyuhasims* with the Zamorin. The Zamorin who was waiting for the best opportunity to drive the Jews off Cranganore utilized the situation to destroy the entire Jewish as well as Christian habitation in the area¹⁰⁴. The Jews from then on did not stay at the place of Cranganore and made sure that they exit the place before sunset.

The Jews who had fled to Cochin were treated well by the Raja and were allowed to build their synagogues and settlements near the royal palace. Long before the pain of the massacre at Cranganore subsided, the Jewish community found insecurity following the migration of a new batch of Jews from Europe, (mainly from Spain following the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition) as well as from West Asia. These Jews had lighter skin color, unlike the Malabari Jews who were dark which again resulted in the rise of the differentiation within the Jewish community into Black and White Jews¹⁰⁵. They were called *Paradesi* or Foreigner Jews and their synagogues were called *Paradesi* Synagogue. According to PM Jussay, the differentiation on the origin and skin color of the Jews into black and white Jews “became cancer in the body of the community”¹⁰⁶.

The early Jews who had migrated to the Malabar Coast were from Alexandria which was the hub of Hellenistic Judaism. However, the community has amalgamated so much to the native culture of Kerala that their Hellenic elements are either diffused or disappeared. Another critical part of the Jewish identity in Europe and West Asia was the memory of victimhood in the medieval period. This was largely absent among the Jews of Kerala at least until the massacre at Cranganore.

¹⁰³ J B Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (London:1993), 24-25.

¹⁰⁴ Jussay, “Jews in Kerala”, 133.

¹⁰⁵ For further vreading on the controversies and contestaion between the Black and White Jews, refer to J B Segal, “White and Black Jews at Cochin,the story of a Controversay”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Britian and Ireland*, no 2 (1983),228-252.

¹⁰⁶Jussay, “Jews in Kerala”. 135

2.5.0. Early Christians in Kerala: The Thomas Christians and the Historical debates

The identity of the early Christians of Kerala is claimed by the Thomas Christians of Kerala who not only considers themselves as the oldest Christen community in Kerala but also as the oldest surviving community in India. They trace their legacy to the arrival and preaching of Thomas the Apostle, who according to the tradition visited and lived in Malabar Coast between 52 CE and 72 CE. The community has passed the traditions to generations through their folk songs such as *Thomas Rambaanpattu*, *Margamkali pattu*, and the *Veeradiyanpattu*¹⁰⁷ According to the various surviving traditions, Thomas the Apostle had arrived in Cranganore (modern Kodungallor in Thrissur district) in 52 CE and had toured the Malabar Coast stretching from Palur to Quilon, preaching the Gospel and converting the natives especially *Nambootiri* families to the Christian faith. The tradition claims that he had established ‘seven and a half churches’ or *ezharapallikal* at various key trading centers of the region before eventually attaining martyrdom at Mylapore near Madras in Tamil Nadu¹⁰⁸. The legend of Apostle Thomas had defined the identity and morality of Thomas Christians throughout their period of existence and continues as the backbone of their legitimacy. Interestingly the very legend has become the bone of contention within the academic circle and had quelled numerous debates and discussions on its historicity. The major reason for the disagreement among the scholars is the lack of direct written records referring to or confirming the event. A similar tradition exists in North India, where Apostle Thomas is said to have served at the court of the Indo-Parthian king, Gondophernes, later baptizing him and his family. The legend is represented in the 3rd century apocryphal work titled *Acts of Thomas*, which was originally written in Syriac. Stephen Neil who is very critical about the Acts of Thomas and the Thomas Legend in North India believes that with the very little information that can be gathered from the *Acts of Thomas* it is beyond the scope to historicize the Apostle’s presence in India. But whatever may be the case the prospect of Thomas the Apostle in South India remains as an accepted surviving legend whereas the presence of the Apostle in North India survives as a historical event owing to the direct source relating to his arrival as mentioned in *Acts of Thomas* and the references to the name of King Gudnapar (identified as King Gondophernes) in certain Parthian coins unearthed from the region.

¹⁰⁷ P U Lukas, *Purathanapattukal* (Kottayam:1910),141.

¹⁰⁸ The legend relating to the martyrdom of Thomas the Apostle is described by Barbosa . See, Barbosa , *East Afric and Malabar* ,175-176.

Unlike the *Act of Thomas* and the representation of Apostle Thomas in North India, there is hardly any reference to the Apostle in South India in the work. This is rather interesting as south India has the deepest bearing of the legend, unlike North India. The reason for the absence of reference to Thomas tradition in South India can be assumed for the reason that Apostle might have visited the Malabar Coast after he visited North India. Interestingly the period of Apostle Thomas in South India is believed to be from 52 CE to 72CE, and the period of the Indo-Parthian king is the first century CE. D.N Jha adheres to the popular suggestion of considering king Gondopherous as Kaspar, one of the three kings of the East who play an important role in the Christian tradition¹⁰⁹. Eugene Tisserant suggests that Apostle Thomas might have reached South India through the Persian Gulf and Socotra¹¹⁰.

Whether Apostle Thomas visited Malabar Coast is a question for deep debate amongst the scholars¹¹¹. A serious examination of the problem considering the politico-social milieu of the time can provide reasons to either approve or disapprove of the case.

The reasons that can be taken in favor of the problem outweighs those that could reject the arrival of Apostle to South India. Firstly, there exist a strong living tradition amongst the Thomas Christians of Kerala concerning the arrival, proselytization, and martyrdom of the Apostle. Pius Malekandathil refers to the legend as the ‘historical nucleus’ to which the entire Christian legacy clings¹¹². The *Margamkalipattu*, *Thomas Rambanpattu*, *kalyanapattu*, etc suggest the depth of the tradition. The *Thomas Ramban pattu*, otherwise known as *Mar Thoma Geethagal*, is said to have been originally composed by the first disciple of Apostle Thomas in Malabar. However, the present form of the song which has reached us today is a 16th-century reinterpretation done by Thomas Ramban Mallikal, the 48th in the hereditary line of priests¹¹³.

¹⁰⁹ DN Jha, *Ancient India In Historical outline* (New Delhi:Manohar Publications, 2014),115.

¹¹⁰ Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity* ,6.

¹¹¹ A very interesting article on the actual possibility of Thomas the Apostle is written by H Comes. According to him Christianity in Malabar was brought by the early merchants and missionaries who came to India and it was them who brought the legend of Thomas to the land as he finds that similar traditions existed in the coastal regions of Gujarat and Konkan as well. Read , H Comes, “Did St Thomas Really Come to India”, *Thomapedia*, ed by George Menachery (Ollur , 2000), 23-24.

¹¹² Malekandathil, “St Thomas Christians”,7.

¹¹³ Viswanathan, “Legends of St Thomas”, 27-44.

Secondly the Thomas Christians of Kerala are the only Christian community in India to claim the legacy of Thomas the Apostle. Despite the historical fact of Apostle Thomas visiting North India, especially the region of Taxila there are hardly any sources or living traditions supporting the existence of Thomas Christian legacy or the presence of Thomas Christians there. If at all King Gondophernes was converted to Christianity along with his family, at least some of the contemporary text or anecdote should have referred to it. Moreover, Gondophernous being a powerful king had minted coins, but none of them depict the conversion to the Christian fold. Thirdly the affluent trade relation between the Malabar Coast and the West Asian region supports the possibility of Apostle Thomas visiting Kerala. As Stephen Neil quotes” If apostle Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus of Nazareth, had wished to take ship and go to India, there was nothing to prevent his doing so”¹¹⁴. Numerous pieces of evidence suggesting the profusion of trade and commerce between India and the Western world rules out the impossibility of Apostle Thomas’ visit to India. J Thorley in his article “The Development of trade between the Roman Empire and the East Under Augustus”, states that even during the period of the Roman Republic incense from Arabia, spices from India, and perhaps an occasional load of silk from China had managed to reach Roman markets through various eastern merchants¹¹⁵. Mac Culloch in his book *A History of Christianity* considers the claim of the Thomas Christians as’ not beyond the bounds of possibility’¹¹⁶ considering the vigorous trade relations of Rome with the Indian subcontinent. Another claim that has come up recently approving the visit of Apostle Thomas to North India is abstractly linked to the tradition of the tomb of Rauza Bal which is assumed to be the tomb of Jesus by certain amateur historians. If at all the place had any association with the life or death of Jesus, possible references might have appeared in the *Acts*. Therefore, the claim of life of Jesus in India, as well as his burial, can never

¹¹⁴ Stephen Neil, *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984),30.

¹¹⁵ J Thorley , “The Development of trade between the Roman Empire and the East under Augustus”, *Greece and Rome* 16,no 2(October 1969):209.

¹¹⁶ Diarmaid Mac Culloch,*A History of Christianity* (London:Penguin Books,2010) 248.

be taken as concrete proof to ascertain the visit of Apostle Thomas to North India unless scientific studies are performed¹¹⁷ .

The serious point in question that arbitrates the case is the possible confusion of Thomas of Cana and Thomas the Apostle. Both persons, despite having existed centuries apart, have an unavoidable connection with the history of the Thomas Christians of Kerala which further makes the question complicated. While Thomas the Apostle lived in the 1st century of the Common era and claims to be a direct disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, Thomas of Cana was a merchant who emigrated from West Asia along with a group of 72 Christian families and settled in Cranganore. Secondly, there are loopholes within the legend contradicting the course of history and historical evolution. The fact of Thomas baptizing the *Nambootiris* of Kerala should have a direct corroboration with the date of the Aryanization of the region. According to the scholars, the Aryanization of Kerala was a slow yet steady process that started with the immigration of the first batch of Brahmins in the 3rd century BCE, immediately following the advent of the Jains and the Buddhists to the region. The process reached its climax around the 8th century CE when a large batch of Brahmin immigrants settled in Kerala and established themselves by defeating the Buddhist priests¹¹⁸. Interestingly the sacred geography of the Thomas Christians of Kerala, and the places associated with the early traditions of the Thomas Christians and their churches correspond to the regions of early Brahmin settlements calls for further debates regarding the problem. This can be inferred by referring to the names of the 32 *urs* mentioned in *Keralolpathi* and comparing those with the places of Thomas Christian presence in Kerala as mentioned in *Jornada*. While indulging in such a study, there could arise doubts on whether the association of the Thomas Christian settlements to that of the early *Nambootiris*, as a conscious invention to ascertain the Thomas Christian claim of their erstwhile Brahmin legacy to maintain their superior social existence. There have been arguments from scholars who assume that ‘the baptizing theory from the *Nambootiris*’ itself is an appropriated and fabricated fact created by the community to enjoy a privileged position in the Kerala society. It could be another means that the early Christian converts created to assimilate themselves to the larger society.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed reading on the various facts ,mdebates and discussion on the issue, read, *Holger Kersten, Jesus Lived in India: His Unknown Life Before and After Crucifixion* (Penguin Books, 2001).

¹¹⁸ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 88-90.

There can be another possibility of the legend of Apostle Thomas arriving with the Persian Christian immigrants who came to Kerala under the leadership of Thomas of Cana in the 4th century. By the time Thomas of Cana had reached the Malabar Coast, the *Acts of Thomas* was already written in Syria. The legend might have later been taken up by the Christians and ascribed geographic and cultural shades. If such is the case, the Thomas Christians will lose their claims of the Apostolic origin and will have their history toned down to a few centuries post the Common Era. This possibility cannot be ruled out completely neither can it be simply regarded as an assumption.

Whatever may be, the case remains an open-ended debate. Nevertheless, the arrival of Apostle Thomas in Malabar Coast remains an accepted legend by the academic historians and historical reality by the church historians. On the other hand, the arrival of Apostle Thomas in northwest India is accepted by the academic historians owing to its corroboration with the apocryphical *Acts of Thomas* as well as since certain coins unearthed from Northwestern India bear the name of King Honhppheres who is identified as the King Gudnapar mentioned in the *Acts of Thomas*. Apostle Thomas is said to have taken a second trip to India, this time reaching the Malabar Coast after North Indian mission. The Apostle has departed to Jerusalem to attend the First Jerusalem Council via Barygaza (Braukaccha or Broach), which had then become an important port in Gujarat.¹¹⁹ He is said to have arrived in South India by sea route via Persian Gulf and Socotra¹²⁰ unlike his journey to Northwestern India which was mostly by land route.

Susan Viswanathan, who had briefed the current debates going on in the historical world on the possibility of the Apostle Thomas visit opines that despite the availability of conclusive evidence on the case, the tradition has ‘crystallized into the collective memory’ of the community¹²¹.

2.5.1. Thomas Christian community in medieval Kerala before the arrival of the Portuguese

The history and culture of the Thomas Christian population of Kerala before the arrival of the Portuguese is primarily reconstructed based on the *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper*

¹¹⁹ Pius Malekandathil, “St Thomas Christians”, 3.

¹²⁰ Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity* ,6.

¹²¹ Viswanathan, “Legends of St Thomas” ,27-44.

and from the various accounts and observations left by travelers, missionaries, traders, and others who had visited the region along with aid of the folk traditions and legends that exist among the community. As discussed in Chapter One only passing references on the Christian community in Kerala is provided by the ancient records and much of the present knowledge about the community is produced based on foreign records that began to emerge in profusion from the 16th century. The two main reasons for the case are the lack of internal sources and the destruction of the Thomas Christian corpus of literature by the Portuguese. Primarily, there had been hardly any representation of the culture of the Christian common life in any of the literary books of the time that were produced internally. Secondly if at all any such books had ever existed, has been collected and destroyed by the Portuguese following the Synod of Diamper. However, some sources of foreign origin referring to the existence of the Thomas Christians. Some of the earlier sources that refer to the Christians of the Malabar region before the 8th century are the from Pantenius of Alexandria and Cosmos Indicopleustes. Pantenius of Alexandria who visited Malabar in the 2nd century CE mentions the presence of Christians in the region. Cosmos Indicopleustes, however, provides a more elaborate account of the Christians of the Malabar (Male)coast by summing up their congregational structure and relations with the Persian Church¹²². Interestingly Cosmos never refers to them as Thomas Christians, or Nazaranes or Syrian Christians, but calls them as Persian Christians. There are mentions about the Thomas Christians by Friar Jordanus who visited Kerala twice in the 14th century. Later descriptions of Friar Odoric in the 14th century and John de Marignoli and later Monte Corvino.

Epigraphic pieces of the evidence referring to the ancient Christians of Kerala and the various grants and privileges conferred to them could be identified from copper plates such as the Tarisapalli Copper Plate or the Syrian Christian Copper Plate, Thazekkad Inscription, and the Veeraraghavapattayam. The Tarisapalli Copper Plate dating to the 9th century CE sheds considerable light on the fact of the Christians being an established community in the region. The Thazekkad church inscription of the 11th century CE bears the record of the grant of certain privileges to two Christian merchants of the Manigramam guild. The Veeraraghava *pattayam*

¹²² Indicopleustes, Cosmas. *The Christian Topography of Cosmas an Egyptian Monk*, trans. JW Crindell (London: Hakluyt Society, 1897), 365-367.

despite the debate on the religious affiliation of the donee, is attributed to the record of privileges to a Christian merchant in the 13th century¹²³.

In addition to the literary mentions pointing at the Christian presence in Kerala, there are numerous traditional songs or *Puradanapattukal* that fall into the category of oral traditions that speak about the Thomas legend and the history of the Thomas Christian community. *Margamkalipattu*, *Thomas Rambaan Pattu*, and *Veeradiyan pattu* are some such traditional songs that are popular among the Thomas Christians and their larger cultural space. These songs not only brief the history of the community but also provide considerable insights about the ancient settlements of these Christians¹²⁴.

These earlier sources, although provides scant references to the existence of the Thomas Christian community during the pre-Portuguese times, no considerable information regarding their culture, lifestyle, and interactions with the larger indigenous population finds representation. However as mentioned earlier, several sources elaborating the life and culture of the Thomas Christians appear from the 16th century following the community's Portuguese encounter.

From the available sources and traditions, the evolution of Christianity in Kerala can be identified as progressing in various phases considering the major historical breaks that had occurred during its evolution. For a comprehensive understanding, the pre-Portuguese history of the Thomas Christians can be divided into phases. The Phase I (52CE-3rd century CE) Phase II (4th -9th century CE) Phase III (9th century-11th century) Phase IV (11th century-15th centuries). The early history of the Thomas Christians beginning with the arrival of Apostle Thomas and up to the 2nd century CE is shrouded in mystery and may be considered as a 'dark period' on account of the non-availability of sources referring to their culture and lifestyle. Only assumptions can be made regarding this phase of the Thomas Christians and their existence in Malabar. It could be assumed that following the martyrdom of Apostle Thomas, the incipient community might have lurched in an arduous situation with hardly any contact with a larger established Christian community. As most of the early Christians especially near the ports were

¹²³ For detailed reading on the plate see, MGS Narayanam, *Cultural Symbiosis* (Thiruvananthapuram:1972),35.

¹²⁴ Chummar Choondal, *Christian Folklore* (Thrissur:1983),29.

Jewish converts, they already had exposure to trading networks through which they connected with major trading centers. The Thomas Christians, therefore, might have initially connected with the Church of Alexandria through the Greek merchants who were trading with these Christians in Muziris. A spiritual and ecclesiastical connection was established with the Church at Alexandria and the Thomas Christians reducing their isolation from the larger Christian world¹²⁵. However, due to the decline in the Roman trade towards the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the 2nd century, the Thomas Christian relation with the Church at Alexandria began to wane. Nevertheless, the rise of Persia under the Sassanids in the 3rd century CE opened new arenas for trade and commercial activities with Malabar which brought the Thomas Christians in contact with the Persian Church. A shared tradition of Apostle Thomas would have been a catalyzing factor that bridged and cemented the connection between the Persian Church and the Thomas Christians. Thus, the Persian connection of the Thomas Christians opens Phase II of the pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian history.

The Thomas Christian connection with the Persian Church had a twofold impact on the historical and religious evolution of the community. It not only hooked up the Thomas Christians with an institutionalized Christian church but also enriched the community's demography with immigrants. The shift in the religious policy of Shapur II (309-379CE) of Persia from that of toleration as practiced by his predecessors to persecution has unleashed waves of migration of Persian Christians to the adjacent lands in search of refuge. These migrants had also reached the Malabar coast in various waves on account of its commercial connection with Persia. The earliest account of Persian Christian migration to Malabar Coast is associated with the arrival of Thomas of Cana or Knanai Thomman, with a group of 72 Christian families belonging to seven tribes of Jerusalem, Ninevah, and Baghdad in 325CE at the Carnanore port¹²⁶. The increasing trade on one hand and the rising hostile attitude of the Persian monarchs to Christianity on the other resulted in the further exodus of Christians from the Persian mainland and their subsequent settlements along the fringes of the Arabian Sea. Trade and commercial activities served as the

¹²⁵ Neil, *History of Christianity*, 40-41.

¹²⁶ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 92. Also see. Malekandathil, "St Thomas Christians", 29.

Although Malekandathil does not speak about the aspect of the migrants being members of the tribes belonging to the aforesaid places, he generalizes them as coming from West Asia.

connecting and unifying link between the Christian Diaspora scattered along the Indian Ocean¹²⁷. Although the Thomas Christians and the West Asian migrant Christians were two separate communities with different historical and cultural backgrounds, Christianity, trade and the shared legacy of Apostle Thomas acted as important connecting links between the two entities. According to Pius Malekandathil, ‘even though the mercantile Christian settlements on the rim of Indian Ocean were predominantly West Asian in the initial phase, with the commencement of joint commercial operations with the help of St Thomas Christians of Kerala, these settlements became mixed in the intermediate period and eventually, in the course of time they became purely indigenous with lot of elements from St Thomas Christian community’¹²⁸. However although some West Asian Christian migrants chose to completely amalgamate with the native Thomas Christians, a major chunk of them decided to preserve their West Asian traditions and bloodline being within the larger Thomas Christian umbrella, by practicing endogamy. This section of West Asian Christian migrants, who claim their settlements to the arrival of Thomas of Cana is known as Knanaya Christians. The Knanaya Christians are predominantly based at various pockets in the central region of Kerala, mostly to the south of Cranganore, in the districts of Ernakulam, Pathanamthitta, Idukki, and Kottayam¹²⁹.

Not much is known about the social and political engagements and relationships of the Thomas Christians during Phase II of their evolution. Therefore, this phase may be considered as the dormant phase in their history. It could only be assumed that this period marked their complete integration into the social, political, and economic fabric of Kerala. Having re-established their spiritual network with the Persian church, the community might have undergone a certain degree of organization in their religious sphere by adopting customs traditions and practices which were molded to have them infused to the larger ‘Indic’ socio-cultural milieu. Interactions between the Thomas Christians and the ‘non-Christian’ cultural space of Kerala were multilayered as well as multidimensional. Yet it is hard to elucidate the nature of these interactions outside the realm of religion. Nevertheless, considering the Thomas Christian

¹²⁷ Malekandathil, “St Thomas Christians”, 36.

¹²⁸ Malekandathil, “St Thomas Christians”, 40.

¹²⁹ For more insights on the Knanaya community refer to Richard M Swiderski. *The Blood Weddings: Cananya Christians of Kerala*. (Madras:,New Era Publications,1988).

privileges endowed in the following centuries, it should be assumed that the Thomas Christians occupied a renowned status in the Malabar centuries during this period.

The Third Phase in the development history of the Thomas Christians can roughly be calculated from the 9th century CE, which saw the coming of Mar Sabor and Mar Phrod to the Malabar Coast. The period saw the use of Pahlavi as a major language of communication. It was during this period that these Christians were given so many privileges by the rulers of the region.

Phase IV of the Thomas Christian evolution is marked from the 11th century to 15th century CE. The period saw the emergence of the Church at Baghdad and the extensive use of Syriac as the liturgical language.

It is evident from the above discussion that the Thomas Christian community despite remaining as a monolithic community until the Portuguese intervention was a community having a heterogenous ethnographical profile comprising of the natives of Malabar, Jewish and Greek merchants, all of whom claiming their conversion under the auspicious of Apostle Thomas and West Asian Christian immigrants. The history and legacy of the community is therefore a cumulative result of the crystallization of various traditions through space, time, and memory, which has survived through legends, folklore, and customs¹³⁰.

The Thomas Christians are known by various names in the local Malayalam language. They are called *Marthomas Kristyanikal*, *Suriyani Kristyanikal*, *Malankara Nazranikal*, or simply *Nazranekal*. The term *Marthoma Kristyanikal* is translated as the Christians of Saint Thomas and echoes their Apostolic connections. The community is called *Suriyani Kristyanikal* or Syrian Christians owing to their liturgical language being Syriac. However, the term *Malankara Nazranikal* is widely used among the community and was the term used to identify themselves during the Portuguese times. The term means *Nazranes* of *Malankara*. *Nazarene* is used popularly by the Thomas Christians instead of *Kristyani*, which translates to the follower of Jesus of Nazareth. They were also given certain privileges and titles by the local rulers on account of their excellence in commerce and military. Some of such titles were *Mappila* and

¹³⁰ Sinu Rose, "Identifying Themes of Orientalism in Early Modern Period:A Study of Select Travel Writings on Christianity in Kerala"(MPhil diss.,University of Hyderabad,2015),12.

Panickkar respectively. The term *Mappila* reflects the dignity and status, both social and economic, that was enjoyed by the Thomas Christians. The title or *Panikkar* is attributed to the Thomas Christians on account of their expertise in war and military affairs. Similar titles are attributed to the Muslim and Jewish individuals who were respected and revered in the society. Therefore these titles had a ‘secular’ character and were attributed based on the caliber of persons irrespective of their faith.

The Thomas Christian settlements were clustered at the places where the initial seven churches were set up by Apostle Thomas. These settlements were either close to the ancient seaports such as those at Cranganore Parur and Quilon or were located at important inland trading posts such as Niranam and Nilakkal which were on the banks of river Pampa. However, their initiative in agriculture and trade had resulted in the gradual percolation of the community to the interior regions of Kerala thereby bringing in more lands under cultivation, especially for growing spices and pepper. Pius Malekandathil suggests the beginning of the gradual expansion of the Thomas Christians from the 3rd century CE¹³¹. The spread of the Thomas Christians into the interior regions of Kerala needs to be understood keeping into consideration the increasing demand for spices that best grew in the interior of the relatively fertile and milder region from the coastal belt. Besides the availability of more unused lands and forests that were fit for spice cultivation had paced the movement and settlements. The Thomas Christian interest in agrarian expansion not only resulted in the habitation of interior and highland regions of Kerala but also led to the expansion of Christian cultural space. The gradual movement of the community into the deeper regions resulted in the establishment of Christian communities and churches away from the initial seven churches¹³². Therefore, the role played by the Thomas Christians in transforming the physiography of Kerala and their participation and influence in the agrarian system requires retrospection. The major centers of their habitation being Cranganore, Cochin, Quilon, Travancore, and the Coromandel Coast especially the region around Mylapore¹³³.

The Thomas Christians mainly engaged in agriculture trade and commerce as well as military services. Their expertise as great pepper cultivators find mention in numerous historical

¹³¹ Pius Malekandathil, "Introduction" to *Jornada of Dom Alexis de Menezes*, XLIII.

¹³² Malekandathil "Introduction", XLIII-XLIV.

¹³³ Philip Baldeaus, p369

narratives¹³⁴. The dexterity of the Thomas Christians in commercial activities added to the economy of the region thus establishing them close to the power ladder and the ruling class. The contributions of the Thomas Christians in the field of trade and commerce along with their claim as the scions of a superior social class fostered their position as an important and indispensable part of the social-political and economic system. This might have been the reason for these Christians to receive land grants and royal privileges. These Christians were known to possess large tracts of land owing to the various land grants received by them from the local rulers. The skill of these Christians was too good in the art of warfare that their services were sought during the time of wars by the local rulers.

The Thomas Christians lived in great solidarity with the native Hindu community. They shared common cultural spaces and traditions of the larger macro society that it was quite difficult for an external observer to differentiate between the Christian and the non-Christian communities. According to K J Mathew, these Christians occupied an exalted position in the social hierarchy next to the Brahmins¹³⁵. Although Christianity was never patronized by the local rulers, they were always favored by the rulers of the lands owing to their mettle in trade and commerce. Numerous favors and special privileges were granted to the community as can be inferred from the copper plates that were issued by the local rulers such as Veeraraghava Chakravarthi and Sthanu Ravi¹³⁶. The privileges include permission to ride on the elephants, permission to sit in the presence of the kings, etc. all of which were reserved for the princes and the ambassadors¹³⁷.

The dietary and dressing habits of the community were similar to the privileged sections of the Malabar society. They adorned themselves with ornaments of various types and styles,

¹³⁴ For details see, Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither, Vol III*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1967), 216-218, where Thomas Christians are mentioned as the owners of pepper plantations.

E R Hambye, 'Medieval Christianity in India: The Eastern Church', in *Christianity in India: a History in Ecumenical Perspective*, ed by ER Hambye and H C Perumalil (Alleppey: Prakasham, 1972), 34.

¹³⁵ K J Mathew, "The Role of the Kerala Church in Indian Culture", in *The Malabar Church*, ED. Jacob Vellian, *Orientalia Christianna Analetica* 186, Roma: 1970, 119.

¹³⁶ Aiyer, *Tribes and Castes*, vol III, 438.

¹³⁷ C V Cheriyan, *A History of Christianity in Kerala: From the Mission of St Thomas to the Arrival of Vasco de Gama AD 52-1498* (Kottayam, 1973), 151.

maintained long hair and *kudumis* ¹³⁸ on their head like the Nairs and Nambootiris of the land yet inserted gold or silver Cross or praying beads in the middle of it to assert their Christian identity. The men too pierced their ears as it was a sign of nobility and carried arms with them wherever they went¹³⁹. A remarkable difference between the Thomas Christian women and their ‘Hindu’ counterparts are perceived in their choice of clothing which exhibited modesty by covered their entire body, unlike the other ‘Hindu’ women who went naked above their waist¹⁴⁰. The food habits of these Christians were also similar to that of the culture in which they inhabited. Although they took meat, they abstained from its larger consumption as they were living in a largely vegetarian society. Jornada notes of the Thomas Christians abstaining from meat and flesh while they were in the Nair neighborhoods so as not to offend their religious sentiments¹⁴¹.

Social systems and practices of the Malabar society were also incorporated by the Thomas Christians community in varying degrees of totality. They followed a patriarchal family system with the eldest male member being the omnipotent. G M Moraes notes that the elders were very well respected in the family that the children hardly talked in their presence¹⁴².

The Thomas Christians had similar cultural practices as of the ‘Hindu’ community, especially the *Namboothiri* Brahmins. A lot in common can be traced and located in the rituals and customs followed by the Thomas Christians as well as the *Namboothiris* and the larger cultural space of their habitation, especially in the rituals following birth, marriage, death, and after death rituals. Soon after the birth of a baby, he/she was firstly fed with honey, a practice that was prevalent among the Hindus and a practice that has survived to this day¹⁴³. The women

¹³⁸ *Kudumis*, also known as *Sikha* is a type of hairstyle that is popular among the Brahmin community of South India. There are two variants of *kudumis*; the *pin kudumi* and the *mun kudumi*. The *pin kudumi* is styled in the way in which a lock of hair is kept knotted on the crown of the head and the rest of the entire hair is shaved. The *Mun kudumi* is different from the *pin kudumi* with the fact that in this variant, the hair which is grown long in the front is knotted to the forehead. The variant of *Kudumis* practiced by the Thomas Christians is the *Mun kudumi*.

¹³⁹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 250.

¹⁴⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 259.

¹⁴¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 252.

¹⁴² Moraes, *History of Christianity*, 176

¹⁴³ The practice among the *Namboothiri* Brahmins were known as *Jatakarman*, See Placid Podipara, *The Malabar Christians*, (Aleppey:Prakasham, 1972), 29.

were not allowed to go to the churches for forty days post their delivery if the child was male and eighty days if the child was female. This was a practice that was prevalent not only among the 'Hindus' but also among the Jews¹⁴⁴. Giving boiled rice to the child when the child attains eleven years of age¹⁴⁵ and sending them for *Kalari* or arms training after they turn eight years were also common among the Christians.

The marriages were primarily arranged between the families of the bride and the groom. The Dowry system was in practice among the Thomas Christian community following the popular custom in the Malabar society. Although marriages were mostly performed in the churches, it was validated by tying of *tali* like the conventional modal. The presence of a Cross on the *tali* with 21 beads distinguished it from the *tali* of the 'Hindus'. Many customs that had 'Hindu' influences were followed by them during the occasion of marriage for its fertility, prosperity, and success. As reported by Joseph the Indian, divorce was unheard of in the community of Thomas Christians and they could only be separated by death¹⁴⁶. Nevertheless, the presence of polygamy and concubinage was common among the Christians too¹⁴⁷.

The Thomas Christians believed in several superstitions and omens¹⁴⁸ typical of the Malabar society. They gave importance to the horoscope, good and bad days, auspicious days for marriage and other celebrations, and more that according to Jornada, the *Kathanar* himself had a book in his possession called *Pansmao* that was used to decide auspicious days for marriage¹⁴⁹. Despite the exposure of these Christians to the Western models of Christianity, a large number of Christians still practice or believe in superstitions, omens, and horoscopes even today.

The Thomas Christians used to observe Lent with great piety and devotion¹⁵⁰. The Celebration of feasts like Resurrection, Nativity, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

¹⁴⁴ Zcharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 204.

¹⁴⁵ Cheriyan, *History of Christianity*, 153.

¹⁴⁶ Antony Vallavanthara, *India in 1500AD. The Narratives of Joseph the Indian* (Research Institute for Studies in History, 1984), 176

¹⁴⁷ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 178

¹⁴⁸ K S Mathew, "Indian Ocean and Cultural interaction", *Indica* 35, no 2 (1998) : 107-108.

¹⁴⁹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 247.

¹⁵⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 242.

Epiphany, *Puthunjayar*, *Dukhrana* (the Commemoration of Thomas the Apostle) was also in vogue. The participation of non-Christians in these festivals was also common¹⁵¹. Thomas Christians also observed the harvest festivals of the land such as Onam with immense vigor and also attended the temple festivals of the Hindus.

The virtue of cleanliness played a key role in the lifestyle of the Thomas Christians as they assured that they visited their churches in clean clothes and offered prayers in the morning as well as in the evening. The importance given to cleanliness is a direct reflection of the community's adherence to the traditions of the upper castes in the Malabar society. Interestingly Gouvea notes that they made the sign of the Cross from right to left contrary to the Western Christian practice of doing it from left to right. Although they possessed some sacraments similar to the Roman Church, they administered them differently. Gouvea speaks of the Christians not having the sacraments of Confession and Extreme Unction. Considerable differences from the Roman conventions in the processes of making the Host, as well as the celebration of the Eucharist, are noted in Jornada. They had their liturgy in the Syriac language and all the important texts including the Bible (called *Peshitta*) as translations from the Syriac texts.

The priests of the Thomas Christians were ordained at a very young age and celibacy was not a mandatory practice¹⁵². The wives of the priests or the *Kathanars* (Cassanars) as reported by the Portuguese were very well respected by the people. These women wore a cross around their necks to distinguish themselves as the wives of the *Kathanar*.

The Thomas Christians Church had a hierarchical framework which was different from the Papal model, with the Archdeacon being the most important and foremost head of the Christians next to the Bishop. These priests used to work for the church as well as the state to meet their livelihood. Joseph the Indian mentions that they had a pontiff, 12 cardinals, 2

¹⁵¹ Vallavanthara, *India in 1500AD*, 176.

¹⁵² The Thoams Christians practice of allowing their priests to marry after ordination is a local practice which is an outcome of the cultural syncretism that the community went through. The practice of allowing the ordinate priests to marry is not common in the Oriental Churches. However married men can enter priesthood in most of the Oriental churches yet celibacy is recommended for those who wish to elevate to the level of Bishops.

patriarchs, bishops, and archbishops to guide them in their divine matters¹⁵³. They also have priests, deacons, and sub-deacons¹⁵⁴.

The Christians being converts from the noble castes had a general aversion towards the lower caste people. Although they did not practice the caste system and untouchability most strictly like the *Nambootiris* and the Nairs, they were keen to preserve their noble heritage and status. The Christians buried their dead like the Western model rather than cremating them like the general practice of the 'Hindus' in Malabar. The writing of the will before the death of a person was common in the community.

The status of the Thomas Christian women was similar to their counterparts. Although their role was limited to the domestic sphere, they were entitled to a better social representation. The women were allowed to remarry after one year of the death of their husbands and were also given their dowry back¹⁵⁵. They adored in a special attire called *Chatta* and *Muri* which later became a characteristic dress code of the Christian women.

The missionary activities of the Thomas Christians are not known. According to AM Mundadan, the presence of the caste system in society was the major reason for lacking interest among them¹⁵⁶.

Interestingly Christianity was never patronized by any ruler in Kerala, although sufficient grants and honors were given to the Christians on a great scale owing to their economic value. Yet there exists the tradition of a Christian Raja named Raja Thoma of Villarvattom. However, no systematic studies on the tradition have been produced leaving the issue an open-ended question.

The Thomas Christians of Kerala were not an exclusive monolithic entity. There were differences in question of their legacy despite following common religious and liturgical practices. The Thomas Christians were divided into two factions: the *Thekkumbagakkar* or the Southists(Knanaya) and the *Vadakkumbagakkar* or the Northisits(Non-Knanaya). The Southists

¹⁵³ "Account of Priest Joseph",102.

¹⁵⁴ "Account of Priest Joseph", 103.

¹⁵⁵ Vallavanthara, *India in 1500AD*, 176.

¹⁵⁶ Mundadan, *Traditions of St Thomas Christians*, 154.

consider themselves as the descendants of Thomas of Cana, who had migrated from West Asia to Malabar around 345 CE¹⁵⁷. These Christians hardly mixed with the *Vadakkumbagakkars* and maintained exclusive endogamy to preserve the bloodline. These Christians are also known by the name Knanaya Christians. They settled in places like Cranganore, Carturte, Diamper, Cottette, etc. Despite the internal differences and claim for superiority, both these factions followed common liturgy and identified themselves as belonging to the Thomas Christian identity.

As noted before contemporary writings on the life and times of the Christians before the arrival of the Portuguese are not available. The reconstruction of the Thomas Christian life before the arrival of the Portuguese is difficult because the lived history of the Thomas Christian community if they were any internal productions, were either destroyed or modified by the Portuguese after the Synod of Diamper as a measure to ‘detach’ the community from their heretical past and free the Christians from their unchristian.

2.5.2. Thomas Christian Perception of Christianity

It is clear from the above analysis that the Thomas Christian had evolved and developed into a unique entity that had deep cultural, social, and political ties with the indigenous culture of the Kerala region. Likewise, their religious practices and conception of Christianity were independent and unique with little synonymity to the ‘accepted Christian ideality’ that Europe had attained under the auspicious of the Papal authority. They considered the ‘Law of Thomas as the central idea that defined their existence and legitimacy as a separate entity within the larger Indic society. In a true sense, the Law of Thomas as stated by Placid Podippara was the milestone of the individuality of the Thomas Christians¹⁵⁸.

It is more apt to term the Thomas Christian entity in Kerala as a community rather than by the term church. The community was not organized in the pattern as it was done in the Catholic model. The Thomas Christians had the Archdeacon as the local head of the

¹⁵⁷ Jacob Kollaparambil, *The Babylonian Origin of the Southists among the St Thomas Christians*, (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium 1992), 89-92.

¹⁵⁸ Placid J Podipara, *Individuality of the Malabar Church* (St Thomas Press), 20

community¹⁵⁹. *Jatikku Karthavyan* was the actual title endorsed to the Archdeacon, whose role determined the social, cultural, economic, liturgical as well as political inclinations of the Thomas Christians. With independent notions of spirituality and sacredness, the Thomas Christians diverged from the Roman norms of organization and institutionalization.

According to Bosco Puther, the pre-Portuguese Thomas Christians decided on significant issues through an assembly known as *Yogam*¹⁶⁰. Palliyogams are still an important element of the Thomas Christian churches, wherein matters related to the governance of the parish, the church properties, and related issues are discussed. No conclusive details on the liturgical form employed by the Thomas Christians have survived. However, it is concluded that they followed the East Syriac rite that follows the liturgy of Addai and Mari and used the liturgical language of Syriac. Although the liturgy dates back to the 3rd century CE, the liturgy might have become prominent among the Thomas Christians in their Fourth Phase of historical development from when Syriac began to replace Pahlavi. Nevertheless, the community continued using the East Syriac liturgy until the Coonan Cross oath of 1653CE that saw the Puthankurukkar adopting the West Syriac liturgy of St James.

The Thomas Christian prayers and rituals were based on their reflections of the Peshitta, teachings of the Church of the East in proportion to the customs and conventions of their land of inhabitation. Furthermore, they differentiated between the Law of Thomas and the Law of Peter. Decree VII of Session III of Synod of Diamper Decrees condemns such distinction¹⁶¹ and identifies the Law of Peter as one law for the universal church. It can be inferred from the Synod records regarding the attitude of Thomas Christians to various sacraments. Despite baptism being the most important ritual of Christianity, the Thomas Christians were giving little significance to the ritual, probably due to the non-availability of prelates, their relative ignorance, or due to the heavy expenses that came with it.

The arrival and establishment of the Portuguese on the Malabar coast marked the direct contact of the indigenously evolved Thomas Christian tradition with the organized Roman

¹⁵⁹ Placid J Podipara, *Individuality of Malabar Church*, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Bosco Puthur, *The Life and Nature of St Thomas Church in Pre Udayamperoor Period*(Kochi:LRC Publication,2003).39-40.

¹⁶¹ Zacharia,*Synod of Diamper*, 93.

Catholic fold. Thomas Christians who claimed their legacy to the missionary activities of Apostle Thomas found difficulties in accepting the doctrines of the Catholic fold that claimed the legacy of Apostle Peter. As for the Catholic Church centered in Rome was concerned, it was by then well organized and patronized by the State. But in Kerala, although Christians were honored by the rulers, Christianity as a religion was never patronized.

The Chapter argues the unique identity of the Thomas Christians and their culture represented by their historical evolution, lifestyle, traditions, and perceptions of sacred spaces, entirely divergent from the European model.

CHAPTER THREE

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The chapter discusses the evolution of the ‘church’ as an institution as well as a ‘space of worship’ with special emphasis on Europe. Various models of church architecture prevalent across the centers of early Christianity in Europe, Eastern Africa, and Western Asia, until the 18th century CE, is discussed concisely. The Chapter aims in understanding the idea of ‘church’ in European spaces largely characterized by Western Christianity to compare and contrast the manifestation of the idea in non-European spaces, outside the realm of Western Christianity.

3.1.0 The etymology and the meaning of the term ‘church’

The DK Illustrated Oxford English Dictionary primarily defines the term ‘church’ as a building for public Christian worship¹. The word ‘church’ is used among the Christians not only to signify the structure or building where the community gathers but also to describe the community or the congregation as well. In the Christian faith, the gathering is a quintessential element in worship, and praying together is considered an ideal means to accomplish the purpose of prayer. The importance of group prayers has gravitated among the early Christian community as Jesus himself had preached about its significance in Mathew 18:19-20².

Fordyce H Argo prefers to use the term church in three different senses such as the universal, denominational, and the local³. While the term is used in the ‘universal’ sense to insinuate the Christian body around the world irrespective of its variation, the term is used to denote differentiation from the ‘other’ denomination in the denominational sense. Finally, the sense of ‘local’ specifies churches in a small geographical space of a city, town, or locality.

¹ DK Illustrated Oxford English Dictionary(2003),131.

² Mathew 18:19-20, Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, then I am with them

³ Fordyce H Argo, "The Essential Meaning of ἐκκλησία", *The Biblical World* 25,no 3 (March 1905): 183.

Therefore the term is applied to convey both generalized as well as specific meanings and implications.

The word used to describe ‘church’ in the classical Greek version of the New Testament was *ἐκκλησία* or *ekklesia*, which in Greek meant the body of free citizens in a Greek city who were entrusted to execute public affairs and summoned to the assembly by a herald⁴. To be precise, the term applies to free citizens who are elected or called out from a larger population⁵. However, the expression found its way to the New Testament through the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was made for the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, especially Alexandria. The word *ἐκκλησία* was used to denote the term ‘congregation’, and specifically to signify ‘the assembly of those called by the God to salvation’⁶. Hence, the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament borrowed the word to denote the ‘church’ in the sense of congregation. Argo further notes the word *ekklesia* in earlier English versions of the New Testament translates as ‘congregation’ and not ‘church’ until 1611CE when the term ‘church’ replaced it⁷. The word ‘church’ in English has roots in Dutch and Greek⁸. While the word congregation echoes the concept of brotherhood or a community of men, the term ‘church’ reverberates to a structured and institutionalized notion.

The term church is used by various denominations of Christianity to specify their respective spaces of worship. Although the plan and construction of the churches may vary according to the denominations, regions, and localized communities within specific regions, the idea of exclusive space for Christian worship remains universal.

The term ‘chapel’ is another word used synonymously with the term church although both buildings serve slightly different functions. The term ‘chapel’ is derived from the medieval

⁴ Argo, “Essential Meaning”, 184.

⁵ Argo, “Essential Meaning”, 184.

⁶ Argo, “Essential Meaning”, 186.

⁷ Argo, “Essential Meaning”, 188.

⁸ The term ‘church’ has roots in the Dutch word *Kerk*, derived from the Greek root word *kuriakon* meaning Lords House.

Latin word ‘*Capella*’ which means ‘little cape’⁹. These structures are often considered as subordinate places of worship which are either added or formed as part of large churches, cathedrals, or huge residential buildings and dedicated for special services. Chapels are usually smaller than the ‘churches’ and cater to specific requirements and functions. Chapels may also remain independent and detached from major buildings. While smaller chapels within palaces, large residences, or private buildings are meant for private worship, there are wayside chapels located on crucial roads and highways meant for travelers and traders. Small chapels are also located within the premises of universities, convents, etc to support the spiritual needs of the community that contains it.

The typology of the churches varies based on their administrative function in the episcopal ladder. The hierarchical model might vary with various denominations within the Christian body and therefore has different organizational orders. The Roman Catholic and Anglican churches follow almost similar hierarchical models whereas the Protestant Churches have a more or less self-supporting or self-governing structure. In Catholicism, while the Basilicas are those church buildings to which certain ceremonial rights are vested by the Pope, the Cathedrals are those churches that house the seat of the Bishop. The parish churches form the basic administrative unit of the hierarchy being the center of religious as well as secular activities in the rural areas.

Besides, there are churches or chapels attached to the monasteries or the abbeys known as the Conventual or Monastic churches in the Western Christian nomenclature and generally as *katholikon* in the Eastern Christian nomenclature.

3.1.1 Jewish roots of Christian Church

The Christian faith essentially has Jewish roots. In a way, the Judeo Christian tradition departs at the point of considering Jesus as the Messiah. The delinking of Christianity from Judaism is practically impossible as the preacher of Christianity; Jesus himself was a practicing

⁹ The word has taken various forms as it spread to different European languages, as in *Capella* in Italian, *Kapelle* in German, Chapel in English.

Jew leading a Jewish lifestyle. He was circumcised according to the Jewish tradition and so were his disciples. Interestingly the popular representation of Jesus portrays him as a man who hardly wears the headscarf, unlike the fellow Jewish men, so is the depiction of Joseph as well as the 12 disciples of Jesus. This representation can only be understood as a way to establish and create a separate Christian legacy and identity.

Marvin Wilson elaborately discusses the Jewish Christian relations and the significance of the Hebrew thought in understanding the essence of Christianity. He identifies Hebrew thought as the key for understanding the background and teachings of the New Testament as the Hebrew thought and culture which is explicitly discussed in the Old Testament forms the milieu of the New Testament¹⁰. Considering its similarity with Judaic cultural and belief systems, early ‘Christianity’ can be considered as a movement within the Jewish tradition during its initial times¹¹ and Jesus as a revolutionary preacher. This can be paralleled with the emergence of the Sikh religion in India as of late as the 16th century. Christianity gradually crystallized into a way of life’ before getting institutionalized as a separate religion.

The Jewish influence of Christianity is also linked to the sect of Essenes, who were an ancient sect of Judaism possessing a radical attitude towards the incumbent Jewish rituals and the management of the Temple. The Essenes maintained a secluded and ascetic life and immersed themselves in preparing for the arrival of the Messiah by focusing on apocalyptic theology rather than mundane practices of Judaism. Considering the silence of the New Testament in referring to this group, it was a challenging task to reconstruct their history until interesting details regarding the Essenes was unearthed following the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many scholars consider John the Baptist and Jesus as members belonging to the Essene sect. Although the ascetic and secluded lifestyle of John the Baptist is similar to the practice of the Essenes, Jesus lived a different lifestyle. There are no direct references available that can establish historical Jesus as a member of the Essenes, yet he was probably influenced by the school of thought. Also, there are references in the New Testament about some of the disciples of John the Baptist joining

¹⁰ For a detailed reading on the Jewish Christian dialogue see, Marvin R Wilson, *Our Father Abraham, Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, (Dayton Ohio: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan and Centre for Judaeo Christian Studies. 1989).

¹¹ Delbert Burkett, “Introduction to the New Testament” ,3.

Jesus¹², which provides the base to such speculations. Considering the similarities of some of the core doctrines and ideas of the Essenes and Christianity, Christianity is often considered as the spiritual heir of Essenes. Studies and discourses on the possible connection of Essenes to Jesus as well as their role in the evolution of early Christianity is still steaming. Various scholars have pointed out the similarities between Essenes and the core doctrines of Christianity as a possible reason to consider the decisive nature of the relationship¹³.

It is important to understand the perception of the then ruling class towards the emerging religion as it governed and conditioned their perception towards its practitioners. The Roman empire of the time saw Christianity as a sect of Judaism' thus relegating it merely as a Judaic sect. But the gradual expansion of the mission to the 'Gentiles' meant the percolation of the non-Jewish people to the so-called 'Judaic sect' and thus it lost its homogenous character. Although Christianity sprung from Judaism, it hardly considered itself as a sect or community confined to the Jews alone. Unlike Judaism which solely considers the Jews or the people of Israel as the 'chosen people', Christianity believes in the inclusion of all the people in the world irrespective of their ethnicity to become the 'chosen people'. Christianity considers that God had formed a new covenant not only exclusively with the Jewish population but also with all the nations. Therefore the Jerusalem Council took the decision exempting the Gentiles from performing circumcision, observation of Jewish festivals, and dietary laws. The inclusion of the Gentiles and their absolution from the Jewish obligations broke the scope of Christian adherence to the Jewish rituals and practices. This was a radical break for Christianity from Judaism as the very existence and morality of Jews was founded on the idea of their 'uniqueness' which they maintained through the idea of 'exclusion'. The cumulative result of the decision was decisive to the newly formed 'sect; as its status quo was at offense and they needed to resolve their 'identity crisis'.

¹² New Testament, John 1:35-39

¹³ A recent publication by Simon J Joseph, titled *Jesus, the Essenes and Christian Origins: New Light on Ancient Texts and Communities*, is a brilliant read that examines the relationship between the historical Jesus and the Essenes in the context of the then contemporaray Judaism by analysing the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition the book also deals with the role played by the Essenes in the evolution of early Christinity and contributes to the scalding debate on the issue.

For details ,read, Simon J Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes and Christian Origins: New Light on Ancient Texts and Communities* (Baylor University Press, 2018).

The new ‘sect’ had become neither Jewish nor Gentile but a conglomeration of people from various cultural backgrounds who were considered incompatible earlier. The institutionalization of the ‘new teachings’ to a way of life’ was, therefore, necessary to create a new identity and space for the budding faith. It became therefore indispensable for them to differentiate themselves from the larger Jewish fold and create their own identity. Thus the inclusion of the non-Jewish people into the new sect of Jesus facilitated the formation of the independent Christianity embedded in the Jewish tradition yet distinct from its core doctrines.

3.1.2 Biblical studies on the evolution of the institution of Church

The evolution of the institution of the Church had begun soon after the death and Resurrection of Jesus. According to the Bible, Jesus had ordained one of his disciples named Peter to spread the word of the Lord throughout the world. Following this, Peter along with 11 other disciples¹⁴ of Jesus had started off to various parts of the then-known world to propagate the Word. Thus began the institution of the Christian Church in a very humble manner. The *Book of Acts* in the New Testament of the Bible provides a concise account of how the institution of the Church expanded to various regions and how it got gradually organized. The text also provides glimpses of the early perilous ordeals that the newly converted people had to endure to defend and preserve their faith amidst the hostile environs. The term ‘proto Christians’ best describes the newly converted Christians as they were never like the mundane practicing Christian of today, nor had the religion crystallized and institutionalized to the form and structure akin to the present times. As discussed earlier the Essenes might have played a significant role in enriching and augmenting the early Christian spirituality and population.

The *Acts of Apostles* speak of the beginning of the preaching of Christianity following the Ascension of Jesus after the 40th day of his resurrection.

Acts{1:8}”¹⁵ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost

¹⁴A note on the 12 Apostles of Jesus with their names are given in the Bible, see Mathew 10,1-4 (pp 563), Mark 3, 13-19 (pp 580), and Luke 6, 12-16 (pp 595).Kings James Version Bble.

¹⁵Acts, 627,Kings James Holy Bible

is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

The Acts refers to the first steps undertaken by the Apostles in the process of spreading the Word of God as follows

Acts {1:15} “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,) {1:16} Men [and] brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was a guide to them that took Jesus. {1:17} For he was numbered with us and had obtained part of this ministry.”¹⁶

The inception of the church as an institution is sometimes traced to the proclamation of Peter as quoted in the Bible.

“ As I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”¹⁷.

3.1.3 Early ‘proto church’ during the period of Jesus and his followers

Observing that Christianity as a separate religion was hardly established during the lifetime of Jesus, the Church building had no relevance or scope for existence. Christianity was

¹⁶ “Acts”, *King James Holy Bible*, 627.

¹⁷ Mathew, 16:18

initially considered as a movement within the Jewish community itself rather than a separate religious order. It should be noted that the earliest Christians were the temple going Jews who recognized Jesus as the Messiah¹⁸. The places where Jesus preached and those where Jesus had his Last Supper were spaces having Jewish lingering. Judaic metaphors and life situations were employed by Jesus to create his teachings comprehensible to the Jews. Metaphors such as that of ‘shepherd and the flock’, ‘fig trees’, etc had a direct link with the then-contemporary Jewish lifestyle and cultural spaces that were dominantly pastoral and agricultural. The use of such illustrations broke the complexities of ideas and messages that Jesus intended to convey to the Jews thus attracting them. Besides, Jesus had taught extensively in the Temple of Jerusalem¹⁹ and had read the Jewish scriptures; He was buried in the traditional Jewish methods following their conventional practices and rituals. Even the Last Supper which is considered as the moment of consecration of the Eucharist was performed in a simple house²⁰. If the Last Supper could be considered as the genesis of the New Faith, then the house where Jesus had his Last Supper could be considered ostensibly as the first ‘church’ building in the history of Christianity as the celebration of the Eucharist forms the most important ritual of the Christian faith which is celebrated in the church. However since Christianity did not call for sacrifices and specific rituals in its inception period, the need for a separate and exclusive building for the practice of the new way of life had hardly been a necessity.

Therefore, even after the Resurrection of Jesus, the proto Christians chose to assemble in the Jewish synagogues for the Jewish traditional services²¹ and private houses for breaking of the bread ceremony²². But as Christianity became a more widespread movement it was considered a threat to the Jewish faith and the pagan culture of the times. The predominantly pagan culture of the Roman Empire under which the regions of the cradle of Christianity fell and the adherence of the Roman Emperors to the pagan faith made to consider Christianity as blasphemous and illegal thereby forcing the Christians to practice their religion in secrecy. Besides, as Christianity began

¹⁸ Huyghe, Rene (Ed), *Larousse Encyclopedia of Byzantine and Medieval Art*(Great Britain:The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd, 1968), 38.

¹⁹ Mathew 21, 1-17, Mark 11, 1-11, Luke 19, 28-40, John 12,12-19

²⁰ Mathew 26, 17-25, Mark 14, 12-21, Luke 22, 7- 13, John 3, 21-30

²¹ Acts 19:8 refers to Paul teaching in the synagogue for almost three months.

²² Edward D Mills,*The Modern Church*(London:The Architectural Press1956), 20.

to establish itself as a separate religion with divergent ideas of ‘God’ and ‘Salvation’, it was indispensable to depart and create a moat from the Jewish practices and beliefs to effectuate ‘uniqueness’ in their identity.

A space for Christian gathering was imperative for an incipient community to sustain their faith. The Christians required spaces for conducting their prayers, holding their common meal (*agape*²³), and performing the baptism. The temples of the Greek and the Roman gods were unsuitable for their purposes as unlike in the Greco-Roman practices, the Christian worship called for only the baptized, insisting on the protection of the mystery of their faith from the ‘infidels’ and the ‘gentiles’. Most importantly the features of the Greco-Roman temples had inadequate features to meet the requirements and the purpose of Christian worship. The existing temples of the Romans and Jews lacked a structure or provision that can suit the Christian practice of baptism, as none of these religions had any rituals comparable to this. In these pagan practices, the common people gathered in the open air in front of the altar while a priest performed the sacrifice. While pagan rituals wanted its followers to remain as meek spectators of the rituals, the Christian mode of worship required its followers to be participants in the process. Inclusion was the key to Christian worship, wherein every member of the congregation was expected to participate and perform the functions.

Christianity has always supported closed spaces of worship for both religious as well as security reasons. It required enclosed spaces for preserving the mystery of faith as well as to evade the Roman eye. Closed spaces granted a reticent atmosphere for Christian worship, which was absent with elaborate exposition of sacrifices and rituals in addition to providing security from the Roman persecutors. Furthermore, as discussed before, Christian worship had elements of mysticism such as the celebration of Eucharist which was meant for only the chosen people.

The necessity of an enclosed unique space for Christian worship gave way to the ‘proto church’, which in a sense can be called ‘house churches’. The *Acts of Apostles* refers to the practice of the assembling of the congregation in such private houses²⁴. However, no archaeological evidence of the so-called house churches or any kind of Christian worship space

²³ *Agape* is a Greco Christian term meaning love.

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 16:19

is available before the period of 200CE²⁵. The reason for the absence may be the secret nature of Christian worship which left no evidence of its practice. Yet another reason may be the fire that devastated Rome in 64CE during the reign of Emperor Nero which might have destroyed most of such buildings. The reason for the cause of the fire was attributed to the Christian deviation from the path of pagan worship that angered the Roman Gods. This incident had doomed the fate of the budding Christian population by stamping them as the Roman Empire's greatest foe susceptible to Roman persecutions and massacres. Another reason for the absence of such buildings might be the vacillating nature of the houses of the community gatherings that served both sacred and profane functions until the 3rd century until exclusive areas of larger homes were dedicated entirely for Christian worship. Usually, the Christians performed their prayers and cultic practices like reading from the Holy Scriptures, having *agape*, etc, in these private rooms or houses. Baptism was performed in a place where running water was available in any form, in the open air or an enclosed room. During the persecution time, catacombs were also used for Christian gatherings to maintain utmost secrecy²⁶.

The most important point to be noted here is that these spaces were secular, and not the spaces exclusively reserved for worship or gathering. Therefore the building or the private room that housed the Christian gathering should be considered as a quasi-secular space, embedded in a larger profane environment that gained sacred character only when the purpose of the Christian gathering was executed. In other words, the early Christian community did not have, or in a more meaningful way, could not have assigned exclusive spaces for sacred and mundane activities and the demarcation between the sacred and the profane space was transient. Thus it was impractical for the early Christians to engage in any form of Christian art before 200CE in the Roman world.

The case was contrary in India wherein the Thomas Legend articulates, the establishment of eight churches in Malabar by Thomas, the Apostle between 52CE and 72CE marking the genesis of a robust Christian community. Accordingly, the church at Niranam, when abiding by the legend becomes the first church established by the Apostle, maybe the one among the oldest in the world!

²⁵ Guntram Koch, *Early Christian Art and Architecture An Introduction*.(London:SCM Press, 1996),15.

²⁶ Mills,*Modern Church*, 20.

3.1.4. The early orders of Christianity in Asia and Africa

Although Christianity is often identified with ‘the West and its components’, it was the lands of the ‘East’ that cradled the inception of the religion. Even though the genuine practice of the religion in the East is often questioned, by the state-sponsored and heavily power-driven Roman Church, ‘East’ as the region of the genesis of Christianity is nevertheless accepted. Long before the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion of Rome and the establishment of Papal stronghold, there occurred numerous schisms and disagreement within the Christian fellowship over the nature of practices and clarifications of doctrines. These differences had resulted in schisms within the Christian fold. The depth of the schisms intensified as the Papal seat at Rome began to gain more foothold and power after the recognition of Christianity by Constantine. The emergence of different orders of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Europe could be traced to the forces of political, cultural, doctrinal, and liturgical differences that played in action during the early Christian history.

The spread of Christianity to the various regions of the Roman Empire and outside its limits is recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*. The connection of the Roman world to almost the whole of the then known worlds through its elaborate trade networks has facilitated the rapid expansion of the religion in a very short period. B M Thomas whose article studies the expansion of Christianity outside the Roman Empire considers the tenets of Christianity, strong communication networks, persecution of the Christians under the Roman rule, and the Edict of Milan by Constantine as the four major factors which aided in the spread of Christianity outside the Roman Empire²⁷. The expansion of Christianity outside the Roman Empire was directed to the East which contained the regions of Persia, Central Asia, Arabia, India, and China. The key role played in the eastward expansion of Christianity was by Apostle Thomas and his companions²⁸. Gradually Edessa, Antioch, and Alexandria in Egypt emerged as the major points of Christianity outside the Roman world.

²⁷ B M Thomas, *Expansion of Christianity outside the Roman Empire: Persian Christianity; Persecution under Saphor II, Causes and Effects* (Kottayam: Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture, 2015), 2.

²⁸ Thomas, *Expansion of Christianity*, 3.

By 3rd century CE Christianity might have entered Armenia partly from Edessa and Antioch and partly from Caesarea²⁹. However, the Armenians trace their origins to the preaching of Apostle Thaddeus and Apostle Bartholomew in the second half of the first century CE and support their claim with the historical findings. Nevertheless, it was with the effort of Gregory the Illuminator(261-317 CE) that the whole nation was converted to the new religion³⁰.

The spread of Christianity into the Arabian peninsula during the early centuries of the Common Era cannot be dismissed completely owing to its commercial and geographic connection with the major Christian centers of the time such as Persia, Syria, and Egypt. In all probability, the Nabatean Incense Road might have served as a channel for the dissemination of the New Faith to various regions that connecting Petra to Gaza³¹. It is, therefore, possible that Christianity might have reached Arabia through the traders, missionaries from Persia, or Christian emigrants to the region³². Similarly, the presence of Christians in China in the ancient period is supported by the tradition of the visit of Apostle Thomas to the region and also to the presence of a Jewish colony at Kaifeng³³. However, clear information regarding Christian missions to the land is available only from the 7th century CE³⁴.

There are various traditions on the spread of Christianity into Persia. While Doctrine of Apostles attributes the origin of Christianity in Persia to the missionary activities of Aggai, a disciple of Addai, the tradition of Acts of Saint Mari associates the missionary activities of Mari to the origin of Christianity. Other traditions consider both Aggai and Mari as the preachers of Christianity in the region and another tradition adds Addai to the list³⁵. Although each tradition is attributed to various persons, all of them are related to Apostle Thomas. The early Christians in

²⁹ Thomas, *Expansion of Christianity*,5

³⁰ Thomas,*Expansion of Christianity*,5.

³¹ For a brief reading on the Nabatean Incense Route, read, Tali Erickson-Gini and Yigal Israel, "Excavating the Nabatean Incense Road", *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*, Vol 1 no.1(2013):24-53.

³² T V Philip, *East of the Euphrates:Early Christianity in Asia*(Thiruvalla:Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge & Christian Sahitya Samiti, 1998), 68.

³³ Thomas,*Expansion of Christianity*,6.

³⁴ Philip, *East of Euphrates*, 76-77

³⁵ Thomas,*Expansion of Christianity*, 6-7.

Persia enjoyed considerable freedom under the Parthian rule until the Sassanids overthrew the Parthians in 226CE. The adoption of Zoroastrianism as the state religion of Persia was a setback to Christianity, which from then on began to be relegated and later persecuted under Sapor II. One of the major reasons for the animosity was that Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion that stressed its exclusivity. His reign sighted the persecution of the Christians, execution of their clergy, and destruction of their churches³⁶. The Persian church lost contact with the Roman church due to political reasons and therefore had to establish relations with the Thomas Christians of India and expand outside the Persian limits. It should be noted that a group of Christian immigrants under the leadership of Thomas of Canai landed in the Malabar Coast in 325CE escaping the persecution of Sapor II. Although the condition of Christians improved after the death of Sapor II in 379CE and became more organized and institutionalized, Christianity was unable to outweigh its popularity over Zoroastrianism and remained a minority religion³⁷.

The Christian communities that blossomed in these various regions were independent of each other under their respective Patriarchs, becoming the major loci of Christendom. By the 4th century CE, five centers exercised considerable control over Christian communities such as Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch. The division of the Roman Empire into Western and Eastern portions gradually created a polarization of these centers. While Rome became the capital of the Western Roman Empire, the Patriarch of Rome became isolated from the rest of the centers which largely fell into the Eastern part of the Empire. Gradually Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch leagued and accepted the leadership of the Patriarch of Constantinople creating two strong power centers of Christianity, Rome, and Constantinople, backed with the royal patronage from the respective Emperors.

The Germanic invasions that overtook the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, gave the death knell to the Western Roman Empire with the centers of political power diffusing from Rome to several 'barbaric(unchristian?) kingdoms' under various Germanic tribes. Nevertheless, the Eastern Roman Empire or the Byzantine Empire remained politically stable

³⁶ For a detailed reading on the persecution of Christian under Sapor II, see, William Young, *Handbook of Source Materials for Students of Church History* (Serampore :1969), 278-279.

³⁷ Thomas, *Expansion of Christianity*, 9-10.

and managed to survive till 1453CE until it was overtaken by the Ottoman Turks. These political events that happened from the 5th century CE, created further drift between Rome and Constantinople in both theological and administrative ideologies. The outcome of these conflicts was a split or schism between the two factions in 1054CE.

The gradual expansion of Christianity outside the region of its inception saw it reaching different cultures and societies. These societies and communities had divergent social, cultural, and economic makeup and experienced a lifestyle largely different from the people of Israel and Palestine. These differences are showcased in the way various societies and cultures understood and imbibed the doctrines of Christianity. The Jews who were the initial recipients of the faith found it difficult to amalgamate with the new idea of God and man. However, the Judao Christians had the advantage of falling into the cultural region which saw the inception of the religion thereby making them more ‘connected’ to the doctrines of the new faith. The people of Greece, Rome, Africa, Persia, and India, to where the doctrines spread during the initial period experienced difficulties to comprehend and relate the ideas and messages of the Christian doctrines as they occupied a different social, cultural, and historical world. All these communities, therefore, tried to relate and examine the new faith keeping their inherited ideas and thoughts as references. Thus emerged variations in the thoughts and ideas associated with Christianity. These variants are condensed to form alternative forms of Christianity or alternate Christianities.

By the end of the 2nd century Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons grouped such alternate Christianities under a common label., *gnostike hairesis* (a choice to claim knowledge), which was Anglicized by a 17th century Cambridge scholar Henry More to ‘ Gnosticism ‘³⁸. Such Gnostic religious practices survive even today in West Asia.³⁹Gerard Russel in his book *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms* identifies and discusses at length the religious minorities who still cling to their traditions and legacy despite being overshadowed by the dominant religions of Christianity

³⁸ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 121.

³⁹Examples of such sects are the Mandeans who are still active in parts of Iran and Iraq. For details regarding the Gnostic orientations that exist in West Asia today see, <http://i-cias.com/e.o/gnostici.htm>

and Islam who either labeled them as Gnostics or devil worshippers.⁴⁰ Following the recognition of Christianity by the Roman Empire, the Church based in Rome decided to deal with the variants of Christianity and agree on a code of 'true Christianity'. The purpose was served by various councils and creeds that were convened during the 4th century CE. By this time, there already existed two major Christian hubs in Europe, one centered at Rome known as the Western Latin Church, and the other centered at Constantinople, known as the Church of Constantinople. Unfortunately the gradual disintegration of the Western Roman Empire and the sack of Rome in 410 CE by 'barbarians', resulted in the Western Latin Church losing its prominence for some time. The Eastern Roman Empire however was almost stable and yielded considerable sway in the power politics, cultural export as well as in development of Christianity.

The constant dialogues of alternative forms of Christianities with the other religions in Asia and Africa gave rise to novel ideas and meanings to the core doctrines. The Council of Chalcedon convened in 451CE⁴¹ by Emperor Marcian was aimed at dealing with the situation and excluded several such variants and different Christian points of view, most of which had Eastern origins'. Some of such major opinions were Miaphysitism based in Alexandria and Diophysite Nestorianism, based largely at Constantinople⁴². These Eastern Christians tend to either oppose or ignore the decrees and decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. The Miaphysists were so powerful in Alexandria that they were able to control the incursion of the Greek elements into their faith. The gradual evolution and use of the Coptic language in the worship and liturgy of the Egyptian Christians resulted in the formation of a distinctive cultural entity that exhibited considerable difference from the Greek Christianity of the Church of Constantinople⁴³.

The Church at Constantinople with the auspicious of the Emperor was constantly trying to reconcile the powerful Miaphysists to the fold of Chaldean. These moves had resulted in a formal schism with the Western Latin Church, from 482CE to 519 CE. The accession of Justin I and later the succession of his son Justinian I, who were supporters of the Western Latin Church

⁴⁰ For further reading see, Gerard Russel, *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms, Journeys into the Disappearing Religions of the Middle East* (Basic Books, 2014).

⁴¹ For a detailed insightful reading on the Council of Chalcedon, read V C Samuel, *The Council OF Chalcedon Reexamined* (Xlibris, 2001).

⁴² Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 232.

⁴³ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 233.

and the Pope, saw significant changes in the history of Christianity. The lobbying of Pope Agapetus to remove the pro-Miaphysist Bishops of Constantinople and Alexandria, Bishop Severus, and Bishop Theodosius resulted in building up a Miaphysistic alternative to the Chalcedonian Church.

The Miaphysists who had received the favor of Empress Theodora, wife of Justinian, spread to the south of Egypt, to Nubia, Sudan, Darfur, and on. The Nubian Christians achieved a blend of the Greek culture and their own, having created a distinctive cultural and liturgical space like the Coptic Christians of Egypt⁴⁴. According to Thomas Wright, although it is impossible to ascertain the exact period that saw the introduction of Christianity into Arabia Felix, it is possible to conclude that the religion might have reached the region after it spread to the neighboring region of Arabia, most likely due to the peculiar location of the place⁴⁵. The existence of a Christian community was unknown to Europe at least until the period of Constantine. The Christianization of the Arab people of Gassanids and the appointment of Jacob Baradeus, an eastern Syrian, had lasting influences on the history of the religion. The Monophysite faith was firmly established among the Arab tribes⁴⁶. The loss of the support of Empress Theodora towards the Miaphysists following her death resulted in the Miaphysists again being targeted by the Rome inclined Justinian I. Therefore Jacob Baradeus created a Syrian Miaphysite Church, officially known as the Syrian Orthodox Church and commonly called the Jacobite Church. They had their Eucharistic liturgy named after St James of Jerusalem who was the brother of Jesus, to foster their claim towards the return to the Semitic fountainhead of Christianity⁴⁷.

Meanwhile, the antagonism towards the Chaldean church was visible in the regions of Georgia and Armenia where there occurred the evolution of churches with Miaphysistic lingering. However while the Georgian Church gradually reconciled with the Chaldean Church, the Armenian Church never reconciled with the Chaldean Church to date⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 236.

⁴⁵ Thomas Wright, *Early Christianity in Arabia, A Historical Essay* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1855), 26.

⁴⁶ Wright, *Early Christianity in Arabia*, 125.

⁴⁷ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 237.

⁴⁸ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 239.

The advent of Christianity in Ethiopia is often debated and is suggested to have entered from the Eastern border from Syria via the Red Sea, rather than from Egypt or Nubia around 4th century CE. The Aksumite monarchy in Ethiopia was fascinated by the religion and constructed monoliths and issued coins depicting the religious sculptures. The accounts of the origin of Christianity as described by the 5th-century church historian Rufinus of Aquileia are accepted as dependable by the historians on account of the inferences obtained from the numismatic evidence⁴⁹. King Ezana of Ethiopia sought connections with the Church of Alexandria (Coptic Church), for the supply of Bishops. This tradition continued till 1951CE, where the Bishop was neither a native of Ethiopia nor shared their language. He was not powerful in terms of religious matters and the real power was distributed amongst the monarchs and the abbots of the monasteries. However despite the presence of the Bishop from the Coptic Church as their head, the Ethiopian Church never became Coptic in character, the liturgy and mode of worship remained African. Interestingly the liturgical and theological language of the Ethiopian church is the Semitic language of Ge'ez, which remains the same despite it being in use. Besides a brief stint of the kingdom to the sway of the Jesuits in the 17th century, the Ethiopian Church has remained largely indigenous and affirmed to their Orthodox faith. The Semitic connections of the Church also reflect on their fascination with Judaism, where the people are advised to follow circumcision as well as male and female dietary laws⁵⁰.

The Dyophysists unlike the Miaphysists of Alexandria had no power base in the Byzantine Empire. But these sections thrived in the regions of present-day Turkey, Iran and gradually spread to Arabia. Interestingly the Arabian Christians inclined towards the Semitic roots of the religion rather than identifying with the imperial Church of Chalcedon. They adopted Syrian theology and renounced the Chalcedonian Church. They adopted Syriac as their scriptural and liturgical knowledge rather than the vernacular Arabic⁵¹. The major reason for this choice of

⁴⁹ The account describes the arrival of two young boys: Frumentius and Aedesius, who were captured as prisoners during the halt at the port on their way to India. The boys were inducted to the royal retinue due to their proficiency in Greek and did play a key role in the development and enrichment of Christian faith in the kingdom. For a detailed reading on the subject refer, Eivind Heldaas Seland, "Early Christianity in East Africa and Red Sea/Indian Ocean Commerce", *African Archaeological Review* 31, Issue 4 (December 2014): 639-640

⁵⁰ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 243.

⁵¹ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*, 247

a liturgical language as Syriac was for the reason of the language being a western dialect variant of the Aramaic language which was spoken by Jesus. The Church of the East, therefore, was fully established by the sixth century with its principal Bishop or Patriarch known as Catholicos (universal bishop), residing at one of the great cities of the Persian Sassanian Empire⁵².

3.1.5 .The Church as an institution and its evolution in Europe

The inception and evolution of Christianity as a religion embarks a two-thousand-year-old tale, of persecution, patronization, propagation, and proselytization. Diarmaid Mac Cullod in his book *A History of Christianity* states that in the beginning “..it was a movement too insignificant to leave artifacts or even much trace in literary sources outside those which Christians themselves created”⁵³. Therefore the reconstruction of the early Christian life and mentalities is possible only through the fragments of information that had survived the onslaughts of time, that too produced internally. Another important issue of concern is that many early Christian documents have been lost, destroyed, or perished in the long run.

Soon after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus, his Apostles had set forth to profess his teaching to various parts of the then known world, which were connected with commercial networks. Christianity therefore got propagated in the regions where trade and commerce were bustling. In other words, the religion had found its way into the major commercial centers of the time. Thanks to the broad network of trade links that the Roman Empire had during the time.

Paul, the Apostle who worked largely in the urbanized regions in the 1st century CE was not against the rule of the Emperor. Interestingly Paul had asked his followers to be obedient to the authorities for they have been instituted by God who is indeed the supreme authority⁵⁴. These teaching had an impact and relevance in the decades to come as this was taken as a base to ascertain the superiority of the Pope and the Church over the Emperors and Kings. Therefore the legitimization of the King's power was recognized by the Church, keeping in view his allegation to the Church. This was how the Church yielded considerable power over the state. Another

⁵² Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*,247.

⁵³ Mac Culloch, *History of Christianity*,112.

⁵⁴ Romans, 13:1. Paul might have derived his teaching from the preaching of Jesus mentioned in Mathew ,22:21, and Mark 12:17, as quoted in the Bible

trend that is observed in the evolution of Christianity was that it was never against any social institutions of the time, especially slavery. The Apostles never wanted the complete abolition of slavery and urged the slaves to live and render their duty in a better way. Since slavery was considered as an indispensable part of the Mediterranean world and Christianity's silence towards the practice meant that the religion was trying to project itself as a "better path", rather than a complete detachment of the old systems. Christianity was trying to frame itself as a religion that chose to create obedience to God, nation, and the master rather than rebelling against the system. Thus despite proclaiming the equality of all before God, the religion hardly strived for equality of all before humanity.

Mac Culloch suggests that the gradual fading away of the hope of the second coming of Jesus towards the later part of the 1st century CE forced the Christians to create their own identity by institutionalizing the new faith⁵⁵. Rules and regulations for the better conduct of the members of the community were set forth. These rules were set keeping in view the social and cultural background into which the community at large belonged. But unfortunately, it is improbable to obtain perspectives on the first Christian churches from external sources other than from the New Testament⁵⁶.

The period of persecution under Roman rule had limited the Christians from undertaking open missionary activities resulting in the slow growth of the Christian population in Europe. However, the recognition of the religion by the Roman Empire gave an impetus to the Christian population as more pagans began to get converted to the new religion. The period also saw the emergence of Rome as a major center of Christianity in Europe and the popularity of the Patriarch of Rome. The convening of the First Council of Nicaea(325CE) by Constantine laid the foundation for the formation of the institution of the church in Europe.

3.1.6.The evolution of the Church as a space of worship in Europe

The perception of the early Christians on the idea of sacred spaces is often debated. There are theories based on archaeological findings and early Christian doctrines that argue the early Christian aloofness from places of spatial divinity. According to one such theory by

⁵⁵ Mac Culloch,*History of Christianity*, 118.

⁵⁶ Mac Culloch,*History of Christianity*,120.

Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann (1909-1993), the Christians of the first four centuries of the Common Era completely avoided the idea of sacralization of space like their Jewish antecedent. The Jews, after the destruction of Jerusalem Temple during the time of Titus, had to by no choice find new meaning by abandoning the concept of spatial divinity which was until then defined by the Jerusalem Temple⁵⁷. Likewise, the Christians were influenced by the Pauline Christology and Johannine Temple Christology of the New Testament which considered the community of believers and the person of Jesus as realms of ‘sacrality’ rather than a particular place⁵⁸. The argument rests on the idea that an exclusive space was never a necessity for the practice of Christianity and the congregation or the assembly of people in the name of God created a divine or spiritual aura and invited the presence of God. The functional and non-spiritual attitude of the early Christians towards sacred spaces is justified by these theorists by indicating the lack of records on early Christian art and architecture before the period of Constantine⁵⁹. The secular character of the house churches is attributed to the delinking of the early Christians from a complete sacralization of space. Harold Turner in his work, *From Temple to Meeting House The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship*, points to demographic, economic, political, and biblical reasons for the avoidance of exclusive sacred spaces and adoption of domestic spaces as places for the community meetings. According to him, the ‘divine space’ was not a requisite for the early Christians as the community had a consciousness of itself being a ‘spiritual temple’⁶⁰.

However, there have been arguments countering the deliberate abstinence of the early Christians from creating sacred spaces. Paul Corby Finney considers the conclusions of Diechmann and Turner as distorted and quasi-historical due to the larger generalization of the Christological ideas irrespective of considering other Christian communities and problematic

⁵⁷For an insightful reading on the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, see, Rupert Furneaux, *The Roman Seige of Jerusalem* (DMcKay Company, 1972).

⁵⁸ James Thomas Hadly, “Early Christian Perception of Sacred Spaces”, *Material Culture Review* (Fall 2014-Spring 2015):90.

⁵⁹ Hadly, “Early Christian Perception”, 90.

⁶⁰ Harold W Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House, The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (Mouton Publishers, 1979), 158.

presentation of the architectural record⁶¹. A new insight into the studies on the attitude of the early Christians to divine space came up at the beginning of the 1990s with the publication of the book *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* by Michael White. The book details the various historical processes that were instrumental in the development of early Christian architecture such as the evolution of the community, the financial status, the liturgical development as well as the social composition of the community. White argues the lacuna in the architectural records of the early Christians were not a result of their anti spatial attitude towards the divine, but a reflection of the cultic building practices of all other communities that were not patronized or sponsored by the Roman Empire. The building of churches after the recognition of the religion by Constantine that ensured access to property and resources justifies the non-anti spatial attitude of the Christians.

Although the evolution of Church architecture in Europe is traced to the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion by Constantine in 312 AD following his victory in the battle of Milvidan Bridge, archaeological findings further push the period to a century before Constantine. It was only after that that Christianity was made lawful and its practice legal. This was followed by the gradual mushrooming up of Churches in various regions of the Roman Empire especially at the new capital of Constantinople.

Guntram Koch wishes to identify the phases of the evolution of early churches in Europe by considering the proclamation of Constantine as the point of reference. It is very much true as Christianity got the status of a state religion during his period and from then on the religion started gaining royal patronage slowly developing as a ‘parallel ecclesiastical monarchy’ in itself with the Pope decorating the highest position. Koch identifies three major phases in the early development of the Church in Europe; the period before Constantine, the period during Constantine, and the period after Constantine⁶².

The expansion of the Christian community and an increased acceptance of the religion despite its secret nature by the third century meant an increase in the strength of the assemblies. Therefore it was no more possible to have the prayer assemblies housed in a normal functional

⁶¹ Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God, The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

⁶² Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 15.

house and the demand for larger space was inevitable. But owing to the hostility of the state and the increasing incidence of Christian persecution, it was not possible to have unique buildings constructed for Christian worship. Therefore by the 3rd century, some of the well-off people in the community either gave a portion of their house or an entire house in their ownership, exclusively for the use of the Christian community. This meant that by the 3rd century a gradual differentiation of the sacred and profane spaces began to emerge within the Christian community in Europe. The portion of the house dedicated to the affairs of the community was no longer used as a functional portion of the house of which it was a part. Guntram Koch notes that ‘ the names of the owners were put on small plates at the entrance to the houses (tituli); a system that passed over to the houses and later to the churches build on their location’. These churches were known as title-churches. Koch identifies at least eighteen of them in Rome like S Clement, S Martino ai Monri, SS.Giovanni e Paulo, S.Sabina, etc⁶³.

Interestingly only very few remains of these ‘house churches’ are available today and as Koch notes, have difficulties in identifying the assigning of the spaces /rooms within the ‘house churches’ for various functions relating to the Christian cults like baptism, eucharist,instr0uctions, etc⁶⁴. It is most probable that the atrium of these houses was used as the assembly space for the Christian worship⁶⁵.

The archaeological remains of the old house from the small city of Dura Europa(Eastern Syria) are the only known ‘house church’ in the Roman Empire. The church was initially a two-storeyed private house which was converted into a church between 232-233AD and was in use till 256AD until the city was destroyed completely by the Persians resulting in future desertion. The house was converted in such a way that it served the religious needs of the faithful. Two smaller rooms of the house were combined to make a larger room with a floor area of 13m x 5m, which served as the assembly hall for the congregation. The walls of the room had hardly any decoration and the room was hardly furnished except for a low podium on the narrow side of the room which probably was the space for the priest's wooden chair. There was another smaller

⁶³ Koch, *Early Christian Art*,17,

⁶⁴ Koch, *Early Christian Art*,17.

⁶⁵ Cecil Stewart,*Simpson's History of Architectural Development, Vol II, Early Christian, Byzantine and Romaesuqe Architecture* (London:Longmans, 1954), 11.

room that was converted to a baptistery with paintings from the Old and New Testament depicted on its walls. A medium-sized room between the assembly hall and the baptistery is assumed to be in use as the room for the instruction of the catechumens. The upper story of the house might have served as the lodging for the priest and his family⁶⁶. Although only the remains of the house church at Dura Europa survive today, there might have been numerous other 'house churches' throughout the Roman Empire which have either perished in the onslaughts of time or remains unidentified.

In addition to the house churches, the catacombs were another space where Christian worship was conducted in secrecy. Catacombs were underground cemeteries which contained the tomb of the Christian martyrs. These catacombs became a center for Christian worship besides the house churches during the time of Roman persecution. The emergence of catacombs in the Roman Empire is attributed to the early Jewish converts as the practice of building catacombs was practically unknown in the West⁶⁷. The earliest surviving catacomb church that has survived to this date is the 'Capella Greca' in the catacomb of St Priscilla belonging to the 2nd century CE. Cecil Stewart thinks that such catacomb churches had certain features such as its division into nave chancel and apse which later became the typical features of the Christian architecture⁶⁸. The catacombs also had some small Christian chapels inside them. The best example of such a chapel is that of Agnes outside the Rome⁶⁹.

It would be a great mistake if the emergence of the idea of 'cultic spaces ' or ' true churches' is linked with the period of Constantine, as there is evidence to prove the existence of the 'church buildings' even before the period of Constantine. The discovery of the Megiddo Church in Israel has brought new leads to the understanding of the cult spaces belonging to the early Christians. It is the earliest cultic space discovered to date in its originality⁷⁰. The structure is a large 54 square meter space dating back to 230CE, with a mosaic floor having the symbol of fish, The inscriptions in Greek found in the building is indicative of the sacred character of the

⁶⁶ Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 18.

⁶⁷ Huyghe, *Larousse Encyclopedia*, 23

⁶⁸ Stewart, *History of Architectural Development*, Vol II, 2

⁶⁹ Simminis, *Sacred Spaces*, 35

⁷⁰ Hadly, "Early Christian Perception", 92.

encompassed space⁷¹. The discovery of two churches belonging to the early years of the 4th century in Um Qais and Aqaba (both in Jordan) has brought new light on the antiquity of churches before Constantine. The church in Aqaba is claimed to be the earliest exclusively built church structure that exists. The church has a basilican plan with a stone foundation. The walls are made of mudbricks and the doorways are characterized by arches⁷². Silvia Siena had recently brought insights into the pre-Constantine churches by showing that the development of the cathedral and Episcopal complex of Milan was already in progress before the period of Constantine⁷³. It was towards the close of the third century CE and from the beginning of the 4th century CE that there occurred a considerable increase in the number of Christians in Europe which in turn demanded larger spaces for worship. This period was also the peak period of the Roman Empire. Some scant details are pointing to the existence of church buildings before the period of Constantine in certain literary works. There is the mention of a tall church in Nicomedia (Turkey), in the work *De moribus persecutorum XII*, which is said to have been pulled down by Diocletian in 303CE. References to the restoration of a large church by Bishop Eugenius of Laodicea, who died in 332CE is mentioned in his epitaph. Although the date of the construction of the original church is not mentioned in the epitaph, it is assumed by the scholars that the original church was built before the period of Constantine from certain indications. The remains of other churches which are thought to date back before the period of Constantine have also been found in various places of the Roman Empire like, S Crisogono in Rome, a small church at Salona (Dalmatia), the cave under the church of Thecla in Merimallik (Turkey), the double church of Aquileia (Northern Italy) (figure), etc. The Synod of Elvira that took place in 306AD forbids the depiction of figurative paintings in the church. There have been findings of evidence of similar house churches at Herculaneum as well as Capernaum, but as details of these findings have not been published yet it is not possible to identify more about them.

⁷¹ Hadly, "Early Christian Perception", 92.

⁷² For a detailed reading on this church at Aqaba, see, Mark Rose, "Early Church at Aqaba", *Archaeology* 51, no 6, (November-December 1998).
<https://archive.archaeology.org/9811/newsbriefs/aqaba.html#:~:text=Early%20Church%20at%20Aqaba%20-%20Archaeology%20Magazine%20Archive&text=The%20remains%20of%20the%20oldest,Red%20Sea%20port%20of%2>

⁷³ Hadly, "Early Christian Perception", 93.

It can be assumed from the above evidence that the development of the Christian architecture in the Roman Empire was in ‘silent progress’, gradually shifting from the secret house churches with a quasi-sacred spatial character to the hall churches or cult spaces that had divine and spiritual character. Besides the absence of the church buildings in the Empire was not the result of the Christian aloofness from sacred spaces, but the result of the political social, and economic situations that were prevalent during the time. To recapitulate, it is evident that there existed churches before Constantine although it is not known how they were structured and decorated⁷⁴.

The Period of Constantine

The recognition of Christianity as a religion on par with the pagan religion was a major benchmark in the history of Christianity. The Edict of Milan of 313CE not only gave Christianity the status of state religion(along with the pagan religion) but also delivered the Christians from the plight of state-sponsored religious persecution. This meant freedom to practice and preach their religion without the fear of torture. Constantine who believed that the symbol of the Cross helped him to win over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312CE wanted to acknowledge the religion and its God for facilitating his victory. This not only made him proclaim the Edict of Milan but also encouraged him to build numerous churches throughout the Roman Empire. Interestingly Constantine was also building and renovating a large number of pagan temples along with the building of churches.

Koch identifies several issues with the churches built during his time. Firstly, many of the churches build after 313CE have uncertain dates and therefore it is impossible to trace them solely to Constantine’s period or the period of his successors⁷⁵. While some of the churches are build by the Emperor himself, some others are supposedly started by them but completed by his successors. Secondly, it is almost impossible to discover the churches which are build during Constantine and mentioned in the then-contemporary literature because most of them have already disappeared and some of them are left only with scant remnants of dilapidated walls, fences, and

⁷⁴ Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 19.

⁷⁵ Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 21.

foundation. Therefore it is very difficult to reconstruct the plan of the initial churches from these remains. Thus the only possible means to get an idea about the churches of the time is by corroborating the literary sources with the available archaeological remains⁷⁶.

An exemplary aspect of the churches built during the time of Constantine was the element of variation. There did not exist an ideal plan for the church and they had different floor plans and elevation models. In many cases, many of the Roman basilicas were converted into spaces for Christian worship on an immediate basis. This may be because of the rather secular character and the spatial organization of these structures as they were enclosed and departed from the pagan model⁷⁷. It should also be noted that Christianity was treated on par with the pagan religion and therefore conversion of the pagan temples into Christian churches may not have been a practical solution. The first-ever church built by Constantine in 313CE for the Bishop of Rome called Salvator Church or the S Giovanni in Laterano is a five aisled basilica with an apse at the West end in contrast to the churches build in Tyre and Aquileia which are modest structures despite being build around the same period. The St Peters church which began construction in 319CE had the addition of a transept for the first time in the history of early Christian architecture⁷⁸. In some cases, the old palace walls were used to build new churches by Constantine⁷⁹. Even during the period of Constantine church building activity progressed in various phases with remarkable additions in the various elements and the plan. Some churches build after 320CE such as SS Marcellino e Pietro, S Agnese, Basilica Apostolorum, etc have an ambulatory aisle model where the aisles run in a U shape around the nave. Also, these churches are outside the city walls and above the cemeteries or sometimes connected to imperial mausoleums⁸⁰. In such buildings which are essentially covered cemeteries, memorial meals for the dead are celebrated. These types of buildings are not found outside Rome or after the period of Constantine.

⁷⁶ Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 22.

⁷⁷ A detailed note on the basilican plan will be discussed in the following section.

⁷⁸ Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 22-23.

⁷⁹ The best example of such a construct build by Constantine was the S Croce in Rome build before 324CE.

⁸⁰ Koch, *Early Christian Art*, 24.

The period of Constantine laid the foundation for tremendous church building activity across the Roman Empire. The pilgrimage of his mother Helena to the Holy Lands of Palestine triggered the building of several churches in and around the places of importance to Christianity. The Holy Land became the sacred geographical space for all the Christian traditions. A classic model of a building that later inspired and influenced the church building plans of early and medieval churches built over the tomb of Jesus had the form of a round building with an ambulatory and a cupola⁸¹.

The foundation of the new capital of Constantinople by Emperor Constantine embarked on a new phase of church building activity with him constructing two churches; one dedicated to Irene and the other to the Apostles⁸². As mentioned in the earlier section, the existing temples of the pagans were considered unsuitable for Christian worship and therefore novel structural plans were required to be adopted to suit the requirements of the Christian congregation. Socrates points at the first church of S Sophia build at Constantinople by Constantine having the plan of the Roman basilica⁸³. The basilicas were introduced to Rome from Greece and it served as a courtroom in Rome. The Roman basilica was a simple structure with a central court between colonnaded portions serving as spaces for gathering. At the end of the hall separated by railings or cancelli was the seat or throne of the Praetor or the judge, from where he sat and heard the cases along with his Judices⁸⁴. Although unlike the conversion of certain pagan temples to the centers of Christian worship during and after the period of Constantine, no basilicas other than the Licinian basilica at Rome was used for Christian worship⁸⁵. Thomas Graham Jackson gives a detailed description of the basilican plan of churches as having “ a nave consisting of a long parallelogram, ending in an apse, divided from an aisle on each side by rows of columns carrying either lintels or arches, above which was a clerestory, with windows which looked over the aisle

⁸¹ Koch, *Early Christian Art* ,26.

⁸² Thomas Graham Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1920). 15.

⁸³ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*,16.

⁸⁴ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*,16.

⁸⁵ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*,16.

roofs”⁸⁶. The roofs were usually made of wood except for the roof of the apse which was a semi-dome of stone or brick. The altar was placed on the chord of the apse and the seats of the Bishop and the presbyters were placed around the hemicycle of the apse behind. The altar was situated in the west end of the church facilitating the priest to pray and address the congregation facing the east⁸⁷. The altar was purposefully raised to symbolize the ancient place where the humans and the divine met⁸⁸. The basilican plan was followed as the standard plan for constructing church buildings throughout the Constantine period with very few exceptions like the plan of St Peters Church which had a slightly complicated plan⁸⁹.

The evolution of exclusive space for baptism occurred during this time. Separate chapels or separate buildings were exclusively constructed for conducting the sacrament. Separate and exclusive buildings for baptism came to be known as baptisteries. Such baptisteries were built in an octagonal shape similar to the Roman martyria. The shape according to Geoffrey Simmins, “thought to refer symbolically to Christ; eight referred to the first day of a new week and so to Sunday when a New Age dawned with the resurrection of Jesus”⁹⁰.

3.1.7. Standard Church in Europe- Ideal Church

The architecture of churches is influenced by various factors that determine and dominate culture and territory. These structures have evolved through time partly by imitating the elements from other architectural styles and designs and partly according to the necessities of changing beliefs, rituals, practices, and traditions. In other words, the architecture of churches evolved and metamorphosed according to the pace and demands during the development of the religion.

The church architecture had evolved from simple structures to magnificent buildings with styles and models adapted according to the time-space and requirements. Therefore it is not easy to arrive at the ideal plan of a church building or the rules that strongly demarcate the church building from other secular buildings.

⁸⁶ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*, 17. A detailed description of the plan of the Roman basilica is provided by Edith A Browne, *Romanesque Architecture* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), 4-5.

⁸⁷ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*, 17-18.

⁸⁸ Simmins, *Sacred Spaces*, 36.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*, 18

⁹⁰ Simmins, *Sacred Spaces*, 37

The root plan of the early Christian churches that came up in Rome was based on the plan of the Roman basilica or the Roman court of law. Some people on the other hand believe that the early churches evolved from either the early Roman dwellings or the classrooms where the philosophers were taught⁹¹. As discussed before, Roman basilicas were simple structures with a rectangular shape and a semicircular apse at one end on which the seat of the judge was placed. This basic plan was adapted to suit the requirements of the evolving community by adding various icons motifs and extensions that were relevant to the Christian core beliefs and practices. The basilica plan for churches remained as more or less the standard ecclesiastical plan for church building in the newly Christianized regions. Churches constructed on such a plan could be found in Palestine, Syria, Africa, and the central provinces⁹².

The gradual addition of transepts towards the north-south direction of the basic basilica plan resulted in the cross-shaped church structure plan. However, the cruciform plan of the church is often considered the ideal plan. Most of the churches that were build during the Renaissance and later followed the cruciform model. Although circular and octagonal shaped churches were constructed, they were relatively less common.

3.1.8. Summary of debate on Church

The church as an institution has always been under various debates owing to its functioning, institutionalization, religious doctrines, and statements. However, in recent years debates have arisen on whether the congregation requires or needs to possess a physical building to uphold their Christian identity. While those who adhere to the nonessentiality for the buildings uphold the idea that the Christian Church need not be specified by a building but by the congregation that assembles as in the body of the church⁹³, arguments are favoring the necessity of the buildings as a marker of Christian identity and an exclusive space for gathering. Besides these buildings are often considered as the focal point of a community and initiates the notion of a permanency

⁹¹ Banister Flecher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (London: B T Batsford, 1905), 180

⁹² Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*, 23-24.

⁹³ Mathew J French, "The Debate on the Necessity of Chrch Buildings Through the Lens of Weslyn Quadilateral" https://www.methodist.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/mr2017_french.pdf

Such debates are justified on the interpretations of various passages from the Old and the New Testament. Several passages from the Old Testament directly speak on the necessity of having an exclusive place dedicated to God and also for worship⁹⁴. However several passages from the New Testament are quoted to contradict the argument. Mathew 27:51 discusses the destruction of the Temple is often quoted in asserting the non-obligatory stand on buildings.

3.2.0.The functional and symbolic idea of Church

The sacred place is a part of the realm of space where spiritual, religious, or divine forces are in operation. Some practices and rituals help people to create sacred spaces and these spaces are made sustainable to remain sacred by associating them with a particular myth or legend often not defined by time. The sacred spaces, like the faith associated with them, create boundaries with the profane spaces by the use of symbols, icons, motifs, or any other object that has relation to the doctrines of the religion. Sacred spaces can be understood as a place or space where the presence of the sacred power is felt. Therefore the spaces are designed in such a manner that the laymen get an atmosphere of the omnipotent power whose existence and function is articulated by the religion.

The church was the loci for the transmission of religion. The building acted as a space where the divine interacts with the terrestrial space. The space within the church acts as a space where the faith is fostered by the reenactment of the rituals thereby embedding it in the minds and memory of the people. Besides, the church acted not only as a space for worship but also as a center of community life. The church and its premises also hosted community banquets, meetings, and fairs making it the center of the community's cultural life.

In Europe, churches were often located in the center of the villages and were the tallest buildings making them visible from the entire village. The idea of a superordinate space that was towering was of immense symbolic interest. The priest at the church often behaved as an authority who exercised judicial powers over the common people to an extend. The church also

⁹⁴ Refertences to a building or a structure dedicated for the purpose may be identified in Exodus 40:34-35,,2Kings 6:19

acted as a place for asylum during the time of natural calamities and therefore acted as a space of safety and security. The church hosts the celebration of the other sacraments such as baptism, Confession, Matrimony, and Ordination. Funeral rites are also conducted in the churches.

The church building is considered as the ‘house of God’ on earth and therefore resonates with the terrestrial idea of heaven. The early Christians of Europe ensured their place of worship resembled the heavenly adobe that gave the worshippers an aura of communication with their God at heavenly peace. The church structure was created in such a way that it represented and reflected the symbolism of the religion. The churches reflected the content of the faith in a physical form. The churches belonging to the Eastern Christian rites had created churches in an elongated plan resembling the arch of Noah.

3.2.1. Major and minor components of the church structure and their connections with ritual style

The major components of the church interiors include the altar, chancel, the sanctuary, the transept, naïve, and the aisles. There are some other elements such as the quire, apses, rood screens, reeds, lancet window, etc that can also be seen in some churches. The below description is taking into consideration the cross-shaped plan of the church, as a reference to study the various components of the church.

Evolution of major elements of the church- Early Phase

It is not clear if strict rules on the orientation of churches ever existed in the early period. Cecil Stewart agrees on the absence of such rules on the orientation of the churches until the Middle Ages⁹⁵. However, by the mid 4th century CE, there started to emerge the practice of orienting the altars of the churches to the East, although the rule varied according to the topographical conditions⁹⁶. Normally, the entrance of most of the early churches is oriented towards the western end so that the altar could be placed in the eastern end facing Jerusalem. The requirement for the chancel for the church was facilitated by using the apse of the Roman basilica as the chancel and the table of the judges as the altar in the basilica model church.

⁹⁵ Stewart, *History of Architectural Development*, Vol II, 19-20

⁹⁶ Stewart, *History of Architectural Development*, Vol II, xiv

The Narthex is the gathering area located outside the church proper. The nave is a space where the congregation gathers for prayer. The altar is contained within an elevated space called the sanctuary. It is a symbol of heaven and space where the clergy and priests perform the functions of the rite.

The altar is the most important part of the church interior as it is the place of reenactment of the sacrifices of Jesus on the Cross takes place during the Eucharist. The priest breaks the bread during the Eucharist symbolizing the sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of man. The altar along with the sanctuary within which it is placed in the most sacred and divine space within the church. In the early basilican model churches, the seat of the judges was used as the seat of the Bishop and the judge's table was converted as the altar. The practice of dedicating a church in honor of a saint started to gain popularity by the 5th century and relics belonging to the particular saint began to be placed beneath the altar by the 6th century thereby altering the shape of the altar table to a box⁹⁷.

The triumphant arch was present between the nave and the chancel from the basilican model churches. Likewise, the pulpits were also present for preaching. This was following the Jewish practice. Although pulpits were initially positioned behind the altars in the earlier churches, they were shifted to the naves later like the Jewish model for practical reasons⁹⁸.

The baptismal fonts might have become an integral part of the initial catacomb churches or the house churches during the period of Roman persecution. It is possible to consider the earlier practice of baptism being conducted in rivers in the way Jesus was baptized. However, during the persecution periods, the practice of baptism in a public space was unfeasible. Thus baptismal fonts were introduced. These fonts found a way to the early church buildings after the acceptance of Christianity in Rome. Additional baptistries were also built in the churches to admit the unbaptized people to the church for baptism⁹⁹.

Burials during the persecution period were in underground catacombs. By the 5th century, the relics of saints and martyrs which were kept in the catacombs were transferred to various

⁹⁷ Mills, *Modern Church*, 21-22

⁹⁸ Mills, *Modern Church*, 23.

⁹⁹ Stewart, *History of Architectural Development*, 128.

churches. Bishops and other clergymen were buried inside the church while the kings and emperors were buried in the atria and the portico areas¹⁰⁰. It was only after the various Council of Braga(6th century CE) that permissions were given for burial in churches in case of necessity. However, permission to bury members of worthy clergy and laymen within the church building was provided only after the Council of Mayence in 813CE¹⁰¹

3.3.0. The early style of Church in Europe- The Romanesque

The Roman art and architecture itself was the result of the Empire's constant cultural exchanges that came out as a result of trade and conquests. The Romans however instead of adapting every other feature they found interesting considered it degrading to openly acknowledge and practice the styles of the conquered people. Therefore they chose to ingest those elements suiting the requirements of their larger civic life that demanded a style that was cost and labor efficient. The adoption of the Etrurian arch could be understood from such a perspective¹⁰². Besides the deficiency in the availability of good quality stones in Europe was another reason for the choice of arches. The adaptation of arches into the architectural style of Rome resulted in the creation of wider spaces with minimal support resulting in the formation of fresh building plans. Gradually vaults and domes were also incorporated into the Roman architecture creating a complex style with decorations and paintings that followed. The Romans carried their art and architecture to the areas they conquered spreading the style from parts of Northern and Western Europe to the shores of Africa. The period of Roman architectural pride was set into a period of decline in terms of its perfection and quality from the time of Augustus Ceaser¹⁰³. By the 4th century, Roman architecture had completely deteriorated and decayed.

. The Romanesque style of architecture is used to describe the style of architecture that emerged in Europe by the late 10th century and gradually developed and evolved into the Gothic

¹⁰⁰ Albert Zucchi,"Churches as Catholic Burial Places:Excavations at the San Francisco Church,Venezuala",*Historical Archeology* 40, no 2(2006):57

¹⁰¹Stewart,*History of Architectural Development*, 128-129.

¹⁰² Jackson,*Byzantine and Romanesque*, 6.

¹⁰³ Jackson,*Byzantine and Romanesque*, 14.

style of architecture by the 12th century. In other words, this form of architecture preceded the Gothic style and succeeded in the basilican style or the Early Christian style of architecture. Although some of the features of this style of architecture began to appear from the 8th century CE onwards, the style becomes fully evolved and defined between the late 10th century and 11th century CE. Therefore this style of architecture was the synthesis of the various elements of the Carolingian, Byzantine, and Germanic traditions and developed as a result of the spread of the monastic orders. It was essentially a style together with the Byzantine style that absorbed elements and features of the decaying Roman art and architecture¹⁰⁴. Eric Fernie prefers to categorize the Romanesque style of architecture with Gothic, Renaissance, Mannerist, and Baroque as ‘stylistic’, unlike the Egyptian Greek, Roman, Merovingian, Carolingian which were tribal, ethnic, or dynastic¹⁰⁵. The Romanesque architecture according to Edward Bell could be attributed to those buildings that were built imitating the Roman manner of the building following its decay. However, the term is commonly used to signify those buildings which have the prevalence of round arches¹⁰⁶. In other words, Romanesque was the term used to describe the buildings that had some connection with the ancient Roman style or at least showed some resemblance with the Roman-like architecture yet had a corrupted form. The major characteristic features of Romanesque architecture are the thick walls, the use of round arches, the presence of decorative arcading, and the use of vault piers and large towers. The use of stone as a building material and the basilica plan as the plan for construction was the distinctive features of the Romanesque architecture. Overall, the buildings were simple structures with the asymmetrical plan. The style was in vogue across Europe, with varying degrees of regional characteristic features as well as on the choice of building materials.

Browne categorizes the Romanesque style of architecture into three different phases such as the Early Romanesque Period, Middle Romanesque, and the Late Romanesque period. This periodization traces the evolution of the style right from the period of the decline of Roman art. While the early Romanesque period consists of buildings constructed in the Roman Empire

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, *Byzantine and Romanesque*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Eric Fernie, “The History of Medieval Architecture from Carolingian to Romanesque Criteria and Definitions from 1925 to the Present Day”, *Muqamas Vol 8, K A C, Creswell and His Legacy*, (1991), 36.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Bell, “On the Distinction Between Romanesque and Gothic”, *The Archaeological Review*, 2, no 4 (December 1888), 237.

except for those in the Eastern half, between the fourth and the sixth centuries. The Middle Romanesque period is attributed to those buildings which were constructed in the Western Roman Empire between the 6th and the 11th centuries with exceptions of those build in the region of Ravenna and those in Spain and Sicily that were originated with the Saracenic occupation. The Late Romanesque period lasted from the beginning of the 11th century to the dawn of the thirteenth century with the exclusion of those buildings with the Saracenic influence in Spain¹⁰⁷.

Although the Romanesque architecture adopted the plan of the Roman basilica as the root plan for the construction of their churches, the addition of the transepts and the elongation of the chancel gradually redefined the plan of the church to that of a cross. The cloisters in the churches exhibited elegance with carved capitals amping its structure and beauty. The towers were an important feature of Romanesque architecture and were placed in the west and the east ends as well as the crossing of the nave and the transepts. The towers were either square, circular, or octagonal with defined stories and windows¹⁰⁸. The wheel or rose window was a characteristic feature of Romanesque architecture which was seen in the main doorway located towards the west end of the church. The use of flying buttresses over the aisle is also a common feature. The carving and ornaments were influenced by the patterns and models from the plant and animal kingdom and were carved rudely. The use of frescos over the mosaic was seen predominantly in the interiors¹⁰⁹. Despite the Romanesque architecture having standard features, there were variations in the characteristic features of the style per the climate geography and geological formation across Europe¹¹⁰.

3.3.1. The evolution of Gothic style

The collapse of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Goths led to the rise of Gothic architecture. Gothic architecture sprang from the Romanesque architecture by adopting certain features of the Romanesque style more innovatively. The style flourished in Europe during the High and the Late Middle Ages as an outcome of the various political, religious, social, and

¹⁰⁷Browne, *Romanesque Architecture*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 226.

¹⁰⁹ Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 225-227.

¹¹⁰ For a detailed reading on the various regional styles of the Romanesque architecture such as the Italian, French and German, read, Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 228-267.

historical developments that triggered in Europe following the Germanic invasion and the formation of the nation-states such as Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Britain. The Papacy and the clergy were also amassing wealth and power in their hands making their consent a requisite for obtaining legitimacy of kingship. They encouraged the building of new and grand churches cathedrals and monasteries. Besides the gradual growth of towns into major cities due to the increased economic activity accumulated considerable wealth which was used to build grand churches with novel architectural styles. Nikolaus Pevsner considers the designer of the choir of St Denis Abbey near Paris (built between 1140-1144 CE) as the 'inventor' of the Gothic style¹¹¹.

According to Banister Flecher there existed similarities in the Gothic architectural style and character throughout Western Europe¹¹². The Gothic architecture developed the ribbed vaulting technique that had already appeared at an incipient state during the Romanesque period. The introduction of pointed arches in place of the semicircular arches aided in overcoming the difficulties of oblong vaulting. The use of painted or stained glass on the windows brought in more light and hues into the interiors of the churches. The walls were kept as flat as possible to have the windows with the stained glass decoration visible from every direction from inside the church. The major themes depicted in the stained glass decoration were biblical and hence accentuated the spiritual aura within the church. In almost all the cases the churches in Europe followed the plan of a Latin Cross, with the shorter arms forming the transepts. A tower crowned with a spire was also constructed over the crossing of the transepts and the nave or sometimes at the western end of the church¹¹³. The main entrance of the churches are usually at the Western end, or sometimes at the northern or the southern part accompanied by a porch. The use of flying buttresses gave more lateral support to the church structure by distributing the thrust of the roof and the vaults to a massive pier situated away from the main building. Other elements that embellished the Gothic church exterior are the elegant pinnacles and crocketed angular canopies.

The Gothic architectural style was widely used for building Christian religious buildings such as churches, cathedrals, and monasteries although they were used for constructing secular

¹¹¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1946), 31.

¹¹² Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 268.

¹¹³ Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 273.

buildings such as castles, residences of nobles, houses of common people, and public buildings like hospitals.

3.3.2. Byzantine Architecture

The shift in the power loci of the Roman Empire from, Rome to the newly built capital of Constantinople had announced the total death knell of Rome and its glory. The division of the Roman Empire into the Western and the Eastern spheres amongst the sons of Theodosius and the subsequent fall of the Western Roman Empire had a significant impact on the architectural development of early Christianity. The religion flourished at the Eastern half with the new capital of Constantinople creating ample space for the development of the Byzantine style art and architecture. Domical churches build by Constantine in the East were in the early Romanesque style¹¹⁴The Eastern churches are less influenced by the European styles of architecture. The styles are more traditional and stick to the ideals of conservatism. The church building traditions exhibited the influence of Byzantine architecture.

The Byzantine architecture had its inception at Byzantium after it became the capital of the Roman Empire in 321CE. The place has been a Greek colony and an important commercial city and becomes the center of the Byzantine style of architecture until it fell into the Turkish hands in 1453CE.

The most outstanding feature of Byzantine architecture is the dome. The domes were placed over square apartments that were modeled into a circular shape by the use of pendentives¹¹⁵. Windows were placed in the lower portion of the domes, which in the latter times was lifted upon a high circular drum. The floor plan of the Byzantine churches looked like a Greek cross, with the narthex and the side galleries making the plan almost a square¹¹⁶. The walls were made of bricks and relatively kept flat and plain. The windows are grouped and are mostly semicircular headed. The Byzantine style unlike the Gothic, employed mosaic rather than stained glasses to ornament the interiors. However geometric and non-representational imagery was used to ornament the church interiors owing to the practice of not using images and idols in Eastern

¹¹⁴ J L Petit, *Remarks on Church Architecture*, Vol 1 (London:James Burns,1841), 19.

¹¹⁵ Flecher,*History of Architecture*, 194.

¹¹⁶ Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 210.

Christianity. Although the style used columns and moldings, they were unimportant features that were meant only for providing support to the side galleries.

An outstanding example of Byzantine architecture is the church of Santa Sophia or Hagia Sophia built by Justinian in the 6th century CE. The church is dedicated to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and was built by renowned architects and geometers, Anthemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus¹¹⁷. The church is considered as an architectural gem of the Byzantine style with a novel style known as the basilica dome which later became the preferred style during the Justinian period. Although the church was converted into a mosque after the fall of Constantinople and its stuccos depicting Jesus, Christian saints, and others covered with plaster¹¹⁸, the building was maintained well and survived the tests of time. Despite having undergone numerous alterations due to destructions, fire, and natural calamities, the edifice still carries its grandeur.

3.3.3. Renaissance Architecture (15th -16th centuries CE)

The dawn of the Renaissance saw a shift in the European taste from the architectural styles of the Middle Ages. A revival of the Greco Roman classical architecture was embarked on by the architects of the period who took immense care to fit the classical ideas into the tastes and demands of the period. This saw the birth of a new style of architecture that showed striking departures from the earlier Romanesque and Gothic styles. In a way, the Renaissance architecture and art sprang as a revolt against medieval art which was hardly human-centric. While the Gothic style of architecture was born in France, the Renaissance architecture was born in Italy by the early 15th century. Italy neither had a strong Gothic influence in art nor feudal influence in a social structure which made it more susceptible to the charging waves of the rediscovery of the classic.

¹¹⁷ Anthony Cutler, "Structure and Aesthetic at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 25, no 1 (Autumn 1966): 28.

¹¹⁸ For further readings on the mosaics, see, Nicolas Oikonomides, "Some Remarks on the Apse Mosaic of St Sophia", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985):111.

The first building constructed in the Renaissance style was the Foundling Hospital in Florence designed by Brunelleschi¹¹⁹. The style of architecture gradually spread from Italy to other parts of Europe in the 16th century. The Jesuits played a key role in spreading the Renaissance style parts of the world to where they ventured¹²⁰.

The main features of the Renaissance style were based on Classic orders such as the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian that were used in vogue¹²¹. Although classical Roman architecture was the inspiration for the Renaissance architecture, it was never imitated. The Renaissance artists adopted the classical semicircular vaulting instead of the ribbed vaulting characteristic of the Gothic style. The presence of the dome was an outstanding characteristic of Renaissance architecture. A common feature of renaissance architecture was the dome. In most cases, the ceilings of the domes were decorated with paintings.

3.3.4. Baroque architecture (16th -18th centuries CE)

Baroque architecture style succeeded in the Renaissance architectural style in Europe. It sprang from the desire of the Catholic church to counter the forces of Reformation by bringing in a new style that established the superiority of God over Man. The style of architecture was intended to express the triumph and power of the church and the state. The Baroque style thus had its origin in Italy, the seat of the Catholic church, around the late 16th century and spread to other parts of Europe and later to the European colonies. Unlike the precedent Renaissance style that adopted elementary floor plans of square, rectangle, or circle, the Baroque style adopted more complex geometric forms such as the ellipse, oval, and other sophisticated shapes. The Baroque style adopted the elementary features of the Renaissance architecture and reformed it to more elaborate and complex structures.

John Rupert Martin considers naturalism as an important feature of Baroque architecture as the artists imitated the natural things well¹²². The Baroque style is known for its grand ornate

¹¹⁹ Pevsner, *European Architecture*, 79.

¹²⁰ Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 438.

¹²¹ Flecher, *History of Architecture*, 439.

¹²² John Rupert Martin, "The Baroque from the Point of View of the Art Historian", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 14, no 2, Second Special Issue on Baroque Style in Various Arts (December 1955): 165-166.

style and layout that was meant to bring surprise and awe to the viewers. The use of elaborate and colorful paintings that were realistic and expressive was another important feature of the style. The element of light was effectively used to create a pattern of light and shadows.

The Baroque style had developed and evolved through various stages, the Early Baroque(1584-1625CE), High Baroque(1625-1675CE), and the Late Baroque(1675-1750CE). The pioneer of Baroque architecture was Carlo Maderro who designed the facade of the St Peters Basilica in Rome, the facade of which remains the best instance of the Early Baroque style.

The word Baroque although had varied meanings across Europe, all echoed the tone of imperfection. The style departed from using the conventional floor plans and instead adopted asymmetrical plans. The narrow and long naves of the earlier styles were supplanted with broader or circular ones. Grand and colorful frescos on the ceilings were an important characteristic feature.

3.4.0. Church Architecture in the East

Christianity had expanded eastward outside the limits of the Roman Empire at a rapid pace. The spread of the religion to these different regions inaugurated styles of church architecture that were unique to the region. Various legends in circulation in the region of Edessa claim that the earliest Christian king, the earliest translation of the Greek New Testament, and the earliest church building first appearing in Edessa¹²³. However, the church structure was destroyed by a devastating flood that engulfed the city later¹²⁴.

The division of the Roman Empire resulted in the varied traditions of church architecture in Europe with the Western half adopting the basilican model as the basic plan, and the Eastern half, having local traditions and influences creating a variety of plans and styles. With the political and economic stability that prevailed in the Eastern Roman Empire during the tumultuous period between the 5th and 8th centuries, the various centers of Christianity in the Eastern half began to flourish both architecturally and demographically. Varied forms of

¹²³ Thomas, *Expansion of Christianity*, 3-4

¹²⁴ Young, *Handbook of Source Materials*, 11-12.

Christian art and architecture flourished in Persia, Egypt, and Syria which had the influence of local elements at large.

The Coptic Church of Alexandria that detached from the Roman control following various theological differences after the Council of Chalcedon(451CE), adopted a distinct style of Christian art that departed from the traditional Egyptian art. The form of art flourished in Egypt until its Arab conquest in the 7th century CE. These churches had a tri-apsidal setting having three altars with the seating for the clergy arranged around the central apse. The churches had an ever-burning lamp positioned within a niche behind the Bishop's chair. An important feature of the Coptic churches is the presence of iconostasis, which was a wooden screen with doors that separated the chancel from the nave¹²⁵. These churches had plain and discreet exteriors and ornate interiors., Barrel vaulted naves and domed apses are the other major features of the Coptic churches.

Ethiopia had an early arrival of Christianity, has a different architectural tradition, where the entire church was carved out of a single block of rock especially during the Aksumite period. The rock-hewn churches of Lalibela also known as the (New Jerusalem of Ethiopia)carved between the 10th and 12th centuries(or maybe earlier) are the classic example of the monolithic tradition that was prevalent in Ethiopia¹²⁶. The style of using alternating layers of wood and stone was also common during the period. The wooden beam structures for the support that were protruding outwards from the main building is considered as the major feature of the architectural style of the Aksumite period. The church building activity progressed almost in a similar fashion during the Zagwe dynasty with gradual influences from the Ottoman and Arabic styles, until modern styles of architecture were introduced by the Jesuits.

The architecture of the churches in Asia minor, especially around the Christian centers of Jerusalem and Antioch, was influenced by the local elements as well as the Byzantine style. The church building activity in Edessa and Syria had ended with its conquest by the Saracens. The use of wood for the construction was too minimal and the exteriors had more ornamentation than the interiors. These churches were characterized by their larger width in comparison to their

¹²⁵ Stewart,*History of Architectural Development*,35.

¹²⁶ For further reference,see,Denison Brook,"Seamless Drawings the Monolithic Churches of Lalibela",*Perspecta* 21,Grand Tour(2008):42-45.

lower height and therefore appeared more spacious¹²⁷. In Armenia, where Christianity had spread by the 3rd century CE, the conversion of many pagan shrines and places of worship into Christian churches took place¹²⁸.

The places for Christian worship were present in Persia too from the earliest centuries of the Christian era. Persia as an important center of ancient Christianity enjoyed considerable freedom in the practice of the religion until the period of the Sassanid king Saphor II. His period saw the persecution of Christians and the destruction of Christian churches¹²⁹.

The churches of the East had followed the central plan in constructing their churches like their Western counterpart. However, the Churches of the East had a partition or a screen known as the iconostasis, that divided the chancel from the nave. Unlike the Western churches which had a more open-plan inviting the attention of the worshippers into the altar, the churches of the East gave access to the sanctuary only during some part of the services, and certain services were conducted with the screen drawn to create an aura of sacredness and mystery.

The church architecture varied according to place, culture, and continent. The churches built on the Malabar coast where Christianity had reached immediately after the period of Christ had adopted a church-building style that was similar to the models of the temples of the Hindus. Although influences of the building styles from West Asia can be identified from these structures, they were more or less Indic in nature and style. It was only after the advent and establishment of the European colonial powers that the European church architectural styles were introduced in the region.

3.5.0. A Summary of main similarities and striking divergences in the different building traditions of the Church

The churches in Asia Africa and Europe had a considerable difference in style owing to differences in the geography, climatic conditions, historical experiences as well as liturgical differences. The architectural styles of Europe exhibited connection as well as continuity. While the successive styles influenced the preceding styles, the earlier style was never imitated. The

¹²⁷ Stewart, *History of Architectural Development*, 41.

¹²⁸ Thomas, *Expansion of Christianity*, 5.

¹²⁹ Young, *Handbook of Source Materials*, 278-279.

architects despite imbibing the features from the earlier styles, redesigned them to suit the milieu of the period thereby creating a pattern of continuity.

Gothic architecture exhibits the sensation of growth and therefore showcases dynamism and continuation. The flying buttresses and high towers with spire give the illusion of continuation to infinity. Nikolaus Pevsner describes the architectural continuity as “in Gothic style motif follows motif, as branch follows branch up a tree”¹³⁰. The Romanesque style in contrast is more or less a static style with inert features. The semi-circular arches and basilica style does not create the scope for the sensation of continuity.

While both Renaissance and Romanesque architecture gave importance to the walls, the Gothic style considered the walls as an element for enclosure and gave more importance to the windows which were placed on the walls. In other words, during the Gothic times, walls acted as a space to adore the more elaborate stained glass windows. However, the Renaissance walls unlike the Romanesque ones was ‘active’ and follows the law of human reasoning when it comes to their sizes and arrangement¹³¹. Renaissance architecture exhibited uniformity, clarity, simplicity, and regularity. The Baroque style was the exact opposite with its asymmetrical and ambiguous features that gave it a more mysterious character.

Overall, the European churches were not governed by strict rules of orientation from the earlier periods. There was no compound wall to fortify the churches. The root plan of these churches through various periods of development had remained basilican with additions and modifications in various periods. These churches were well lit and ventilated with intrinsic ornamentations and decoration in the interiors in comparison to the exteriors. Although the chancel was built a little higher than the nave, the roofs of the chancel were never projected upwards. The chancel and the nave had uniform width and the triumphant arch separated the chancel and the nave.

In most cases, the Eastern churches followed a tri-apsidal plan with three altars. The Eastern churches had an iconostasis that separated the nave and the chancel. The arch that

¹³⁰ Pevsner, *European Architecture*, 90.

¹³¹ Pevsner, *European Architecture*, 91.

separated the chancel and the nave was also present. Vaults over the altar was an important feature of the Eastern churches

Wholly, The chapter aids in the understanding of the 'European' idea of the church as a space of worship thus enabling to comprehend the major departures and divergences in the architectural evolution of churches in non-European spaces, especially Kerala

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ADVENT OF THE PORTUGUESE AND THE IMPACT ON THE THOMAS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The present chapter looks into the social-political and cultural milieu of the Malabar Coast and Portugal focusing on the situations towards the end of the 15th century. The Chapter further analyzes the course of events that signaled a ‘civilizational clash’ and the political developments that followed along the Western Coast of India that embarked on the Portuguese colonial regime which lasted for over 450 years. Besides, a detailed discussion on the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians of Kerala and the various methods, they devised to bring the community under the Roman Fold and the Thomas Christian responses to the cultural and religious encroachment. The understanding of the historical and social evolution of the two landscapes is crucial in understanding the attitudes and agendas of the two entities in deciding their relationship with each other.

4.1.0. Malabar Polity and Society at the Time of Portuguese Arrival

The reconstruction of the history of the Malabar Coast at the time of the Portuguese advent is limited mostly to information from the Portuguese records and narratives as the indigenous sources reflect very scanty information on the makeup and history of the then-contemporary society¹. The Portuguese were keen to observe and document the life and culture of the people for official reasons as well as for the sake of satisfying the curiosity of their countrymen’s yearning for the knowledge of the new lands. However, various historiographical issues need consideration while dealing with such records. As the Portuguese were new to the social and political structure of the region, their comprehension of the Malabar society was governed by their social-political, and economic experiences which had shaped their perceptions. Therefore the Portuguese experienced certain degrees of difficulty in understanding the society and culture of the people especially during their initial years of encounter with the new people. In addition to the cultural shock, the Portuguese

¹ It is not appropriate to state that there were hardly any internal production of knowledge in the Malabar society in the Pre Portuguese period. As discussed at length in Chapter 2, there were a number of literary sources in the form of *sandeshakavyas*, dramas, *prasasthis* etc that contextualized Kerala society, polity and geography of the time. However the information that can be amassed from these works that has historical value is very few. For further reading on various indigenous sources concerning the medieval period, see, Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 26-32.

inability to understand the indigenous language of Malabar made it essential for them to depend on the translators and interpreters who in certain circumstances gave false or misleading information. Such misunderstandings can result in misappropriation and misinterpretation of information resulting in flawed and imprecise narratives. Another factor that needs special emphasis while examining the sources is the extent of Portuguese acquaintance with the Malabar society that can result in generating a first-hand knowledge of the people and their lives. It is to be assumed that the Portuguese had established contacts only with the societies and communities who were directly or indirectly involved in trade and commerce, especially during their primary years, and limited their observations to these regions and communities. Much of their initial sojourn was along the coastal regions and had not ventured deep into the hinterlands. It was only after a decade of Portuguese existence in the region that they were able to percolate into the hinterlands of the Kerala region. Therefore the Portuguese accounts were never free from erroneous tendencies and have to be utilized after proper corroboration and analysis.

Malabar Society

The Malabar society at the time of the Portuguese arrival was organized based on religion and caste. ‘Hinduism’, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism were the predominant religions of the 15th century. Although the term ‘religion’ could suitably be appropriated with the term ‘way of life’ in the Malabar context, for the want of delineating rules determining them. Amalgamation with the social structure and system was considered more important than an individual’s spiritual deference. As social structure defined an individual more than his ‘way of life’, each of these religious communities was never devoid of the influences of the *jati* and *varna* system that was prevalent during the time. Even though the practice of the *jati* and *varna* system within Christians and Muslims of the region was less common, or less socially conspicuous to have been documented, such practices were exercised outside the community. Barbosa notes the presence of at least eighteen different castes of native heathens present in the region². These different castes have different lifestyles and patterns of worship and practiced untouchability to a considerable extend.

The Malabar Hindu population followed the similar hierarchical structure of the Vedic *varna* system. The Brahmins or the Nambootiris, as they are commonly known in the region, occupied an exalted position in Malabar alike in other societies and cultures of the

² Barbosa, *Book of Barbos*, Vol II, 7.

Indian subcontinent. People of other castes could not approach the *Nambootiris* lest at shouting distance³. The *Nambootiris* were the owners of great stretches of land⁴ as they were provided with land grants by the rulers due to their respectable position in both religious and social hierarchy. They remained close to the power that some of them ruled small kingdoms⁵ in the region while some others maintained close knits with the ruling families. The Brahmins were respected so much so that despite the magnitude of their crime they were never given a death sentence.

The next significant position in society was occupied by the ruling class and the military class. The kings are also known as *tampuran* and the other ruling nobility belonged to this section. *Nairs*, who were essentially the military caste occupied a privileged status in the society and maintained close nexus with the power centers. The *Nairs* occupied the most superior position over other *jatis* except for the Brahmins⁶. They hardly practiced farming and agriculture despite residing in the countryside⁷, they were skilled military men. They always carried arms with them wherever they went⁸ and were known for their bravery and courageousness. The travel writings of the 15th and 16th centuries mention other *jatis* in Malabar such as *Tiyars* who were considered as artisans⁹ and were lower in status. Other lower caste people like *Vettuvār*¹⁰, *Mukkuvas*¹¹ (fishermen), *Parayars*¹² (lower caste people who lived in the hills), and *Pulayas* or *Poleas*¹³ (agricultural laborers).

Other than Hindus or the ‘infidels’ or the ‘idolators’, as they are mentioned by the Portuguese, the Malabar society was composed of Christians, Jews, and Muslims as well. All the communities were living in peaceful coexistence despite their varying beliefs. A detailed

³ R S Whiteway, *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India 1497-1550* (Patna, 1979), 11.

⁴ George Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, His Life, His Times, vol III, India 1541-1545* (Rome, 1977), 490.

⁵ K M Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese. Being a History of the Relations of the Portuguese with Malabar from 1500 to 1663* (Bombay: 1929), 15.

⁶ Whiteway, *Rise of Portuguese*, 11.

⁷ KS Mathew, *Society in Medieval Malabar* (Kottayam: 1979), 35

⁸ Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier*, 490.

⁹ Varthema, *Travels of Ludovico de Varthema*, 57.

¹⁰ Varthema, *Travels of Ludovico de Varthema*, 57.

¹¹ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 64-65.

¹² Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 69-70.

¹³ *Poleas* were living in the agricultural lands and were tied to it Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol III*, 68, also see, Whiteway, *Rise of Portuguese*, 101.

discussion on the Christians and their cultural space has already been dealt with under Chapter Two. Considering the roles played by the Christians in the social scenario, it is most likely that they might have been included in the higher castes. In addition to Christians, Muslims also occupied a considerable section of the society. By the end of the 15th century, the Muslim merchants had established a primal position in Malabar, especially in Calicut. They had the monopoly of trade in collaboration with the Arabs in the northern region of Kerala before the Portuguese advent. The Jews who had enjoyed a favorable status amongst the rulers of Cochin were by the 16th century in a relatively waning stage. The establishment of the Muslim and Arab traders had done considerable harm to the commercial concerns of the Jews who were once known for their extensive wealth and trading networks.

Durate Barbosa remarks about the various trading communities that were present in the region of Malabar such as Tamil *Chettys* and Gujarathi merchants. A heterogeneous trading community finds space in his description The Tamil *Chettys* of Calicut who are mentioned as dark-skinned and heavily build are described as being originally from the Coromandel Coast¹⁴. They were wealthy and engaged in trading and money lending on interest¹⁵. Distinctions are noted between the various classes as the Gujarathi merchants are described to be wealthy and fair¹⁶.

It is clear from the above discourse that the Malabar society at the time of Portuguese arrival was an amalgamation of the multilingual, multinational and multicultural population who had carved out their own specific spaces and realms by engaging in various economic and social functions. However, all these people had some degrees of shared commonalities by culture religion, or economic relations that gave fluidity to the entire structure. It was into such a milieu that the Portuguese, who had an entirely different cultural and historical base made their entry.

4.2.0. The socio-cultural milieu of Portugal in the 15th century

The Portuguese Polity

The middle of the 12th century saw a surge in the crusading spirit of the Portuguese and the strengthening of their resistance towards the *Mouras* or the Moors ultimately

¹⁴ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 71.

¹⁵ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 72-73.

¹⁶ Barbosa, *Book of Barbosa Vol II*, 73, See also, *The Account of Priest Josepoh*, 109.

resulting in their triumph over the Moors culminating in their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula and the establishment of a monarchy by the middle of 12th century. The expulsion of the Moors and the victory over them was achieved by Affonso Henriques(1105-1186 CE)in 1139, who declared himself the King of Portugal after the event¹⁷. This monarchy created by Affonso Henriques marks the beginning of Portuguese independence¹⁸. Sancho I who succeeded the former devised administrative structures that focused on populating the northern regions of Portugal thus expanding the land resources¹⁹. The Portuguese continued to recapture their lost regions with the help of Crusaders from Germany, France England, and Spain in much vigor thus by 1250CE, Moors were completely driven out from Algarve. which was the last province in the Moorish hands. The ousting of the Moors followed by the gradual occupation of the lands left by them by the Christian population from the northern parts of the peninsula resulted in a gradual process of nation-building. Although the victory of Portugal in Algarve meant complete flushing out of the Moorish dominance, it triggered tension between Portugal and her Eastern neighbor Castile, who was trying to create direct access to the Atlantic. According to Bringminham this conflict indeed dominated the foreign policy of Portugal for over half a millennium²⁰.

At the start of the 14th century, Portugal was not a very significant power in Europe and was not as economically sound as its other counterparts. The constant wars of religion against the Moors had not only plunged Portugal into severe impoverishment but also had brought famine, flight, and spread of diseases, which hindered the economic recovery of the nation²¹.

The emergence of the ruling class of Aviz, after the crowning of King Joao I,' John the Bastard' in 1385, asserted the country's independence from Castile. The victory of the small kingdom over Castile in the war of Aljubarrota gave the House of Aviz much needed internal support and international respect²². The Aviz dynasty took good care to nurture and

¹⁷For a detailed reading of the historical process and course that led to the event , read, H V Livermore, *A History of Portugal, Chapter Four and Chapter Five*..

¹⁸ H V Livermore,,"Portuguese History",in ,*Portugal and Brazil :an Introduction*, ed .L V Livermore (Oxford::Oxford University Press, 1978), 48.

¹⁹ HV Livermore, *A History of Portugal* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1947)Chapter Five.

²⁰ David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*, Cambridge:,Cambridge University Press,2003),19-21.

²¹ Birmingham, *History of Portugal*, 19.

²² Birmingham,*History of Portugal*, 22.

maintain international relations. Portugal sought the assistance of England to forge a stable alliance against Castile in case of any future requirement. The signing of a perpetual alliance with England by Joao I of Aviz and his marriage with the granddaughter of King Edward III of England proved beneficial to the young kingdom. His sons Duarte, who later became the King, Pedro who encouraged trade and commerce, and Henrique (Henry the Navigator) was successful in the overall development of Portugal during the late 14th century²³, which gave it the confidence to emerge in the 15th century.

At the dawn of the fifteenth century, the condition of Portugal has not shown a significant improvement. Roger Crowley notes that during this time the population of Portugal was not more than a million and its economy was based mainly on fishing and subsistence farming²⁴. He also notes that the kings of Portugal were ‘too poor to mint their own gold coins’²⁵. Despite fishing being a major contributor to the Portuguese economy, certain industries were developing in various parts of the country. They produced textiles, leather, salt, as well as explored for iron, silver, and other precious metals. Ship building was also emerging as an important industry in Portugal²⁶. This could be understood from the maritime exposure and the sailing spirit and knowledge they nurtured. Although the internal trade was still concentrated on the agricultural goods that Portugal produced, their reach over outposts in Africa helped them to increase their volume of trade as they were able to procure items like spices, sugar, vegetable colors, etc from the African possessions. Portugal imported cereals, manufactured cloth, metallic objects, and arms from the neighboring countries of Western Europe which gave them an understanding of the importance of maritime trade. The gradual development of trade and shipping resulted in the accumulation of capital in Portugal²⁷ which helped the young kingdom to nurture its impoverished state.

Having had the Moors completely ousted from the Iberian peninsula Portugal was gradually emerging and trying to express itself in Western Europe, with the trauma of the Moorish regime still fresh in their hearts. The leaving of the Moors from southern Portugal meant the liberation of vast tracts of lands that required tilling and thus much labor force.

²³ Birmingham, *History of Portugal*, 24.

²⁴ Roger Crowley, *Conquerors How Portuguese Forged the First Global Empire* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), 3

²⁵ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 3.

²⁶ Jose Hermano Saravia, *Portugal, A Companion History* (1997), 18.

²⁷ Livermore, "Portuguese History", 56-61,

Harry Johnston notes that the Portuguese had multiple reasons to explore the African coastline, firstly to meet the labor force required for tilling the lands left by the Moors, secondly for procuring the vast amounts of gold that was said to be existing in Africa and lastly for satisfying their craving for the pepper and spices that were said to be growing in the region²⁸.

The Portuguese urge to conquer Morocco and get access to the gold mines in Africa persuaded them to launch an African expedition by crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. Although they were not successful in their plan initially, the ransacking of the city of Ceuta (August 1415 CE) in northern Africa, which was a stronghold of the Moors gave the realization of the might and vigor of the small kingdom of Portugal to the other rival European powers²⁹. The capture of Ceuta, which was an important center of trade and point of confluence of merchants from various centers including India, gave the Portuguese their first encounter of the wealth and marvels of the Orient. According to Crowley, the capture of Ceuta “marks the beginning of Portuguese expansion, the threshold of a new world”³⁰.

Prince Henrique, who was one of the three sons of King Joao I and the participant in the Ceuta ransack was keen for further exploration of the unexplored regions particularly the regions of Africa for the greed of slaves, gold, and spices. He began to sponsor expeditions of the western African coastline, which earned him the name ‘Henry the Navigator’. Henriques’ glimpse of the wealth of the Orient as well as his acquaintance with the medieval maps prepared by Jewish cartographers showed the gold mines that would fetch the Portuguese a fortune, and a chance to nourish the impoverished Portuguese kingdom³¹.

The rise of Islam in the 7th century and its subsequent spread and establishment had been the greatest threat to the emerging religion of Christianity. Although it was born almost six centuries before the birth of Islam, Christianity was under constant persecution by the Roman Empire until its recognition as the state religion of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the 4th century. Christianity was nurturing itself by gaining patrons all around Europe and strengthening the Papal seat in the religiously amicable situation when the birth of Islam occurred. The medieval Christendom was unaware of methods to deal with the

²⁸ Harry Johnston, *Pioneers in India* (New Delhi:1993),116.

²⁹ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 3.

³⁰ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 4.

³¹ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 14

newly emergent religious threat which was too close to their religious philosophy and ideology. A religion that acknowledged the virgin birth of Jesus, his special privilege as the prophet of God'(rather than the Son of God) but yet denying his divinity³².

The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 meant greater implications to the various powers of Western Europe who once again saw the Moorish triumph. This resulted in an economic crisis in Europe as the flourishing spice trade that was mostly by land between the East and the West fell into the hands of the Turks. Europe was therefore forced to depend on the Muslim middlemen for the trade between the East and the West which was unsafe and less profitable. Therefore the need for a maritime trade route to the East was becoming indispensable in Europe. Thus the major driving force behind the Portuguese maritime activities got impetus from the political and social developments that were taking place around the then geographically known world regions. The increasing frustration in the rising power of the Muslims coupled with the fear of further subjugation under their political and economic mettle and the lingering Christian Crusading spirit coupled with the greed for exotic spices sued the Portugueses in venturing out to the seas for their maritime expeditions. The accidental discovery of the Americas by Columbus expanded the known geographical knowledge of the Earth bringing in two larger continents into the political frame. Felipe Fernandez Armesto in his book *1492 The Year Our World Began*, identifies the various events that occurred around the world in that specific year as the impetus for the convergence of people and cultures, that eventually changed the course of world history³³. The rising power of Spain in the Iberian peninsula and their role in the maritime expeditions resulted in the intervention of the Pope who demarcated the regions of the activities of both these powers by drawing a North-South line in the Atlantic giving Portuguese the Eastern Hemisphere(that included India) to explore. The Spaniards were given the Western regions that included the Americas. But following the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 between Spain and Portugal, the Portuguese were successful in getting the line of demarcation set by the Pope to 270 leagues to the West³⁴. This had further political implications as Brazil came under Portuguese control.

Thus began the Portuguese endeavors to the unexplored lands that marked the Age of Discoveries and the expansion of the idea of the world'. This long-run had gained more

³² R W Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge(Massachusetts and London,;Harvard University Press,1978),13.

³³ For a detailed reading , see, Felipe Fernandez Armesto, 1492;The Year OurWorld Began(A&C Black,2011).

³⁴ Crowley , *Conquerors* ,39-40.

political implications creating several colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas which later crystallized into a Eurocentric global empire in the long run. The Portuguese as stated earlier were not only driven by the quest for gold but also by the anti-Islamic spirit that was infuriating within their souls. Therefore the Portuguese aspired to present their expeditions as the crusades against Islam. This projection did help them to gain financial and spiritual support from the Pope³⁵. The moralization of the exploration gave the Portuguese an edge to excise their political presence over the lands, by triggering conquest, massacre, and enslavement. Brining the infidels under the Papel fold and challenging the Islamic hold over the 'Middle Eastern' regions were the primary aims. Portuguese were aware of the earlier travelogues and narratives about the Christians who followed St Thomas living in the Indies. Elimination of Muslims from Europe meant both ideological and economic benefits. The removal of Muslim middlemen would mean direct trading with the people of Africa that was rich in gold and spices. The triumph over Islam was more alluring as it was then Christianity's greatest enemy. The Portuguese therefore envisaged creating alliances with the Christians over the world as well as Prester John to unite against the Islamic current and wipe them out³⁶. The existence of Prester John and his Christian kingdom beyond the Islamic world gained so much popularity among the Europeans that a host of literature featuring the person of Prester John and his ideal and powerful Christian kingdom emerged as a distinct literary genre during the 15th and 16th centuries³⁷. Some notable works that gained popularity during these periods were *The Letters of Prester John*³⁸, *Guerino da Meschino*³⁹ by Andreada Berberino, and Giuliano Dati's *Treatise of the Supreme Prester John, Pope, and Emperor of*

³⁵ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 14.

³⁶ C R Boxer, *The Portuguese Sea-borne Empire, 1415-1825* (London: 1969), 19-21. See also Crowley, *Conquerors*, 16.

³⁷ Alexander Henn, *Hindu-Catholic Encounters in Goa, Religion Colonialism and Modernity* (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2014.) 26.

³⁸ The Letters of Prester John began circulating in Europe from the 12th century and captured the imagination of the Western Christian world about an Eastern Christian kingdom ruled by the Christian priest-king Prester John. The authorship and authenticity of the letters are still debated, yet the scholars consider the author as a Westerner/European

³⁹ *Guerino da Meschino*, published in 1473 at Padua, was a fictitious travelogue to the marvelous kingdom of Prester John

*India and Ethiopia*⁴⁰. There was a continuous shift in the ‘possible locations’ of Prester John. While during some point the location of Prester John was considered to be somewhere in Central Asia before various kingdoms of Georgia and Armenia took the position. The loose geographic position of Prester John was later pinned to China and India before concluding it at Ethiopia⁴¹. These perceptions influenced the Portuguese to sail down the bulge of Africa with the hope to reach the so-called powerful king Prester John. Rila Mukherjee in her article connects and establishes links between the historiographically privileged oceanic world of the Indian Ocean to the Central Asian terrestrial world through the legend of Prester John⁴².

The fervor faced a mild standstill after the death of Henrique but attained newfound vigor and impetus during the period of Joao II, who was the grand-nephew of Henrique. King Joao II who was crowned in 1481 was an ambitious ruler. He wanted to do great things and accomplish great achievements. Therefore he considered finding a sea route to the Indies as well as the exploration of Africa as his greatest priorities. The ascend of Manuel I in 1495CE as the king brought more stability to the nation. During his period Asian wealth started to flow immensely to Portugal which lifted Portugal from rags to riches. The emergence of ornamental buildings, both secular and religious along with a more ostentatious show of riches and embellishments in the interiors of Portugal was also becoming common resulting in the overall development of Portugal, by the end of the 15th century.

The Portuguese Society

The Portuguese society was divided into three estates as the common convention in Western Europe. The three estates were the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners. Among the three estates, the most powerful and privileged being the clergy. and then the nobility. Both of these estates were exempted from taxation and tributes to the king. The church through its existence for over fourteen centuries had gained strength and influence over the society and politics of Europe that it gained the status of a state within a state. The fact that the clergy was not subjected to the Civil law and rather only to the Canon Law made their

⁴⁰ *Treatise of the Supreme Prester John, Pope and Emperor of India and Ethiopia* Is a rhymed version of the Letters of Prester John that was published from Rome in 1493.

⁴¹ Andrew Kurt, "The Search for Prester John, a projected crusade and the eroding prestige of the Ethiopian Kings 1200-c1540", *The Journal of Medieval History*, 3-4.

⁴² Rila Mukherjee, "People Places and Mobility: The Strange History of Prester John across the Indian Ocean", *The Asian Review of World Histories* 6, no 2: 258-276.

position more safe and secure. Portugal being a Catholic country had a greater influence on the Pope. Their long spell of the Moorish regime made it essential for the people to demonstrate the purity and fidelity of their faith in the wake of the Moorish expulsion. Therefore the kings as well as the common people made all possible measures to safeguard and nurture their religion which had been at risk during the Moorish regime. The people took keen interest to gave enormous donations for building new churches, chapels, and monasteries. This had made the Church not only richer but also more influential among Portuguese society.

The next estate of importance was the nobility, which like the clergy was considered as a privileged estate owing to their exemption from tributes and taxation and also due to the concentration of power in their hands. The nobles provided military support to the king at the time of requirement and also assisted the king with their counsel⁴³. Although their independence and existence depended on the disposition of the King, they enjoyed considerable influence over the king and were given titles according to their ranks. The nobility too was not a monolith and consisted of both higher as well as lesser nobles greatest qualities that the nobles were required to have during the period were religious devotion, chivalry, as well as the spirit of crusading against the infidels⁴⁴. The nobility owing to their access to power and exemption from taxation provided them with enough leisure time, which they used for the development of arts and tending to discoveries.

The third estate of the Portuguese society was the estate of the commoners which included all those who were not included in the first two estates of clergy and nobility. The class was an unprivileged one with the class consisting of different groups. Most of them were unfree, and were associated with the estates of the kings' nobles and the clergy and gave them service in return for protection. The commoners were obliged to pay taxes and tributes to the king and were placed under restrictions to move⁴⁵. The feudal institution like the other Western European countries was well prevalent in the Iberian peninsula too. This was the social and political situation with which the Portuguese were familiar with and their encounters with a new system of social and political structure happened with the geographical discoveries that they ventured into

⁴³ Livermore, "Portuguese History", 56.

⁴⁴ P E Russwel, *Portugal Spain and the African Atlantic, 1343-1490: Chivalry and Crusade from John of Gaunt to Henry the Navigator* (Hampshire: 1995), 6

⁴⁵ For more details see, Livermore, *History of Portugal*, 91-92

4.2.1. The Architectural Style in Portugal- Manueline Style

The reign of Manuel I of Portugal marked great transitions in the Portuguese Empire. With the opening of the new sea route to India, the Manueline style of architecture developed in Portugal as a transition style between the Gothic and the Renaissance style. Manuel I initiated the remodeling of the monumental Santa Cruz Church in Coimbra and the S Vincente in Lisbon in the ‘Tower over the Narthex’ model. These churches were founded by Afonso Henriques I and hence symbolized the foundation of the Portuguese Kingdom and the Christian crusading spirit. Remodeling of the churches in the wake of the founding of the new sea route to India symbolized the reestablishment of the Portuguese Empire in the Crusading context⁴⁶.

The Manueline style is characterized by the profusion and luxurious use of maritime symbols associated with shipping, voyage, sea, etc. The Manueline style derives its name from the king of Portugal, Manuel I(1495-1521CE)during whose time the Portuguese achieved remarkable success in their capacity as seafarers and discoverers of new land. The period also saw the establishment of the Portuguese as the greatest maritime traders and rulers of a significantly vast Empire. Although this style of architecture had a short term of popularity in the sphere of Portuguese art and architecture, the style not only represented the Portuguese maritime competence and potency but also celebrated it with exuberant maritime ornamentations.

4.3.0. The Portuguese Advent and discovery of the sea route to India

Long before the Portuguese set out to explore the seas they were already acquainted with short distance seafaring. From the times of Henrique, expeditions were sponsored by him down the coast of Africa in search of slaves, gold, and spices. Gradually the Portuguese were sailing further down the west African coastline exploring the new lands and delineating the shape of a continent and mapping it in the process⁴⁷. The efforts made by Joao II, the king of Portugal, in encouraging explorations by forming a committee comprising of the periods best astronomers, mathematicians, and sailors resulted in the accumulation of a large source of knowledge into a single-center, thereby making Lisbon the hub of activities relating to

⁴⁶ Paulo Varela Gomes, *Whitewash, Red Stone, A History of Church Architecture in Goa*. (New Delhi:Yoda Press , 2011).28-29.

⁴⁷ Crowley, *Conquerors* ,13.

expeditions and exploration of the world⁴⁸. Joao II send multiple expeditions both oceanic as well as inland to solve the Indian problem and locate Prester John. Two concurrent expeditions, one via sea captained by Bartholomeo Dias and another via land by Covilha and Pavia were commissioned by the king to find a final solution for the mysterious question. Dias was successful in sailing further south to the tip of Africa and reaching the Cape of Storms or Stormy Cape, which was renamed by Joao II as the Cape of Good Hope. He was also able to understand the pattern of winds that can help to sail towards the tip of Africa by arching further west into the Atlantic rather than moving along the shore⁴⁹. Meanwhile, Cavilha had managed to reach Calicut by sea, and by early 1488 CE, he was traveling in Goa and later to Ormuz, collecting details about the trading centers, ports and enquiring about the possibilities of rounding Africa by sea⁵⁰. Around 1491 CE, Covilha was able to reach back to Cairo and send the details he collected in a long letter to King Joao which he entrusted with some Jews in Cairo who were sent by the King himself in search of information about his lost spies. Instead of returning to Portugal Covilha decided to embark upon the mission to meet Prester John, which was unfinished by Pavia, who was reported dead on his way to Ethiopia. Although Covilha was able to reach Ethiopia and meet the King, who was believed by them to be Prester John, he was not allowed to leave the land. Covilha was found out after thirty years during a Portuguese expedition to the land, to whom he narrated his situation⁵¹.

Although both Dias and Covilha were able to join dots and frame the possibility of a direct sea route to India, it took nearly 8 years for the discoveries to get crystallized into the finding of the direct sea route to India by Vasco de Gama. Meanwhile, through this time Joao II was battling unfortunate times with the death of his son, his impeding kidney disease, and the news about Columbus discovery of the land which he claimed to be the ‘Indies’ as well as the tensions between Spain and Portugal regarding the claim over the unexplored lands⁵². Despite the fact that much progress was made in the sphere of exploration and discovery of new lands during Joao II, he was unfortunate to live to bear the fulfillment of his ambition of finding a direct sea route to India. His death in 1495 CE and the ascension to the throne by

⁴⁸ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 18.

⁴⁹ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 34.

⁵⁰ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 35.

⁵¹ Crowley, *Conquerors*, 35-36.

⁵² Although the dispute was partially settled by the treaty of Tordesillas of 1494-95, the rivalry continued between the two parties way into the 18th century,

Manuel I, who was fortunate to see the accomplishment of the tryst which began almost a century before

The ascend of Manuel I gave a new impetus to the zest to discover. He claimed to have inherited the traits of his Grand Uncle, Henrique's interest in exploration, and wanted to move forward with the India project as well as Prester John mission. He believed that God had chosen him to do extraordinary things and therefore considered his coronation and everything associated with his rule as a sign of divine interference. It was therefore due to this that despite popular disapproval from the nobles, Manuel was confident in resuming the India project. Thus he appointed Vasco de Gama, known for his commanding power and formidable anger as the captain of the ships he would commit to India⁵³.

Having had the incremental knowledge of over many decades of sailing and exploration, Manuel I planned the project as a relatively modest one with two to three ships but with well-crafted ships and updated types of equipment that may aid them along their formidable journey. Other than the sailors the ships also carried slaves, priests, gunners, musicians, etc who were required to provide support throughout the journey.

The journey started on July 8, 1497, with four ships under the command of Gama. After a tedious and excruciating voyage along the hostile waters of the Atlantic, they were able to round the Cape of Good Hope. Following multiple halts at the Muslim ports of Mozambique, Mombasa, and Malindi dealing with tumultuous situations, the crew was able to obtain a pilot, probably a Gujarati Muslim who would help them to reach India⁵⁴. After only 23 days of traveling in the Arabian Sea, the Portuguese fleet was able to reach the shores of Malabar which ended the long tryst with the seas and ending the isolation of Europe.

4.3.1. Clash of Civilizations-The Portuguese Period and the Impact of Portuguese on the socio-political makeup of Kerala

The arrival of Vasco da Gama in the Malabar Coast marked an important milestone in the history of India in general and Kerala in particular. Although there were frequent visits from Europe to India even before Gama, Gama's arrival marks the opening up of the direct sea route to India, which in turn had larger implications in the commercial sector. This very discovery was a leap of European commercial empowerment as the fetters of dependency on

⁵³ Crowley, *Conquerors* ,43-44.

⁵⁴ Crowley, *Conquerors* ,72.

the Arab and Venetian merchants ceased. In another sense, the discovery had a greater impact on the history of Europe as the event facilitated the rise and fall of many nations and also the formation of social groups and identities in the long run. Vasco da Gama landed on the shores of Malabar in May 1498 at Kappad, near Calicut in the Malabar Coast of present-day Kerala. Although Gama was suspicious of the fate that may overrun them considering their past experiences on the East African coast, he decided to meet the ruler of Calicut, the Zamorin (Samudiri) in person and negotiate with him their purpose of arrival and their intention of establishing trade relations with the ruler⁵⁵. Gama was given due welcome by the ruler of Calicut, the Lord of the Seas (*Samudiri*-Malayalam). Gama concluded meetings with the Zamorin of Calicut and requested him for permission to set up factories for leaving the untraded goods in their ships. However the Arab traders who were suspicious of the Portuguese ulterior motives advised the Zamorin to deal with the Portuguese with caution and suspicion. Thus, the Zamorin not only denied the requests but also imposed customs duties over the goods according to the norms of the land. A disgusted and disappointed Gama departed from Calicut in August 1498, and halted at Cannanore following the invitation of the Raja of Cannanore, the *Kolathiri*, who was hostile towards the Zamorin. For years the *Kolathiri* and the Raja of Cochin had been subdued by the stronger Zamorin and they were waiting for an opportunity to turn against the Zamorin. On hearing that the Portuguese fleet was denied permission of trade by the Zamorin, the *Kolathiri* decided to offer Gama the facilities for trade. Accordingly, Gama and the *Kolathiri* entered into an informal pact on the loading of ships. Vasco de Gama was thus able to satisfy himself to a certain extent and returned to Lisbon in November 1498 and arrived there in 1499, with goods and wealth 60times more than the expenditure of the expedition⁵⁶.

Happy with the little achievements of the first expedition, as well as disgusted with the failure from the part of Gama to secure the right to build a factory at Calicut, Manuel I of Portugal sent the second expedition to the Malabar Coast under the captainship of Pedro Alvarez Cabral in 1500CE, who started to India via the same route followed by Gama with a fleet of 33 ships and 1500 men. Out of the 33 ships, only six ships were able to reach the shores after the perilous journey. Although Cabral was successful in procuring the right to set

⁵⁵ Crowley, *Conquerors* , 77.

⁵⁶ For a detailed reading on the first expedition of Vasco da Gama and his various experiences along the African and the West Indian Ocean Coast , read, Ravenstein E G ,*A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama (1497-1499)*(London:The Hakluyt Society,1898).

up a factory near Calicut, his policy towards the Arab merchants created dissatisfaction and distress to the Zamorin as well as the people alike. The Portuguese who considered the Arab merchants as their greatest commercial competitor and political enemy caused hostility towards them and unleashed a policy of barbarism and brutality towards them. They attacked the Arab mercantile ships, plundered them, and massacred the crew. This destroyed the factory and killing of several Portuguese on land by an infuriated local mob, which resulted in Cabral sailing off the Calicut towards Cochin⁵⁷.

Cabral arrived at Cochin on Christmas eve and was given a huge welcome by the Raja of Cochin who too was waiting for a chance to vent his enmity towards the Zamorin. Cabral was not only given permission for trade at Cochin but also was permitted to build a factory at Cochin, through an informal agreement. But due to the arrival of an armada from Calicut, Cabral had to leave Cochin and sail towards Portugal⁵⁸. En route to Portugal along the Malabar coastline, Cabral also received invitations from the Raja of Cannanore and later from the Raja of Quilon, promising him help in loading his ships. Although Cabral was not able to venture to Quilon, he stopped at Cannanore and loaded more cargo to his ships⁵⁹. Cabral unlike Vasco da Gama was more successful in gaining allies in Kerala. Although his actions had created tensions with the Zamorin, the Portuguese were able to find a more satisfying ally in the Raja of Cochin and his land which in the coming years would serve as the capital of Portuguese until they shifted their loci of activity to Goa after its capture in 1510.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam thinks that it was the degree of the expertise and efficiency with which they used the naval forces in the waters which expanded to large unfamiliar maritime spaces that were located far from the home country that gave them an upper hand both in commerce and conquest⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ This incident is also mentioned in the narratives of “Account of Priest Joseph” ,98. See also “The Anonymous Narrative” for a more detailed descriptions of the incidents that led to the bombarding of the city of Calicut and the sail of Cabral’s ship to Chochino/ Cucchino (Cochin), 83-85. Both the descriptions are similar although the one by Anonymous Narrater is more elaborate and detailed.

⁵⁸ “Anonymous Narrator”, 87.

⁵⁹ Both “The Anonymous Narrator” as well as “The Letter by Dom Manuel to Ferdinand and Isabella” has references to these incidents. See “ Anonymous Narrative”, 88-89. See also “ Letter by Dom Manuel”,50.

⁶⁰ Sanjay Subramaniyam, *The Career and Legand of Vasco de Gama* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1997),112.

4.3.2. The Capture of Goa and the Beginning of Portuguese Ecclesiastical Architecture

The Portuguese style of architecture had spread to all the Portuguese colonies and pockets across the world between the 15th and the 17th centuries. The Portuguese were pivotal in introducing the Gothic and Baroque styles of architecture into India⁶¹. In a way, the Portuguese had their models of reference for town planning and architecture predominantly drawn from the metropolis of Lisbon which gave them a ‘national character’⁶². The Portuguese models of architecture had seeped into the Indian subcontinent along with their arrival and had started dominating the buildings which they constructed. This new form of architecture began to be known as Indo Portuguese architecture from the mid 20th century. The Portuguese might have utilized the local facilities for commercial and residential purposes in the initial times or until they had the provisions for constructing buildings in their style. Although it was impractical in adopting the contemporary architecture of Portugal in its entirety due to the limiting factors of climate, raw materials, and labor, the Portuguese had managed to implement certain features in original and sometimes certain features redesigned. Gradually the style had become a mark of identity to distinguish the Portuguese buildings from the indigenous ones.

According to Varela Gomes, Catholic architecture in India began in the early 16th century as the result of the creations of Portuguese architects, masons and military engineers, and priests who valued the Portuguese artistic and architectural legacy and culture⁶³. As discussed earlier in the current chapter, the churches of Portugal during Manuel I was characterized by the Tower over the Narthex model, which in turn had shown its representations in India. The style entered India around the same period during which it became popular in Portugal. Varela Gomez opines that the major reason for this style to seep into India would be the meanings and representations of the crusading spirit and the triumph of the Christian monarchy⁶⁴. The Portuguese capture of Goa in 1510 had shifted the Portuguese base of power from Cochin to Goa and had inaugurated a new chapter in the Portuguese colonial presence in India. The Portuguese embarked on a policy of construction

⁶¹ Thomas P, *Churches in India*, (Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt of India, 1981), 12.

⁶² Manuel C Teixeira, “Portuguese Traditional Settlements, A Result of Cultural Miscegenation”, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 1, no 2 (Spring 1990): 26.

⁶³ Gomes, *Whitewash*, 1.

⁶⁴ Gomez, *Whitewash*, 29.

and destruction in Goa, by constructing new buildings in the Portuguese fashion and by destructing buildings that had political or religious connections with the Islamic culture and rule that prevailed in the region. The Portuguese were so keen on planning the city of Goa in their native fashion that by the end of the 16th century, Goa began to be dubbed as the Lisbon of the Orient due to its close resemblance to the latter⁶⁵. The first church in Goa was commissioned on the same day as the capture of Goa and was built as a makeshift church with mud and straw. The church was dedicated to St Catherine on whose feast day the victory happened. Improvements to the building were done in 1511CE and the structure was initially made in stone in 1513CE and later enlarged in 1531CE. The church had several episodes of rebuilding and renovations in 1550CE and 1607 CE respectively⁶⁶. The church had a façade with a single tower with its body having a triple nave and rectangular chancel with three chapels. David Komal suggests that the pioneer permanent church of Goa was relatively small, utilitarian, and followed the Late Gothic and Manueline style that was in vogue in Portugal⁶⁷. According to Varela Gomez, the earliest churches followed the ‘Tower over the Narthex’ model which was prevalent during the time of Manuel I(1496-1521CE).

A time gap of 7 years existed between the building of the first Portuguese church at Cochin and the first church at Goa. The Portuguese in this short period had evolved into one of the formidable maritime powers in the region with political, commercial, and military expertise. Besides the Portuguese had gained considerable knowledge about the society and culture of the region of the Western Coast. This transformation decided the extend of Portuguese exploits in the newly captured region of Goa.

The Portuguese had followed a pattern of the appropriation of sacred and symbolic locations important for the natives of Goa as sites for Christian edifices and buildings⁶⁸. This might have been to remind the native population of the might and spiritual presence of the Christian spirit. It could also be for the wiping the memory of the Hindu and Muslim cultural legacy of the lands from the native population.

⁶⁵ Teixeira, “Portuguese Traditional Settlements” , 27.

⁶⁶ David Kowal, ”The Evolution of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Portuguese Goa”, in *India and Portugal Cultural Interactions* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2001).

⁶⁷ David Kowal, “Evolution of Ecclesiastical Architecture” ,3.

⁶⁸ Kowal, ”Evolution of Ecclesiastical Architecture”,3

The Portuguese were not only passionate about church building but also considered it as the key to developing the Christian community of the region. They adopted the Baroque style of architecture that encouraged elaborate decorations showcasing the triumph of the Catholic church.

4.4.0. The Portuguese and the St Thomas Christians of Kerala- attitudes, and aversions

From the thorough analysis of the Synod of Diamper records as well as Jornada, it can be concluded that the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians was centered around four major problems; the Problem of Origin, the Problem of Doctrinal Evolution and Nestorianism, the Problem of Nonuniqueness, and the Problem of Allegiance. The Problem of Origin springs up from the fact that the Thomas Christians and the European Christians had differential Apostolic traditions. Despite being Christian in the primal sense, the Thomas Christians, as their name indicates had Apostolic traditions relating to the proselytizing activities of Apostle Thomas whereas the Portuguese belonging to the Catholic tradition centered at Rome, traces their legacy to the missionary activities of Apostle Peter. A difference in the Apostolic Origin although was acknowledged by the Portuguese was never accepted as an excuse for the Thomas Christians to not unite with the Papal See which they considered as the direct descendent of Peter, the First Pope. The second problem that bothered them was the Problem of Doctrinal Evolution and Nestorianism. After their encounter with the Thomas Christians, the Portuguese soon identified that the Thomas Christians had a contrasting doctrinal evolution which had strong links with the teachings of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius. The followers of Nestor distinguished the human and divine nature of Jesus and proclaimed that the union between the two natures is loosely bounded by will. In acknowledging the distinction, the Nestorians also refrained from giving credence to Mary as the mother of God and considered her as only the mother of Jesus. This theological doctrine that upholds the ‘dyophysitic’ nature of Jesus contradicts the theological proclamations of Rome and therefore was considered heretical by the Council of Ephesus and later by the Council of Chalcedon. The travel writings of the 16th and 17th centuries have left significant impressions on the ‘Nestorian Link’ of the Thomas Christians. Early Portuguese travelers like Ludovico de Varthema considers Thomas Christians as Nestorian due to their dependence on Bishops from Babylon, which is the seat of Nestorian thought, for the administration of sacraments such as baptism⁶⁹. Alexis de Menezes who convened the Synod

⁶⁹ Varthema, *Travels of Ludovico de Varthema*, 341.

of Diamper has found Nestorian practices and theology in the celebration of their masses⁷⁰. The issue attained gravity as the tides of Reformation shook Christendom and questioned its legitimacy and teachings. Portugal being a Catholic oriented nation resisted the waves of Reformation and ensured its contained spread. Every doctrine that countered the teachings of Rome was considered in the purview of the Reformation. Moreover, it was important to ‘protect ‘ the Thomas Christians from the possible susceptibility to the new trend. The Problem of Nonuniqueness was the third significant problem that conditioned the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians. The main concern of the Portuguese in this regard was the highly syncretized lifestyle of the Thomas Christians to the Malabar society that made them and their culture appear non-distinguishable. Being non-distinctive from the larger society meant an assimilated state of existence which hardly created any uniqueness and identity for the Christians, which was a major desired trait and label as the ‘children of the rightful God’. The Portuguese found the Thomas Christians as following similar customs, traditions, dressing style architecture as well as belief systems which were akin to Malabar society, which made them a no unique entity. Also the Portuguese found the Thomas Christians leading an unchristian life, by following the traditions of the Gentile society. They considered these practices as errors of the Thomas Christians and were apprehensive about its spread to the newly converting Christians who were the result of the Portuguese missionary activities in the Malabar Coast⁷¹. Lastly, the Problem of Allegiance gained currency due to the Thomas Christian connection to the Church of the East which was Rome's greatest rival counterpart.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam suggests that Vasco de Gama and his first Portuguese crew were expecting to meet large kingdoms of Christians in Asia who may be used as allies against the Islamic forces that were threatening the Christendom⁷². Thus what the Portuguese aspired to accomplish by meeting the Christians of India was to enter into a pact and form a league or block against the Islamic incursions and their rising power. Same was their motive in finding the fabled Prester John. The Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians had morphed from that of a potential ally to that of a disobedient ally soon after they began

⁷⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 239.

⁷¹ John Teles e Cunha, ‘Socio Cultural Aspects of the Catholic Mission Works in India’, in *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India 1500-1800*, edited by K S Mathew, Teotonio R de Souza and Pius Malekandathil.

⁷² Subrahmanyam, *Career and Legend*, 26.

to gain commercial, territorial and political stronghold along the Western coast of India. The attitude of the Portuguese towards the Thomas Christians was rooted in their strong belief of the superiority in the practice and perception of Christianity which was the connecting link between the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese. The Portuguese had soon discovered the Thomas Christians to be a group of people who maintain close ties with the 'infidels' and idol worshippers' by following their lifestyle and practices. But when they found that these Christians were just a community rather than a nation with their king, they really might have had second thoughts. Contrary to their belief, these Christians were neither powerful, nor had a ruler of their own, neither was a Christian kingdom. The very thought might have shattered them. Besides they found that these Christians did not exercise any significant political power and were unfortunately under the clutches of infidels kings. The low population of the Thomas Christians might also have extinguished the Portuguese hopes for raising a considerable ally. Eric Frykenberg estimates the number of Thomas Christians at the time of Portuguese arrival to an approximate figure between thirty-thousand and seventy-thousand⁷³, which is very few. Thus the actual 'discovery' of the fabled Christians of Saint Thomas In India conflicted with their 'imagination, expectations, and fantasies they nurtured.

It is not clear if Gama had met any Thomas Christian during his three months sojourn in 1498 CE. However, Stephen Neil opined that a formal contract with the Thomas Christians might have occurred during the second voyage of Vasco da Gama. He notes that 'a rod of justice' was presented to Gama at Cochin by the Thomas Christians from Cranganore as a token of their respect and apparent subjugation to justice⁷⁴. The Portuguese from the initial times of their encounter with the Thomas Christians were discontent with the Thomas Christian practices and rituals for they considered them unchristian and sometimes heretical. The Portuguese found the churches of these Christians 'unchristian' and with features very similar to that of the 'Hindu pagodas. The Portuguese considered it as their duty to revamp the morals of the community and bring in order and organization within the community. The Portuguese had therefore devised a strategy to bring these Christians to the Papal fold by the process of Latinization.

⁷³ Eric Frykenberg, "Christians in India: A Historical Overview of their Complex Origins". In *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross Cultural Communications Since 1500*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg (London: 2003), 41.

⁷⁴ Stephen Neil, *History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 191.

In brief, the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians stemmed from their refusal to accept the individuality of the community. Two major issues bothered the Portuguese with regards to the Thomas Christians. The first was their connection with the Church of the East which was labeled as Nestorian by the Catholic church and secondly their cultural ties with the ‘idolaters and infidels ‘ of Malabar. It is impossible to ascertain which outweighed in importance and influenced the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians for both the aspects were considered as unchristian as well as heretical.

Another significant historical development that had created further ideological and attitudinal drifts between the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese might have been the wave of Reformation and Counter-Reformation that had created reorganization of Christian perception as well as political dynamics in Europe. The Portuguese intend to create and establish the superiority of the Catholic church and the Pope above all churches in the world as well as the prelates had found extra momentum following the Reformation. This is evident from the Decree VII of Session III of the Synod of Diamper of 1599CE⁷⁵. The Portuguese had utilized ex-communication as a device to curtail or prevent the Thomas Christians from acknowledging the Patriarch of Babylon as their prelate.

4.4.1. Impact of Reformation on the attitude towards the Thomas Christians

The waves of Reformation had been the greatest challenge that the Roman church faced in the 16th century. The spread of the tide was brisk and rapid that within a short period was able to create polarization of faith in Europe. Portugal, being supporters of Papacy had opposed Reformation.

The Roman church reacted to the Protestant Reformation by initiating Counter-Reformation practices and measures of which the Council of Trent became the foremost. The Council, convened between 1545 and 1563 at Trent in Italy was met for twenty-five sessions under the auspicious of the reign of three Popes in the course. Clarifications of the doctrines of the teachings of the church and the condemnation of the various heresies of the Protestants were the two main agendas of the Council. The Synod of Diamper although conducted 36 years after the end of the Council had not only instructed to follow the rules set forth by the Council, but also had subjugated the Thomas Christians under the Inquisition of Goa⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 93.

⁷⁶ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper, Session III ,Decree XXI & XXII*,108.

The rise of Reformation movements in the early 16th century had a deep impact on the Catholic sentiments of the Portuguese. Portugal's attitude towards the Reformation movement should be seen from the point of view of their spirit of Catholicism and their rigorous spell under the scepter of Islam which was considered as Christianity's greatest threat. The quest for the Reformation began almost 19 years after the Portuguese advent on the Indian shores. By the time the currents of Reformation had gathered momentum, Portugal had already got acquainted themselves with the Christians of St Thomas in India and had also captured Goa and began political control in the subcontinent. Therefore it is clear that the impact of the Reformation had played a considerable role in conditioning the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians

4.4.2. Synod of Diamper and its implications-A Landmark that is Retold

The Synod of Diamper, as Sreedhara Menon describes in *A Survey of Kerala History*, “was the most important event in the history of Thomas Christians during the Portuguese period...”⁷⁷. The Synod or the *Sunahadose*, was convened under the auspicious of Alexis de Menezes, the then incumbent Archbishop of Goa, from 20th June 1599 to 26th June 1599. Although the initial choice of place for the Synod was in Angamaly, it was later opted out in favor of Udayamperoor near Kochi owing to the strong support and alliance of the former region to the Archdeacon. A total of 813 delegates participated in the Synod comprising of 133 *Kattanars* or priests, 20 deacons, and 660 laymen⁷⁸. The Synod was organized in 9 sessions producing a total of 197 decrees that were recorded in both Portuguese and Malayalam. According to the Portuguese, the main purpose of the conduction of the Synod was to purge the so-called Nestorian Heresies from the Thomas Christians and bring them under the Roman Papal supremacy. Decree I of Session I of the *Acts and Decrees of the Synod*, explains the major objectives of the Synod as

“.....for the destruction of the heresies and errors which have been sown therein by several heretics and schismatics and for the purging of the books from the false doctrines contained in them, and for the perfect union of this church with the whole church catholic and universal, and for the yielding of obedience to the supreme Bishop of Rome, the universal Pastor of the church, and successor in the chair of St Peter, and vicar of Christ upon Earth, from whom you have for some time departed, and for the extirpation of simony, which has been much

⁷⁷ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 192.

⁷⁸ Menon, *Survey of Kerala History*, 192.

practiced in this bishopric, and for the regulating of the administration of the holy sacraments of the church, and the necessary use of them, and for the reformation of the affairs of the church and the clergy, and the customs of all the Christian people of this diocese.....”⁷⁹.

During the Synod, the Syriac liturgical books of the Thomas Christians were scrutinized for possible heresies and misinterpretations which were considered offensive to the Christian faith. By Christian faith, the Portuguese meant ‘ their own faith’ which excluded, rejected, or criticized the philosophy and traditions of other ancient Christian communities. The Synod demanded the removal of offending heretical passages, sections, or phrases from certain books and commanded for the burning of the Heretical Books⁸⁰. The Synod had directed for the eradication of the errors in the Syriac scriptures by undertaking measures for omissions from the level of phrases to books as well as in the addition of certain books into both Old and New Testaments under the auspicious of Francis Roz S.J⁸¹. Jornada mentions the method by which Menezes dealt with the heretical books of the Thomas Christians, either correcting them or burning them publically⁸².

Many scholars have debated over the actual reasons and motives of the Portuguese in conducting the Synod. While the Portuguese claim of ‘purging’ the community off its Nestorian beliefs could be considered inadequate to justify the cause, scholars have pointed at the commercial and economic prospects as well. An expansion in attitudes of the analysis of the various reasons that led to the Synod has surpassed the bounds of religion to economic political and social arenas. While the Thomas Christians were condemned as having a trajectory different from the Church of Rome, it should be noted that the Thomas Christians were already in full communion with the Papal See at Rome by the time of the Synod of Diamper⁸³. Additionally, by 1553CE, Mar Yohannan Salaqa, the Patriarch of the Church of the East had reconciled with Rome meaning that the Thomas Christians were already subjected to the Pope. Therefore the convening of the Synod was not aimed at bringing the Thomas Christians under the Catholic fold as claimed by the Portuguese but was to subjugate

⁷⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 75.

⁸⁰ Menon , *Survey of Kerala History* ,192.

⁸¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*,89.

⁸² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 295-296.

⁸³ Mar Abraham was send to India by Chaldean Patriarc Mar Abdiso, who had already been in communion with Pope Pius IV,See, Paul Pallath,”The Synod of Diamper: Valid or Invalid,”.In *The Synod of Diampoer Revisited* ,edited by George Nedungatt, (Rome: Pontifico Instituto Orientale,2001)..208.

them for the commercial and economic benefits that would result in once the Thomas Christian community was brought under the Portuguese sway which can, in turn, foster the Portuguese hold in the land. It should be remembered here that the Thomas Christians enjoyed a superior social, political, and economic status and maintained close ties with the power structure. A strong and infallible association with the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese can benefit the latter politically as well as commercially. Therefore the Portuguese state had anticipated using the Church in Malabar to cater to their colonial gains. Besides, the Portuguese designed the Synod intending to gain control over the Thomas Christians politically and culturally to bring up an ally in the foreign land.

The Synod not only criticized the conventions and practices of the Thomas Christians but also tried to supplant them with the Roman Catholic or Latin practices and rituals. In brief, the Portuguese intention was not the reformation and reconciliation of the Thomas Christians but their total submission to the Portuguese Padroado. Chapter XIII of Decree I establishes the supremacy of the Pope and the Roman Church as the head of the whole church and “the father, master, and doctor of all Christians....in a word, of all that are Christians and of all the faithful people”⁸⁴. Those who do not obey the Pope, therefore, were termed as heretics and schismatics and condemned to hell. A clear motive in creating a hegemony over the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese aversion to the Thomas Christian inclination to the Church of the East is explicit in the decree.

The erasing of the Thomas tradition and the engraving of the tradition of Peter over the *Nazranis* was a hard task for the Portuguese, as the Christians after almost 1500 years of a rather isolated existence, had evolved into a community with a unique cultural and traditional lineage and their strong embodiment within the peoples' memory. The Portuguese attempt to eradicate the memory of the Thomas Christian tradition from the collective memory of the Thomas Christians was done in various steps. Destruction of their sacred books, addition, and omission of certain parts of their books, and the prohibition of possessing or reading them were some of the methods⁸⁵. The Synod had also instructed for the correction of errors in the Breviaries and common prayers of the Thomas Christians thus extending the Roman clutches deep down their tradition and liturgy.

⁸⁴ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 88.

⁸⁵ For a detailed reading on the various books that were condemned to be destroyed, read, Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 98-105.

Besides the Synod had recommended the organization of the Thomas Christians under various parishes and had directed for the beginning of catechism or compulsory religious instructions..The Synod not only questioned the ‘indic’ practices of the people but also forbade them to practice superstitions and festivals which they celebrated.

Joseph Pulikkunnel in his preface to the *Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper* by Scaria Zacharia expresses his disagreement in considering the Synod of Diamper as a ‘synod’ in the ‘strict ecclesiastical sense’⁸⁶, as he states that it was the assembly of the representatives of the various churches in Kerala amounting to around 640, 163 priests and just one bishop. Pulikkunnel states that according to the strict ecclesiastical; meaning Synod denotes the assembly of the bishops and the presence of only one bishop makes the name invalid. There have been recent researches on the Synod focusing on its validity and impact by Jonas Thalith that provides interesting insights to the subject especially the fact that it wasn’t conducted with the permission of the Pope. Paul Pallath examines the validity of the synod by examining the judicial nature of the Synod of Diamper, the titles claimed by Alexis de Menezes in the convocation letter of the Synod as well as by examining the authority of Menezes as the Archbishop of the Thomas Christians. According to him, as Angamaly, the headquarters of the Thomas Christians during the Synod of Diamper was never a part of the Archdiocese of Goa at the time of the convention of the Synod and therefore Menezes had no control over the Thomas Christians in the capacity of Archbishop of the community⁸⁷. The point makes it clear that the self-claimed rights of the jurisdiction of Menezes over the Thomas Christians and on their religious affairs remain null and void⁸⁸.

The Portuguese with their upper hand and control over the native rulers and commerce had the opportunity to effectively curtail the power of the Archdeacon stationed at Angamali. The outcomes of the Synod were that it severed the relation that the Malabar Christians maintained with the Patriarchate of Antioch, which provided them with ecclesiastical necessities when required. These steps resulted in a gradual split among the Thomas Christians, as those who exalted the supremacy of the Roman Church joined the

⁸⁶ Zachariah, *Synod of Diamper*, Preface

⁸⁷ The Archdiocese of Angamaly was made a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Goa on 20 December 1599CE, six months after the Synod of Diamper, See .Pallath, ” Synod of Diamper”, 205.

⁸⁸ Paul Pallath has brilliantly argued with valid statements and historical facts regarding the issue. See, Pallath, “Synod of Diamper” , 205-206.

Cochin Diocese and those who cling to the old Syriac ways upheld the diocese at Angamaly⁸⁹.

It was surprising how at least a fraction of the Thomas Christian community was convinced by the Portuguese to accept the decrees of the Synod despite them having a deep-rooted and strong ‘organic identity’ and legacy. Scaria Zacariah’s introduction to *The Acts and Decrees of Synod of Diamper* provides hints at a possible tactic that Menezes employed to minimize the potential objections that might arise from the participants while presenting the decrees during the Synod. Menezes convened a meeting with 8 reputed and respected Cattanars and the Archdeacon during which the drafts of the Synod were read to them for their opinion. Accordingly, alterations and revisions suiting the pulse of the Thomas Christian population were made to the draft before it was presented during the Synod. Many decrees were added to the originally composed draft of the Synod, following its conclusion. Jonas Thaliath has identified that the Malayalam versions of the Synod are shorter and less offensive than the Portuguese version⁹⁰. This explains the differences in the number of Decrees in the Malayalam and Portuguese versions of the Decrees of the Synod. He intended that if at all any objections were raised during the Synod, the council will take care of the issues and would be able to deliver more convincing and acceptable responses to the protesters. The aforesaid stratagem was designed by Menezes with the idea that ‘if they were approved in his council, they would be undoubtedly passed’⁹¹. The tactic indeed played a pivotal role in convincing at least some Thomas Christians to rethink and reflect on their spirituality, identity, and allegiance.

4.4.3. The Portuguese Modus Operanti

After convening the Synod, Menezes decided to go on for visits to various churches that had both attended the Synod as well as abstained from its intention to cement the European idea. On his every visit, he took it important to read the decrees of the synod after the mass and made the Christians as well as their Cassanars to swear by it⁹².

⁸⁹ Menon *Survey of Kerala History*, 192.

⁹⁰ Joans Thaliath, *Synod of Diamper* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1958), 180.

⁹¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 19-20

⁹² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 296.

Menezes prevented the large scale revolts and unrests among the Christians by devising a broad strategy whereby performing sacraments such as baptism, confirmation, etc to those Thomas Christians who desire at places far away from their native lands⁹³. The activity was coupled with an exhibition of piety humbleness and sacrifice, virtues that were deemed superior by the Thomas Christians.

The Synod of Diamper questioned the very identity and existence of the Thomas Christians of Malabar, by rejecting their customs and traditions as 'heretic', 'unchristian', and 'pagan'. The Thomas Christians, who by the time of their coexistence with the Portuguese for over a hundred years had slowly started to relate as well as in certain cases dissuade with the practices of the Portuguese. Therefore the reaction of the St Thomas Christians to the new reforms was not altogether hostile.

How the Portuguese managed to win over a section of the Thomas Christians is an important question that requires in-depth investigation. The Thomas Christians had a strong traditional base so strong that even the appearance of the Muslims in the 9th century in Kerala could shake their foundation. Not even the revival of the *Bhakti* could create waves of disintegration in the faith. Therefore what was the Portuguese strategy that was used to create a feeling of ambiguousness and insecurity amongst the Thomas Christians. Was the Reformation a keen factor in devising a strategy that had both religious as well as political implications and underplays. The detailed explanation of the above questions is beyond the scope of the thesis, yet a concise note on the above questions will be attempted here.

By the time the Reformation movement has started in Germany, the Portuguese had acquired immense knowledge about the Thomas Christians and also had started converting the indigenous people into the faith. They had also learned their languages, customs, traditions, and lifestyle and achieved political footing, and carved their own spaces on the Malabar coast. The Portuguese therefore were aware that it was particularly easy to get the natives converted to Christianity than taming the Thomas Christians into the Catholic fold.

Firstly they started a college at Cranganore to educate the sons of the Thomas Christians and make them practice the Latin rite. This measure hardly achieved success as those priests who were educated in Latin rite were not allowed to practice or preach in the

⁹³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 298.

churches of the Thomas Christians⁹⁴. Moreover, the Thomas Christians considered language as an integral part of their legacy as well as liturgy. Syriac language which had roots in the Aramaic language was accepted and respected rather than Latin. The Aramaic roots of the Syriac language meant the revival and survival of the direct traditions of Jesus. Because Aramaic was the language spoken by Jesus and was the language of a larger biblical community, it was important to preserve their liturgy in Syriac and not in Latin.

The second attempt taken by the Portuguese to win over the Thomas Christians was the founding of a College at Chanota or Vaipicota in 1587. The college taught Chaldean as well as Syrian languages. This step also found rather limited success. Unlike the Portuguese notion that the priests who received the Latin exposure might impart the Catholic doctrines learned at the college to their fellow church laymen after passing out from the college, the situations turned contrary. This conception of being better received in the Serra⁹⁵ did not find success as it resulted in several misunderstandings in the matter of faith and sacraments. Most importantly these so-called enlightened priests were not ready to preach against their Prelates and bishops who had ordained them and on whom they were depended⁹⁵.

The creation of the fear of ex-communication was the most well-crafted element of the Portuguese strategy. Although the Thomas Christians were not under the direct jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Goa, they were in communion with the Pope at Rome following the association of the Chaldean Patriarch by the time of the Synod. Therefore being excommunicated was the greatest fear of the Thomas Christians they were practicing Catholics and never intended to break from the Catholic Church⁹⁶. The researcher assumes the possible socio-political and economic impact of being excommunicated as having a greater impact than the religious facet. The Malabar society which was a caste-based society had strict rules and regulations in the regard and being excommunicated from the community left the individual completely aloof. Thomas Christians being a component of the social structure that demanded a collective existence in the Malabar society, breaking away from the community implied the status of an 'outcast' or an 'outlaw'. Besides, the Thomas Christian community was part of trading guilds and cooperations which required the support and assistance from the entire community. Therefore being excommunicated from the community

⁹⁴ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 32.

⁹⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 31.

⁹⁶ Pallath, *Synod of Diamper*, 216.

was the greatest fear as it deprived them of the social economic and political privileges that were collectively given to the community.

Besides these developments, several political and religious underplays were being initiated in the region. Although these plays were rather slow in yielding results, it did have a profound impact on the mentalities of the Thomas Christians. The Portuguese thought that a greater impact on the Thomas Christians can be made if the Prelates and the bishops of the Thomas Christians could be subdued as they thought that ‘all the evil came from the Prelates’⁹⁷, and blamed them for neither correcting these Christians nor cooperating with the Portuguese in doing so. The Portuguese therefore arrested and deported the Thomas Christian Prelate Mar Joseph to Rome⁹⁸. Here it should be noted that Mar Joseph was sent to India following the reunification of the Chaldean Church with the Church of Rome and therefore technically speaking Mar Joseph had to have Catholic inclinations. But contrary to this, the actions of Mar Joseph were greatly on par with the Thomas Christian interests. Although he brought in certain ‘order’⁹⁹ among the community, and therefore made him send first to Lisbon(1563) claiming him as a heretic and later to Rome(1567-1569).

Mar Joseph after being deported to Lisbon in 1563 was able to win over the hearts of the Queen of Portugal and therefore was acquitted of all the accusations and sent back to India. Although he came back with a promise to abide by the Catholic Church his heart called for clinging to the age-old traditions. But the presence of a rival bishop Mar Abraham from West Asia made him think otherwise. Sensing that Mar Abraham had gained considerable influence amongst the Thomas Christians during the period of his absence, Mar Joseph decided to gain the Portuguese support for ousting Mar Abraham and therefore introduced several liturgical and ritualistic changes amongst the Thomas Christians as the Portuguese desired. The Portuguese with their hold over the Raja of Cochin was able to arrest Mar Abraham and deport him to Portugal and then to Rome. But having had proved himself pure Abraham returned to India with the letters from the Pope stating his acquittance. Meanwhile back in Malabar having had the threat of Mar Abraham removed, Mar Joseph resorted to the

⁹⁷ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 32.

⁹⁸ Mar Joseph was sent to India by the Catholic Chaldean Patriarch Simon Sulaqa, who was elected as the Patriarch in 1551 after a segment of the Chaldeon Church rose against the earlier Patriarch Simon VII. Simon Sulaqa therefore went to Rome and got reunified with the Church of Rome and was confirmed the Patriarch by Pope Julius III in 1553. Refer footnotes by Pius Malekandathil, *Jornada*, 32.

⁹⁹Gouvea, *Jornada*, 32.

traditional doctrines and started ignoring the Catholic traditions and rituals which once he adored. The repeated negligence and breach of Mar Joseph angered the Portuguese and he was again arrested and deported back to Portugal and then to Rome in 1567¹⁰⁰. By the time Mar Abraham arrived back from Rome in 1568, Mar Joseph had already been deported to Rome and the Thomas Christians were left without a Prelate. Mar Abraham like Mar Joseph resorted back to the Thomas Christian practices after being able to obtain a strong footing in the Malabar region and therefore was forced by the Portuguese to attend the Third Council of Goa (1585). Although Mar Abraham hesitated to abide by it after being aware of the Portuguese hold over the native kings who may arrest him and deport him again. Mar Abraham gave up his errors and again promised to uphold the Catholic doctrines at Goa¹⁰¹.

The appearance of a rival bishop from West Asia, Mar Simon again upturned the affairs as he claimed to have arrived to succeed Mar Abraham who was getting very old. The appearance of Mar Simon created a schism among the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese realizing that Mar Abraham was a better enemy than Mar Simon, arrested him and deported him to Rome. After having accused of the errors Mar Simon was sent to a monastery in Lisbon to learn the doctrines. It is said that from there Mar Simon was constantly corresponding to some *Kathanars* in Malabar imparting errors in his letters especially to Jacob whom he left as his Vicar General. Jacob was gradually gaining popularity over the people more than Mar Abraham. This made the Portuguese to warn him to subject himself to Mar Abraham and give up the commission of Simon¹⁰². It is mentioned in the *Jornada* that Jacob did not abide by the orders from the Archbishop of Goa and continued teaching the heresy until he was caught by a disease that slowly resulted in speech impairment and later death¹⁰³. This was indeed a boon for the Portuguese who was now faced with a rather stronger opposition from two points; Mar Abraham on one side and Jacob on the other. The death of Jacob and the extreme old age of Mar Abraham in 1597 meant that the leadership of the Thomas Christians was at stake. Although the Portuguese decided to appoint the Jesuit priest Francis Roz as the new Prelate following the death of Mar Abraham, the knowledge that Mar Abraham had left a Governor for the Church, Archdeacon Jorge (George of the Cross) who had considerable support from the Thomas Christians, they did not attempt to do

¹⁰⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 37-38.

¹⁰¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 40.

¹⁰² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 50.

¹⁰³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 51.

it until Dom Alexis de Menezes returned from his visits to Northern India. Despite the repeated efforts of the Portuguese under Menezes to bring them under the Catholic faith, none of them found results and only resulted in more aggressive responses from the Thomas Christians who were even ready to kill the priest belonging to the Latin rite. Gouvea writes that the Thomas Christians offered to defend their faith and the law of Apostle Thomas "...with their lives and estates"¹⁰⁴. They even took an oath at Angamali, the seat of the Bishopric owing that they will do what their Archdeacon did and will not allow any renewal of the old traditions and faith. They also owed that they will not allow the destruction of the law of Thomas the Apostle nor will they accept any Prelate who visited without the order from the Patriarch of Babylon¹⁰⁵.

The Thomas Christians from then on refused to admit any priests from the Latin rite especially those who visited their churches and gave talks frequently. Their actions were too extreme that they even closed their eyes when they saw a Latin priest lifting the Holy Sacraments. Jornada also mentions certain other hostile attitudes and fatal actions resulting from the deed¹⁰⁶. Malekandathil notes the representation of the Thomas Christians in Jornada as a 'fear evoking people' to indicate the levels of heroism and adventurism involved in the visit of Archbishop Menezes¹⁰⁷. As there are no contemporary sources to cross-check this depiction we have to go by the observation of Gouvea. It is explicit that the Thomas Christians were ready to sacrifice their own life for protecting their faith and upholding their traditions.

It was at this juncture that Menezes, who was in Goa, decided to take up journeys to these areas with the hope to bring the Thomas Christians under the Catholic fold and relieve them from the so-called ' heretical blindness'.

The success of Menezes was not entirely the result of religious tactics involved, but rather was a cumulative effect of a certain politico-economic underplays. How the Portuguese proved meritorious in bringing the Thomas Christians to their obedience has the stories of deceit and betrayal.

¹⁰⁴ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 58.

Menezes after reaching Cochin decided to look at the threat posed by Kunjali, who was becoming the greatest challenge for the Portuguese existence in India itself, before attempting to enter the matters of the Thomas Christians¹⁰⁸. Menezes was tactful enough in getting a promise from the Raja of Cochin to maintain peace until the threat of Kunjali is removed and his cooperation in all the matters concerning the Thomas Christians. By the time the Thomas Christians were aware of the power of Menezes who had ample influence over the Portuguese traders as well as the rulers of the Pepper Kingdom. The Christians who had extensive commercial interactions with the two parties knew that it was not a great idea to let down Menezes. Thus when Menezes called to meet the Archdeacon in Cochin the Thomas Christians had no other option but to abide by fearing the loss of the commercial connections. The Archdeacon along with some Cassanars and several Christian *Panikkars*¹⁰⁹ visited Menezes for the fear of being detained. Menezes on the other hand asked the Archdeacon's cooperation and presence during his visits to the various churches of Thomas Christians¹¹⁰. The Christians thought that Menezes would not stay for more than two months in Cochin and would retire to Goa to spend the rainy season starting from May-June. Thus they decided to show their willingness in cooperating with Menezes and act according to his will until he leaves from the place. Moreover, they were anticipating the arrival of their new Prelate from Babylon which they considered might settle down their insecurity and subdue the Latin threat¹¹¹. But contrary to their expectations, Menezes was quick to act and with great swiftness, Menezes made the Archdeacon sign an ex-communication *late sentantie* that barred the Thomas Christians from mentioning the name of the Patriarch of Babylon nor praying to him¹¹². This brought a breach of religious sentiments from the Cassanars and other Thomas Christians which was indeed a major challenge to the identity of the Thomas Christians themselves as the step meant the removal of the Law of St Thomas, which was unbearable to them. It should be noted here that Menezes was shrewd to call the Archdeacon to Vaipicotta, which was indeed located in the Kingdom of Cochin and a major Portuguese stronghold. While doing so Menezes ensured his safety as he was aware that the Thomas

¹⁰⁸ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 109-114.

¹⁰⁹ A detailed description of the event is mentioned in *Jornada*, see Gouvea, *Jornada*, 116.

¹¹⁰ This measure was indeed very successful and the Raja of Cochin refrained from waging the war against Mangate (Alengad), which indeed helped Menezes to visit the churches there without any hurdle. Gouvea, *Jornada*, 137.

¹¹¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 115-116.

¹¹² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 123.

Christians and their Archdeacon would not take up arms or get scandalized in Portuguese areas of influence for the fear of the loss of their lives, commercial favors as well as estates.

Despite the disturbances that his order has created within the Thomas Christians, Menezes was not ready to refrain from his plan of visiting the churches of the Thomas Christians and with a great tactful play, was able to win over the hearts of some *Cassanars*, not only in Parur but also in many other places, with spiritual speeches and material gifts¹¹³. Menezes was able to subjugate the Archdeacon with the help of those *Cassanars* who showed gradual inclinations to him.

The Thomas Christians were very keen on upholding their faith that when Menezes wanted them to get the Confirmation, they were annoyed and furious. It is stated in *Jornada* that “.....they all got up with arms in hand, saying in a loud voice with great impetus that they would not allow the Confirmation, because their Bishops never did so to the Christians, nor was the Sacrament instituted by Christ, but his invention, with which he wanted to make them captives, and vassals of the Portuguese by putting the seal of Portuguyese in their forehead, which word they used for the sign of Cross which with the holy oil he was making on their foreheads, and soon as a sign of captivity was giving them a slap, and that if the cowards and the paruos of Vaipicota allowed themselves to be made captive and to be slapped, they would not tolerate it, nor would he lay his hands on their heads, nor on the faces of their women and of their daughters, that he should go to the Portuguese and leave the Christians of St Thomas, and that otherwise it would cost him a lot, for they were in their lands, where nobody could do any harm to them..”¹¹⁴.

Menezes was able to defend himself from the hostilities of Thomas Christians with his courage and bravery that made the Thomas Christians both shocked and impressed¹¹⁵. . Besides, Menezes made use of the various references given in the Holy Bible regarding the exaltation of Peter, the Apostle as the head of the Church after the Ascension of Jesus, to state and justify the superiority of the Roman Church over other churches of the world¹¹⁶. Menezes was able to convince the Archdeacon of the Thomas Christians to attend the Synod of Diamper which was scheduled to commence soon

¹¹³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 128 also see 137-138.

¹¹⁴ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 130-131.

¹¹⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 132.

¹¹⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 143-144.

Similarly, Menezes took to understand the internal affairs of the Thomas Christians. Menezes, therefore, was aware that the settlements of Christians towards the south were less prone to the influence of the Archdeacon. He also understood that neither were they so bound to his affection nor he did so frequently go to them¹¹⁷.

In addition to this, the fact that Menezes belonged to the Portuguese and the Portuguese had better armaments, military strength, and commercial enterprises most of the Kings of Malabar wanted to ensure tie-ups with them. Therefore much of the support Menezes required was given and offered by the rulers of the lands he visited. Menezes used the prospects of commerce and trade to sue the local rulers who otherwise could have offered less help to him. The mutual rivalry and hostility between the various kingdoms were also used by Menezes as a tool to gain support and protection during his church visitation prospect.

Despite the fact, the actions of Archbishop Menezes were creating serious tensions amongst the Thomas Christians too. Sensing that direct dialogue with the Archbishop would never gain results, the Archdeacon resorted to sending letters to various kings of the land requesting them not to allow Archbishop Menezes to enter their lands and meet the Thomas Christians substantiating with political reasons¹¹⁸.

Menezes even tried to break the agreement made with the Archdeacon on not to exercise any jurisdiction over the Thomas Christians by announcing the ordination of new priests at Udayamperoor¹¹⁹. Menezes had justified his act of exercising his jurisdiction over the Thomas Christians by stating that he has been allowed to do so by the Pope under whom all the churches in the world were under him¹²⁰. This action is indeed a remarkable sign of the superiority that the Portuguese minds had developed over the years. The early signs of incipient Orientalism can be understood here.

Conducting ordination of the priests meant exercising jurisdiction over the Thomas Christians which was indeed the greatest bone of contention between the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese. Having had enjoyed the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Babylon for almost 1400 years, the Thomas Christians could not conceive the fact of being governed by a

¹¹⁷ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 147.

¹¹⁸ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 156.

¹¹⁹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 158.

¹²⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 159.

different authority that hardly followed their tradition and legacy. Therefore the Thomas Christians were in a complete dilemma with the fear of compromising their religion for the loss of their commercial links. Thus the Archdeacon suggested that Menezes “.....can do so to the Latins, but not to the Surians; the name Latin was given to the sons of the Christians who in the colleges of Vaipicota and Cranganor were learning only Latin, who used to get ordained in the Bishopric of Cochin and served in its churches, who did no ministry in those of the Serra and were like strangers to it,...”¹²¹. Not only was this suggestion rejected by Menezes but also was justified by him by the following words...” that he had come to remove that schism and the division of Latin and Surians, and to subjugate them all into a flock of the purity of the Catholic Faith under only one universal Pastor the Pope, and the Holy Roman Pontiff”¹²².

The Archdeacon tried many ways to prevent Menezes from conducting the Ordinations for he knew that the sole aim of Menezes in conducting the ordinations immediately before the Synod was to gather supporters in his favor who would defeat the Archdeacon and his followers. The Archdeacons’ plan of disrupting the ordination by sending further letters to the various Kings of Serra did not yield fruitful results as, despite the Kings requesting Menezes to refrain from doing so, Menezes gave a cold response stating that it was his duty and the rulers need not interfere in the secrets of the religion¹²³. With no other weapon left, the Archdeacon published an edict stating the penalty of execution for all those who get ordained by Archbishop Menezes including their families as well as relatives. This measure did create a certain fear among the people of Diamper who stopped receiving confirmation from the Archbishop¹²⁴.

But the shrewd determination of the Archbishop was able to regain the lost enthusiasm of the people and overcome their fears. Despite the hostile situations that he encountered from the rulers themselves in the form of threats, Menezes conducted the ordination of 38 priests and made them denounce the Patriarch of Babylon and the heresies of Nestor and united them with the Roman Church¹²⁵.

¹²¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 159.

¹²² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 159.

¹²³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 160.

¹²⁴ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 160-161.

¹²⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 165.

Menezes had proceeded to Caturte (Kadathuruty) where he assumed to spend Easter but contrary to this he received aversion and hostility that he had to proceed to Colligeira Mangaldo (Kulashekharamangalam) where he was received well and was able to preach in the church. But Jornada notes of a murder attempt against the Archbishop which was aimed to liberate the Christians from the hold of the Archbishop¹²⁶. Despite all the troubles Menezes managed to reach Carturte before the onset of the Holy Week.

Meanwhile, other developments were taking place involving the issue. Sensing that Menezes had no plans to retreat from his actions some of the *Cassanars*, as well as some rebel Christians, approached the Pepper Queen (Queen of Vadakkumkur), to take action against Menezes by stating that he was trying to subjugate the Thomas Christians to the Portuguese crown thereby creating political instability. The Queen who had already received letters containing the similar content from the ruler of Thodupuzha, whom she had adopted as her successor, was quick in action and send a notification to the Archbishop asking him to evacuate from her lands. But a diplomatic and meticulously crafted reply from Menezes stating his friendship with the Queen and his responsibility to the Christians put her in a dilemma. The Queen's decision to resolve her dilemma by consulting her counselors was thwarted by the Portuguese by paying them enormous bribes to vote in their favor through one of their loyal Thomas Christian Agents¹²⁷. It is therefore clear that Menezes not only used power but also used the tactics of gift-giving and cajoling to achieve his motives worked out.

Istvan Pertzcal notes that despite the steps taken by the Portuguese during the Synod to curtail the Thomas Christians from continuing with their faith, the Thomas Christians continued to linger to their faith in secret. He justifies the fact by stating the appearance of the copies of manuscripts that were condemned to be destroyed by the Synod and its survival to the present day. According to him the Thomas Christians 'continued to hide or copy their manuscripts, the prohibitions notwithstanding; at the same time they employed all kinds of techniques to escape the persecution'¹²⁸. He also compliments the efforts of the supporters of the Synod for preserving the documents of these Christians

¹²⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 166-167.

¹²⁷ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 177-179.

¹²⁸ Istvan Perczel, Have the Flames of Diamp[er Destroyed all the Old Manuscripts of the Saint Thomas Christians?, Academia.edu, 93.

There was a distinction among the Thomas Christians, until the Synod based on their allegiance. Those who accepted the Roman Catholic Church was called the Romans and those who preserved the obedience of the Patriarch of Babylonia was called the Babylonians¹²⁹.

To conclude, the Chapter argues the impact of a structured and patronized model of Christianity on a 'Christian entity' that managed to thrive in a non-Christian dominant cultural space by assimilating to the socio-cultural framework without departing from their core religious identity. The existence of an exclusive Thomas Christian cultural space, especially a style of church architecture predating the colonial encounters will be considered in the succeeding chapter to establish their unique identity.

¹²⁹ Gouvea, *Jornado*, 196.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHURCHES OF KERALA AT THE TIME OF PORTUGUESE ARRIVAL- ELEMENTS AND FEATURES

The chapter aims to identify the major aspects of the Thomas Christian churches at the time of the Portuguese arrival and summarize the nature and character of various elements present in the style. The chapter will look into the evolution of the church architecture style in Kerala up to the Portuguese arrival by identifying the various styles, features, and techniques adopted during the course.

5.1.0. The idea of the Church-General Introduction on the Church Architecture in Kerala

The term ‘church’ in the sense of a structural building is identified in the local language in various words. The *Thomas Ramban Pattu*, an ancient folk song popular among the Thomas Christians, describes the church building as ‘*alayam*’ or ‘*devalayam*’¹, which translates to ‘house’ or ‘house of God’. However, this term does not seem to be in prominent usage among the community at least in modern times, although words such as *devalayasandarshanam*, *devalayadarshanam* are currently used to ornately describe visits to popular pilgrim centers and churches. The term used ubiquitously to denote the church buildings is *palli*, an expression that was once used to describe the Buddhist and Jain *viharas* in the ancient and early medieval Kerala. This usage is in circulation amongst the popular cultural spaces of the Thomas Christians as well as Christians belonging to the Latin rite to label their adobe of worship. The same term was (at least from the medieval period) and is used to connote the Jewish synagogues that came to existence towards the beginning of the Common Era, as well as to the mosques that began to appear in Malabar from the 7th century CE. Interestingly, this term was not used to denote any of the ‘Hindu’ temples at any point in time. Differently, the temples were and are known by various terms such as *kshetrams*,

¹ Ramba Pattu, www.nasranifoundation.org. Also see, MM Ninan, 71/2 Churches of St Thomas, (Normal:2016), 7-12,

*ambalams*², or *kovils*. The disparity in the usage of the terms can be comprehended further on the functional aspects of the corresponding structures.

An analysis of the term *palli*, considering its historical and functional aspect, can shed sufficient light on the reason for assigning the aforementioned term specifically to certain spaces of worship. The probable reason for adopting the term for use to spaces of worship excluding those belonging to Hinduism can be on account of the community's perception of spaces of worship. The Hindu temples were not meant for the gathering of the devotees, unlike the Jain and Buddhist *viharas* that focused on assembling the devotees and performing community worship. The idea of community gathering for prayers and rituals is considered indispensable for communities such as Christians, Muslims, and Jews thereby creating a functional and practical similarity between the perceptions of worship spaces. This similarity in the idea of spaces of worship can be assumed as the most potential reason for the adoption of this expression. The gradual decrease in the popularity of Buddhism and Jainism following the Brahmin revivalism; had these *viharas* either converted into 'Hindu' temples or left for destruction. However, the term *palli* survived and continued to be used for denoting spaces of worship belonging to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

The legend of Thomas the Apostle credits him as the 'creator' of the earliest Christian worship edifice in Kerala. In addition to the widely known legend of the seven churches, many other legends are supporting the main legend which recounts the Apostle's activities at places where he founded the initial churches. A very interesting legend that was (and still is) in popular circulation amongst the Thomas Christians of Coulam (Kollam) on the building of a Church by Thomas the Apostle in a miraculous way is mentioned by the early 16th-century Portuguese traveler Durate Barbosa. The description may be one of the earliest existing descriptions of a legend by a European author relating to the process of building a church by the Apostle. According to the narrative, on a particular day, a large piece of timber was found stranded on the beach of Coulam that was huge enough to gain the attention of the people as well as the King. Although the King sent numerous men and elephants to drag the wood from the beach, the efforts were futile. Even the King himself was unable to do anything and was distressed. In this critical situation, Thomas the Apostle offered his help in pulling the log to the shore on the condition that the King provide him land to build a church for the God who sent him there. The King was unconvinced on his ability to accomplish the task which could

² These terms are translated to each other by the *Shabdhatravali*.

not be done with the aid of elephants and men. However, on hearing the Apostle's reply that it shall be possible by the strength of the God which was greater than that of the King's, the King ordered for his wish to be granted. The Apostle was able to draw the log all by himself by tying it with a cord and dragging the log to the place where he wished to build the church. The King was pleased with the Apostle's action and allowed him to do whatever he pleased with the log as well as the land and considered the Apostle as a holy man. The Apostle hired carpenters and sawyers of the land and asked them to work on the log. The log was so huge that it was enough to build the whole church³.

The above legend was noted by Barbosa in the early part of the 16th century and after knowing about it from the Christians of the land. Although the legend has crystallized into the hagiography of Thomas the Apostle, and 'historicized' as a twain to connect the church building tradition of the land, the legend hints at the attitude of the common people as well as the ruling class towards a new faith and its preacher. Besides, the legend provides faint links to the possible raw materials and workmanship that was utilized to build the earliest churches of the land.

The inception of space for Christian worship in the Malabar Coast was rather spontaneous. Interestingly, if the Thomas Legend can be historically asserted, the arrival, propagation, and consecration of churches in the region was a process that took less than 20 years to materialize. By the time the legend states the death of the Apostle,(72CE), eight churches were already established by the Apostle and a considerable number of followers were gained. There might have been various reasons for the materialization of the idea of the church as a building in Kerala, long before it gained currency in the region of its inception. The first major reason may be the relative tolerance towards the activities. Unlike the case in Israel where the emergence of the new faith was initially considered as a revolt within the Jewish community and therefore a break from the original, the Malabar society and culture were akin to the Semitic beliefs and culture. Although the presence of Jewish traders and settlers must have made them aware of a different belief system. Secondly, there was hardly any reason for them to keep their faith secretive as was the case in the Roman Empire. The fear of persecution was relatively less compared to the Roman Empire.

The Thomas Christians from the period of their formation had evolved into a distinct cultural entity building internal and external networks, that were both commercial and social.

³ Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts*, 160-161.

These Christians began to build their community by enhancing their resources through economic activities, creating boundaries for interactions, and creating various ways and means to describe themselves as distinct, yet notwithstanding the dominant culture of the macro space and time to which they belonged. The churches of the community had developed and evolved by imbibing the changes occurring both in their religious as well as cultural spheres. The absence of these pioneer church structures makes, an evolutionary structural reconstruction of the church architecture possible entirely through comparative analysis and assumptions based on the available shreds of evidence.

The first churches of Kerala were considered to be consecrated by the Apostle Thomas to whom the Thomas Christians of Kerala extend their legacy. These churches except for the church of Niranam and Nilakkal were located in the coastal region. A shift occurred in their settlement pattern around the third century CE, during which they started migrating towards the eastern parts of Kerala. This was done to expand their agrarian activities to more forested regions and to bring those areas under cultivation. As they began penetrating to the interior regions of the land, their zone of settlement expanded to the middle as well as the highlands of Kerala. This has to be seen in the context of the demands of spices and related agricultural products in the Roman markets, which had been reflected in the intensification of the commercial activities in the region. This phenomenon resulted in the construction of churches in the interior parts.

An examination of the location of the earlier seven settlements of the Thomas Christians reveals that the places mentioned above were either located near the ancient port centers or were linked to these ports through water systems. Cranganore, Parur, and Quilon were located very close to the major port centers of the ancient period, whereas Kokkamangalam (connected to the Vembanad lake), Niranam (located near the region of the confluence of the Achankovilar and Manimalayar rivers and often identified with the Nelcynda of *The Periplus of Erythrean Sea*) and Nilakkal (located close to the Pampa river) are located near water systems that linked them to these ancient ports. Therefore while Cranganore, Palayur, Parur, and Kokkamangalm are located in the Lowlands, Niranam is located in the Midland and Nilakkal in the Highland. Despite the contested state of the historicity of the arrival of Apostle Thomas, the examination of the Christian settlements before they migrated to British Malabar towards the second half of the 20th century, infers that almost the whole of the Thomas Christian settlements was located between the belts of

Palayur and Quilon. The presence of the Thomas Christians in these regions is a light towards the presence of their churches in these regions too.

The basic plan of a typical Kerala Christian church before the Portuguese arrival should be conceived as having various stages of development progressed hand in hand with the general architectural development of the Malabar region. Although the various stages of development of the church architecture are difficult to categorize owing to the absence of these churches in their original form, it is possible to identify certain features and styles that were incorporated through the ages. The pre-Portuguese churches were simple structures with the longitudinal plan rather than the cross plan common to the Western Churches⁴. The church structure had a hall, not more than 15-20 meters in length which were divided into the *Madbaha*⁵ (sanctuary) or the altar area and the *Hykala*⁶, the naïve or the assembly area. In addition to this, there was another space between the *Madbaha* and the *Hykala* called the *Azhikakkam* or the *Kestroma* (chancel) which has a higher floor than the *Hykala* but lower than the *Madbaha*. The church also had a porch outside its main door which is known as the *Munkhamandapam*. The churches were usually enclosed by high walls or fences like the ‘Hindu’ temples of the period with a gateway or *Padippura* to access the premises. This basic plan of the church is often compared by various scholars to that of the ‘Hindu’ temples of the land by its general style and architectural features, despite the varied belief system followed by the respective communities.

On the contrary, the present model and pattern of a typical Kerala Christian church is a hybrid structure with various European, West Asian, and Indian styles which was the result of cross-cultural interactions and exchanges. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the Christian population of Kerala today, with allegiance to various congregations and rites, there exists a plethora of church structures and building styles. The changes began to graduate following the arrival of the European colonizers pioneered by the Portuguese. The arrival of the French, Dutch, English, and the Danish had brought in their styles of church building which were either inclined to the Gothic or the Baroque styles. The influence of various missionary societies also played a significant role in shaping the present church models. Many churches are being built in Kerala which is very grand with more European features.; Thanks to the

⁴ Panjikaran and Vedamuthu, “Evaluation of the Spatial Organization “, 124.

⁵ The term has Syrian origin and is derived from the Syrian word Dabaha which means sacrifice or offering.

⁶ The term has Syrian roots and comes from the word Hykalo meaning ‘temple’.

long exposure of the land to the European colonial yoke, a phenomenon that made the Christians connect themselves more to the styles and attitudes of the West thereby sidelining or in certain cases purposefully ignoring their traditions generally and their unique architectural style specifically. The Christians irrespective of their congregation and ethnic claims have been influenced by the European styles. It is therefore strenuous to identify the original and unadulterated architectural style of the Thomas Christian churches in Kerala due to the inclusion and assimilation of alien features.

5.2.0. The Earliest Church Structure- Traditions and Literary Mentions

The primary sources that mention the existence of church structure before the Portuguese arrival are scarce. Besides, there are no known mentions of a church structure in the internal sources produced during the early years of the Common Era, although some amateur church historians have zealously tried to trace the mentions of church buildings to the Sangam literature without any concrete evidence⁷.

The first direct reference of the church structure available from the known sources is in the *Topographia Christiana* of Cosmas Indicopleustes written in the 6th century CE. Cosmas mentions finding church buildings in *Taprobane* (Sri Lanka), *Male* (Malabar), and *Calliana*⁸. Cosmos mentions the existence of a church of Persian Christians who are settled on the island of Taprobane, which is identified as the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka.).He also mentions seeing a “....a presbyter who is appointed from Persia, and a Deacon and a complete ecclesiastical ritual”⁹.Cosmos calls the littoral Malabar coast as Male¹⁰and states it as one of the major trading regions of India¹¹. However, the depiction of the structure or plan of the church is absent in his account. Despite the mention of a church structure at Kollam in

⁷ During the investigative interviews with Church Priests, Church Authors as well as some amateur church historians, most of them tried to locate the reference to churches in the Sangam Literature, which is considered as the most valued and comprehensive non- Sanskrit literary corpus produced in the ancient period. The researcher was told about some books published by certain amateur church historians on the subject. Bu the researcher was neither able to obtain the names of the books nor contact their authors.

⁸ Cosmas Indicopleusts, *Christian Topography* , 118-119

⁹ Cosmas Indicopleusts, *Christian Topography* , 365.

¹⁰ Cosmas Indicopleusts, *Christian Topography*, 366.

¹¹ Cosmas Indicopleusts, *Christian Topography*,366-367.

the Tarisapalli Copper Plate or *Tarisapalli Sasanam* dated 849CE, there is no mention of its architectural style or model¹².

Marco Polo was the first to report the tomb of Apostle Thomas which he found in Mylapore in 1295CE¹³. Further fragments of description about churches in the region surface from the 13th century and later. Friar John of Monte Corvino, who visited India in 1292 CE, has mentioned the Church of Thomas the Apostle, where he had stayed for thirteen months engaging in missionary activities. He reports the burial of his companion Friar Nicholas Pistoia in the same church yet does not venture to describe the church building¹⁴. Friar Jordanus (1280-1330CE) mentions a church building at Kollam but does not describe its structure or the plan either¹⁵. John Marignoli, notes the presence of a 'Latin Church' at a place called *Columbum* belonging to the Christians of St Thomas¹⁶, which is assumed to be the same church that was mentioned in Jordanus' description. Although Marignoli does not provide extensive details about the church, he mentions the absence of paintings within the church interiors¹⁷. All these aforesaid narratives lacked a concise description of the plan and structure of the church buildings which therefore stands as the greatest limitation in studying the pre-Portuguese church structures.

The Portuguese influx to the Malabar Coast had resulted in better documentation of the lands' Christian cultural space and thus creating a surge in the trove of descriptions on the

¹² KS Mathew,,St Thomas Christians in Malabar From The 9th to the 16th Centuries, in St Thomas Christians and Nambutiris Jews and Sangam Literature,edited by Bosco Puthur(Kochi:LRC Publications , 2006),56-58.

¹³ Podipara,*Thomas Christians*, 139.

¹⁴ Monte Corvino,“First Letter of Montecorvino(1305)”,Letters and Reports of Missionary Friars,*Cathy and the Way Tither*, 45. Most probably this church might have been the Church of St Thomas in Mylapore, where Thomas the Apostle's tomb exists.

¹⁵ KS Mathew, “St Thomas Christians” ,65.

¹⁶ Yule, “John de Marignolis Recollection of Eastern Travels”,in *Cathy and Way Tither Being A Collection of Medieval Notices of China* (London:Hakluyt Society1914),218.

Marignoli mentions his vist of the Church of St Geoirge at Columbum around 1346 CE,however the location of the church is in debate as the author mentions the name of the place were he found the church as Columbum,which was a form of the word for Colombo in Ceylon –Sri Lanka. However the author also describes the place as ‘where the world's pepper is produced. In addition, he also mentions finding the Christians of St Thomas at this place. Considering all these there can be cjhances that the Marignoli is mentioning about the church at Coulum or Kollam. For a detailed reading on the information refer to the footnotes from page 217-218

¹⁷ Henry Yule, *Cathy and Way Tither*, 216.

subject from the 16th century. There are two major literary references regarding the churches of Kerala at the beginning of the 16th century, one from the narratives by Joseph the Indian and the other from the letters by four bishops dated to 1504¹⁸ and minor descriptions from that of the travel records produced by the Portuguese. A progressive trend in the production of knowledge regarding the Thomas Christians and their culture has since then begun to emerge from various Portuguese officials, missionaries, bishops, etc. Barbosa mention finding a church at Coulam (Kollam) which was built by Apostle Thomas miraculously during his lifetime. According to his description, the church was located at a high point that juts into the sea¹⁹.

Olivieri addresses the issue of scarcity of sources in dealing with the study of the culture and evolution of Thomas Christian art and architecture before the Portuguese period. The authors of the article credit the Portuguese for the creation of available sources despite the possible disparities that may arise in their narratives owing to their different origins²⁰.

5.3.0. The Evolution of Church Architecture and its Plan until the Portuguese Period

The absence of clear mentions of ancient church buildings coupled with the nonexistence of church structures before the Portuguese in their original form makes the reconstruction of the evolution of the church architecture in Kerala and identification of various stages of development possible only by analytical and comparative study method based on assumptions. Understanding the inception of the community first can bring up favorable insights into the current study. Thomas the Apostle had encountered a complex society in Malabar constituted with people belonging to various cultures and nationalities in addition to the indigenous population which was an outcome of the relentless commercial networks connecting the land to various other parts of the then known world. The earlier converts to Christianity were Greeks, Jews, and the indigenous inhabitants of the Malabar region. The faith of the indigenous population was largely Buddhism and Jainism. All these communities had the practice of building spaces of worship according to the tenants of their

¹⁸ For a detailed reading on the letters, refer, Schurhammer, *Malabar Church and Rome*,

¹⁹ Barbosa, *Description of the Coasts*, 158.

²⁰ Carlo G. Cereti, Luca M. Olivieri and Fr. Joseph Vazhuthanapally. "The Problem of the St Thomas Crosses and Related Questions: Epigraphical Survey and Preliminary Research". *East and West* 52, no. ¼ (December 2002): 288.

respective faiths. The Romans had already built a temple for Augustus²¹ at Muziris and the Jews were known to have built their synagogues. The Buddhists and Jains had also built their structures for worship. Therefore it is probable that the earlier Christians of Malabar either converted the existing Buddhist, Jain, Greek, or Jewish structures as centers for Christian worship or might have build structures bearing the above influences²².

The early Portuguese records have often remarked about the similarities in the style of the Thomas Christian churches and the pagodas of the ‘infidels’, ‘gentiles’, and ‘idolaters’ of Malabar. Although these sources never established the specific community that is categorized by infidels, gentiles, and idolaters, it has been argued by many historians, especially amateur church historians in the 20th century that the description is linked exclusively to the ‘Hindu’ community of the region. Therefore it has been falsely stated that the churches of Kerala before the Portuguese or at least before the Synod had a ‘temple’ style of architecture as the result of the community’s consisted interaction with the ‘Hindu’ community of the region and their adoption of a lifestyle similar to theirs. Besides, the similarity in the architecture of many churches to that of the temples had made many such historians assume that many ancient churches were ‘Hindu temples’ in the long past²³. By claiming so, the researcher feels that it could be a conscious or unconscious action to cement the Thomas Legend dealing with the ‘conversion of the ‘brahmins’ to Christianity as well as reinforcing the community’s pre-Christian legacy to the region. The researcher was able to encounter certain notorious claims raised by various ancient Christian communities of the study area, stating that the ancient churches of the region showed similarities with the Hindu temples because the rulers of the land who had permitted to build the churches insisted on adopting the temple style of architecture, thus trying to state that the ‘temple style’ architectural model was the result of an imperial imposition on the Thomas Christians and not the result of a conscious adoption of the style by the community itself. Such claims had been put forth by amateur historians due to their limited knowledge on the political, social, cultural, and architectural evolution of the

²¹ The temple for Augustus was build in Muziris, Malekandathil, “St Thomas Christians”, 5.

²² The Palayur Church, which was supposed to have been established by Apostle Thomas himself is believed to have been a Buddhist structure which was then transformed to a Siva temple and later converted to a Christian church. This popular claims are claimed and carried over despite proper historical analysis.

²³ Such a misconception can be mostly identified with historians with a colonial inheritance. P Thomas who composed a book on the Churches of India in the early 20th century for the Government of India, too was lingering with such an impression, see, Thomas, *Churches of India*, 13.

Malabar society and polity and a thorough examination of the above facets can result in more clear inferences.

Moreover, it is accepted by the historians that the ‘Hindu’ structural temples had influences of Buddhist and Jain *viharas*. As these religions gradually waned in popularity by the seventh and eighth centuries after brahminic religion began to gain prominence, these architectural traditions were translated into the ‘Hindu’ traditions.

The structural temples of Kerala had their origin between the 9th and the 12th centuries²⁴. It is clear from the time frame that the origin of the structural temples in Kerala postdates the ‘Hindu’ religious revivalism of the 7th and 8th centuries which is later than the available period of establishment of Christianity in the region yet later than most of the traditional dates of establishment of Christian churches in Malabar. Accordingly considering the Christian churches having ‘Hindu’ temple-style architecture will culminate in generating assumptions on the complete absence of Christian churches before this period. Therefore, the cumulative result of such misrepresentations and suppositions would be the circulation of a dwarfed history of the community.

The church architecture in Malabar at its inception should have adopted ideas for construction from a ‘basic plan’ that might have been in existence and use by communities other than ‘Hindus’. The Jains, Buddhists, Jews, and Romans who were present in the land already had the tradition of building their temples for worship. Pieces of evidence for the existence of a temple dedicated to Augustus are found in Muziris cementing the idea of the presence of structural worship spaces in the region. The Jains and Buddhists also had their temples and *viharas*. Therefore the churches had a ‘reference plan’ to look at that was derived from either of these traditions. Sunil Edward’s work on indigenous churches of Kerala asserts that the common origin of plan and design of Thomas Christian churches as well as the ‘Hindu temples from a “common cultural and architectural base (which could be secular buildings or the’ structural temples’ of Jain and Buddhists that seems to be older), which in turn developed from the socio –climatic conditions and availability of construction materials in Kerala”²⁵. This concludes that the temple architecture, the architecture of the churches, and

²⁴ K V Soundara Rajan, “Temple Architecture in Kerala”, *Kerala State Archeaology Series*, 3 (Trivandrum: 1974), 32.

²⁵ Sunil Edward, “A Study of Indigenous Church Architecture of Kerala State (PhD diss, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, 2005), 308-309.

the mosques were based on the plan and layout of a common pioneer which had origins in Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, and Greek traditions.

As discussed earlier the residential and non-residential buildings were primarily designed and planned by the village architect or the *Asari* as he is known in the Malayalam tongue. Therefore the probability of his role in designing the church can be certain, for there were no distinctions between those who did it on a religious basis. Most importantly most of these professions were caste-based and therefore most probably had the involvement of the people from other castes. The *Asaris* planned the buildings based on the principles of *Vastusastra* which intended to blend man with nature.

Vastushastra or the rules of *Vastu* played a major role in the determination of the orientation, elevation, and general plan of the religious buildings of Kerala as it determined the domestic buildings²⁶. The Thomas Christians were also influenced by the principles of *Vastushastra* and therefore had designed their churches based on these conventions. Moreover, *Vastushastra* was never comprehended as a ‘religion-specific’ practice but as a secular practice that was intended to synchronize man with the natural elements. However, the rules of the *sastra* were made in practice keeping into consideration the requirements of the religion. Most probably almost all the churches belonging to the pre-Portuguese times were built under strict rules of *Vastushastra*, although the tradition continued following the Portuguese advent too. Sunil Edward had ventured in placing the floor plans of some old churches such as the ones at Thiruvithamcode and Kaloopara into the traditional grid pattern followed by the *Asaris* according to the principles of *Vastu*, obtaining surprisingly precise results on the positioning, orientation, and elevation of the church and its elements within the grid²⁷.

The plan of the churches belonging to the early years of Christian existence is difficult to obtain due to the non-availability of either their descriptions or their floorplans. Therefore assumptions play a key role in deducing the plan by considering and comparing the general architectural style and its evolution in the Malabar Coast. The assumption on a simple structure as the pioneering model is arrived at by considering the imminent necessity as well as the lack of resources in the hands of the incipient community that hardly gives scope for complexity and superfluity. Therefore in all probability, the first churches of Malabar might

²⁶ Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, "Problem of St. Thomas Cross", 288.

²⁷ Edward, "Study of Indegenous Church Architecture", 299-301

have been simple structures made of wood and thatched with palm leaves. These churches might have had hardly any distinction between *Madbaha* and the *Hykala*. Athapally suggests the presence of a raised platform at one end of the church which served as the altar²⁸. These churches would have been small with a single door for entrance and small holes rather than windows for ventilation and light. Athapally considers the churches at Malayattur and Pudukad²⁹ having reminisced of such a plan.

The single hall or cell-like structure of the ancient Thomas Christian Church had gradually become more complex and elaborate after the 9th century. This was the period when the construction of structural temples began to gain popularity in Kerala. It should be noted that those churches that were built in Kerala after the 9th century had many features of similarities that were common to the ‘Hindu’ temple. This similarity should be appreciated in the context of the shift in the architectural styles and preferences that were happening during the period. The churches from the period had two distinct parts, the *Madbaha* or the altar and the *Hykala* or the naïve. These features had remained as the ‘core’ elements of the Thomas Christian churches for the ages to come. The churches saw a gradual rise in the height of the roof above the *Madbaha*, resembling the *Garba Graha* of the temples. The height of the *Madbaha* roof was usually double that of the nave with windows on the two sides of the sanctum tower³⁰. Although the researcher agrees with the opinion of Athapally, the researcher assumes that it is highly improbable to find windows at the sides of the sanctum tower as the area was labeled as dark and without windows by the Portuguese in the 16th century. The expansion of the encompassed space within the churches in response to the growing population of the community is marked with a spacious nave and the addition of an entrance each to the lateral sides of the nave. The churches like the temples were kept mostly dark with a few small *kilivathil*³¹ just below the roofs to provide a subdued light.

The addition of the *Mukhamandapam* to the plan of the church was a later phenomenon, probably by the 12th century following a surge in the Christian population after

²⁸ Athapally, “Kerala Church Architecture”, 151.

²⁹ Athapally, “Kerala Church Architecture”, 151.

³⁰ Athapally, “Kerala Church Architecture”, 151.

³¹ *Kilivathil* can be considered as a version of ‘window’ typical in Kerala style of architecture. Although the structure was entirely different from the ‘janelas’ introduced by the Portuguese after 15th century, the purpose the element was similar despite its reduced dimensions and size.

the decline of Buddhism and Jainism³². The height of the *Mukhamandapam* was lower than that of the *Hykala* and the *Madbaha*. The function of the *Mukhamandapam* was to accommodate the increasing Christian population and also for storing arms as mentioned by Gouvea. The size and area of the *Mukhamandapam* can vary. In the case of older churches like the Chenganoor church, the *Mukhamandapam* is relatively smaller than those build after the Portuguese times were the *Mukhamandapam* gave way to the *Natapuras* or *Natasalas* as in the case of the Parappur church(Natashala demolished recently in 2015), Ollur church and Velur Church

To study the evolution of Thomas Christian church architecture, the church building activity before the Portuguese arrival can be categorized into various stages following the major developments that had happened in the Christian history in Malabar as well as architectural progress. The categorization of the evolution of temple architecture in Kerala postulated by H Sarkar in his work, *Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala*, has served as a major reference for the studies. He has classified the evolution of temple architecture into three major phases, depending on the complexity of the plan. The Early Phase(800-1000CE), Middle Phase (10010-1300CE), and Later Phase(1301-1800CE) are the three phases of temple architectural development identified by H Sarkar³³. However, with regards to the church building activity, not much periodization or categorization exist. An article titled, *The Problems of Thomas Christian Crosses*, categorizes the evolution of Church building activity to different stages based on the raw materials used³⁴. The proposed periodization categorizes the first stage of church building activity as based on the grass on leaves, the second stage on wood, and the third stage on the use of *vettukallu* (soft stone) and granite. Yet, the categorization lacks the inclusion of the historical and religious discourse that in turn might have had a considerable impact on the church building activity in addition to the raw materials. The researcher has categorized the stages based on the availability of sources, both archaeological and literary pointing to the presence of the churches, oral traditions referring to the traditional dates of the church building as well as based on major historical

³² Some scholars argue that the decline of Buddhism and Jainism had compelled the followers of these religions to either accept the Brahminical faith or embrace the religions of Christianity and Islam in order to escape further persecutions from the Brahmins. Refer, T Madhava Menon, *A Handbook of Kerala, Vol 1* (Trivandrum: International School of Dravidian linguistics, 2000), 200.

³³ H Sarkar, *An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala* (New Delhi: ASI, 1978), 60-61

³⁴ Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, “Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”, 288.

breakthroughs that might have brought in a considerable impact on the church building activity.

The Proto Stage(1st century CE -4th century CE) of the development of the church building activity can be traced from the beginnings of Christianity in India, particularly in Kerala to the time of the arrival of Thomas of Cana. The reconstruction of the model of the churches from this period could only be done based on the hypothetical analysis. The absence of any literary source ‘speaking about’ the floor plan or the general architecture of the churches nor the existence of any church structures from that period explains the use of the term Proto Stage. The general features and appearance of the church structure are based on the findings from the study of the general architectural style of the region as well as from the Thomas Christian traditions in various forms. According to the *Rambaan Pattu*, Thomas the Apostle had established *sleevas* or crosses for worship in most of the places of his activity. *Alayams* were constructed along with the *sleevas* in some specific places like Maliyankara(Kodungalloor)³⁵, Mylapore³⁶. It should be agreed that the earliest churches that were built in Malabar were these *alayams* by Thomas, the Apostle. Nevertheless, the *pattu* further notes the visit of Thomas the Apostle to various *alayams* located at the places where he had already consecrated crosses³⁷. However, the structure of these *alayams* can not be reconstructed as nothing more than simple references on them exist in *Rambaan Pattu*..

An important aspect that needs to be scrutinized in the context is that, unlike the case in the Roman Empire where Christianity was under the sword, and worship needs to be in secret, the Thomas Christians never had to fear the local rulers. Therefore taking into consideration the relative freedom of religion that the Thomas Christians enjoyed, there can be three ‘possibilities’ for the inception of the space for worship. Firstly, there can be chances that the earliest *alayam* of the Thomas Christians might have been the temples of the ‘Hindus’ or the Buddhists or sometimes the Jews who had embraced Christianity. For instance, the Palayur Church is alleged to have been a Shiva temple that was converted into a Christian church following the conversion of some Nambootiris into Christianity during the time of Thomas the Apostle³⁸. The second possibility can be the construction of specific ‘temporary structures’ to serve the purpose of Christian worship. These ‘structures may have

³⁵ “Rambaan Pattu”,in 7 ½ Churches of St Thomas,MM Ninan (Normal IL,2016)line 56, 3.

³⁶ “Rambaan Pattu”,7 ½ Churches , line 176,7.

³⁷ “Rambaan Pattu”, 7 ½ Churches ,line 208-213, 8.

³⁸ Some of the archaeological findings from the church and its vicinity add strength to the argument.

been simple buildings, sometimes roofed and made with readily available perishable raw materials, that were in general use for building purposes in the region, most probably leaves and grass structured on timber poles³⁹. The structures that were made may range from a cross to a simple shed or a roofed hut. As the Christian population began to gradually increase, these temporary structures might have either been modified to a specific permanent structure or left to disuse after constructing larger spaces at desired places. It can be assumed that as there were no established 'Christian' ideas, conventions, or models of architecture for an ideal Christian church, the nascent community could have relayed on the indigenous principles based on *Vastushastra* for constructing a place of worship. The Christian churches until the arrival of the Portuguese had followed the idealities and principles that were adopted at their earliest stage with little modifications following the time, improvements in masonry skill, and building technology.

Another important influence that requires special mention here is the continuous influx of Christian immigrant waves from Persia, who had settled and later assimilated to the larger Thomas Christian community of Kerala. The arrival of the Persian immigrants and their subsequent absorption to the Thomas Christian fold marks the beginning of the second developmental stage of church building activity which can be termed as the Secondary Stage(4th century). This stage might have witnessed the church building activity in wood, which gained popularity by then. These immigrants brought the isolated Thomas Christians to a broader Christian world, thereby introducing them to the West Asian Christian cultural space and liturgical practices that gradually influenced the Thomas Christian liturgy on a complete basis until the intervention of the Portuguese. Therefore it is probable that the Persian elements might have percolated in the architectural facet as well with the Persian Cross being the greatest example. A detailed analysis of the aspect will be dealt with in the following sections. The introduction of the arch separating the Madbaha and the Hykala may have become the new normal during this stage.

The Tertiary Stage of the Church building activity began from the 9th century following the grants given to Mar Sabor Iso. The period exhibited the value of Christians as a community with great economic and cultural value. The social economic and cultural dimensions of the community seemed well established during this period. Jornada was the

³⁹ Olivieri also agrees with the same choice of raw materials, Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, "Problem of St. Thomas Cross", 288.

period when the open-air crosses were built extensively. Incidentally, the period when more Persian elements were introduced such as the Persian Cross, Open-air crosses, etc. In all probability, this stage of church building activity continued mostly unadulterated until novel elements began to be introduced following the Portuguese intervention

The Quarternary Stage began with the church building activity that saw the extensive use of stone as a building material, around the 11th century. This stage developed into perfection around the period of the Portuguese arrival.

5.3.1. Location and Orientation

The locations of the churches of the Thomas Christians are directly related to their demographic distribution. If the legend of the arrival of Apostle Thomas is to be taken as historically true, then the presence and distribution of the Thomas Christians can be traced from around the eight churches that he had consecrated. The pioneer location of the Christian habitation being at Palayoor, Kodungallor, Kokkamangalam, Kottakkavu, Niranam, Nilakkal, Kollam, and Thiruvithamkode. Except for the place of Thiruvithamkode, where the local Christian community of Thomas Christians ceases to exist, much of the distribution of the population remains concentrated around the areas until the 20th century. Jornada mentions Palayur as the “last of this Christian community in the Northern side, in the lands of the King Samorin five leagues from Panane”⁴⁰.

The Thomas Christian churches at the time of the Portuguese arrival was centered around the localities of the *ezharapallikal* believed to have been consecrated by Apostle Thomas. Location analysis of the churches that existed at the time of the Portuguese arrival would point to the fact that most of them were situated either near to a water body or near to major trade routes of the time. In Jornada, it is mentioned that most of the Churches of the Thomas Christians were located interior of the region and therefore far away from the regions of Portuguese control which were confined to around the coastal region, especially the ports⁴¹. This may be considered true as except the seven churches(excluding Nilakkal) were located close to the coast. But as the Christian population diffused further into the interior regions of Malabar coast in response to their economic demands, numerous churches began

⁴⁰ Gouvea, Jornada, 442.

⁴¹ Gouvea, Jornada, 58.

to be built in the interior regions of Central and South Central Kerala. There are references in Jornado about churches that still existed along the coasts. The Church of the Thomas Christians at Coulaio (Kollam), was located outside the Portuguese settlement and very close to the fort of the King of Travancore⁴². However at present, the location of the church at Kollam cannot be determined.

In most cases, the Thomas Christian churches were built at a relatively higher elevation of that particular locality, mostly in an area that was the highest point in the village. This was to ensure that the structure of the church is protected from floods or any possible natural hazards. Besides, the elevated positioning of the church ensured its visibility from a relatively larger area. Therefore whenever a calamity such as a flood hits the place the residents could take refuge at the church. Most of the churches are located nearby navigable water bodies, mostly besides seacoasts, rivers, backwaters enabling easy access of the structure for the people. It should be observed that due to the abundance of forests in Kerala which were in some cases impregnable and containing a lot of wild animals, waterways were used as a reliable and safer channel for inland transportation of humans and freight. Therefore the location of the churches near water bodies was favored. Examples of churches constructed near the major rivers are Akaparambu church (on the banks of Periyar), Old Syrian Church at Chenganoor (on the banks of Pamba), Kaloopara Orthodox church (on the banks of Manimala), Old Pala Cathedral (on the banks of Meenachal), etc. Some churches are located near the lakes such as the Karthikapalli Church, located adjacent to the Kayamkulam lake.

In addition to the positioning of churches near to the water bodies, some churches were also positioned along popular trade routes and at important commercial and trading check-posts. As Christians were mostly traders, they had occupied themselves almost in the major trading centers and established churches. The churches at Nilakkal and Kadathuruty are located along the trading routes that connected the region of Kerala with the adjacent Tamil country.

Most of the pre-Portuguese churches were oriented and positioned in the East-West direction irrespective of the position of the road or the water body nearby. In all cases, the *Madbaha* of the church was positioned in the Eastern end facing the doorway located towards

⁴² Gouvea, *Jornada* ,153.

the Western side⁴³. There are many probable explanations for the Orientation of the church towards the Western side that the researcher could find. While some local people in Central Kerala expressed that the churches were positioned as such so as they faced the Holy Land of Jerusalem that lies to the Western part of the Indian subcontinent. However, as the altar is positioned at the eastern end, the people face to pray eastwards and not facing the Holy Land. Nevertheless considering the orientation of the church building and the altar overlooking Jerusalem can be the only possible justification for the above choice. The Jacobites of Kerala suppose that since the Second Coming of Jesus is believed to be from the Eastern side, the congregation needs to face eastward while anticipating the coming. Interestingly, it is a normal practice among the ‘Hindus’ of the region to pray towards the East⁴⁴. Therefore it is probable that the Thomas Christians might have adopted the practice of praying towards the East as the general practice. Various Indian traditions consider the East as an auspicious cardinal direction. The association of sunrise and dawn to a particular direction is the primal reason for the favor.

5.3.2. Raw Materials and the Building Techniques

The raw materials used for the construction of the buildings in the Malabar Coast had a direct impact on the geological setting and soil pattern. Materials such as *vettukallu*, (laterite stone) granite, wood, silver, gold, iron, and bronze were some of the most extensively used raw materials for church building activity⁴⁵. The availability of the raw materials and their feasibility in the region of construction were the two major factors that governed the selection of the raw materials. Owing to the thickly forested topography of the highland regions, most settlements were concentrated in the more favorable Midlands and the Lowlands. The Midland areas had the presence of hard laterite soil which had more strength and weight-bearing capacity whereas the Lowland regions mostly had loose and sandy soil with low load-bearing capacity. Therefore the raw materials were selected and chosen in such

⁴³ S G Pothen, *Syrian Christians of Kerala* (Bombay:Asia Publishing House, 1963), 77-80.

⁴⁴ Many European writers have noted the practice among the Hindus . For instance,it is mentioned by Nikitin that the places of worship of the ‘hindus’ were situated towards the East and they offered their prayers by turning towards the East. They lifted their hands over their heads in the Russian way, and then prostrated on the ground with full body stretched. “The Travels of Athanasius Nikithin of Twer”, trans, J Winter in *India in 15th Century Being A Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India in the Century Preceeding the Portuguese Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope*,ed.R H Major (London: Hakluyt Society,1857), 17.

⁴⁵ Cereti,Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, “The Problem of St.Thomas Crosses”, 288.

a way that the compatibility of it was analyzed with that of the soil and ground pattern. The primary raw materials for the structures build in the low lands were wood and timber which was effectively used to follow a framed pattern for building the superstructure. This reduced the magnitude of load coming over to the loose soil. The midland regions with laterite grounds had the more load-bearing capacity and therefore the construction of the superstructure was made with laterite. In most cases, the buildings in the Lowlands were single-storeyed whereas those in the Highlands were made with multiple levels owing to the strength of the soil.

As the raw materials used for building purposes were normally readily available, the need for transportation of raw materials from relatively nearby areas for the purpose was not a significant issue. The plethora of extensive water bodies crisscrossing Kerala might have made it advantageous for the transportation of raw materials to a great extend. In case of requirement, the timber from the Highland and stone from the Midland areas were transported to the lowlands through these vast number of water bodies that served as a major freight transport medium.

The expenditure in case of the transportation of the raw materials from distant regions in case of unavailability was a great concern and limitation for the church building. An interesting account of the construction of the new church at Erattupetta or Aruvithura, where the uninsurable expenditure for the transportation of stone for building the church had put the people in trouble, is mentioned by Gouvea⁴⁶.

Laterite or *vettukallu* was the major raw material used for foundations and basements in the ancient buildings. Although granite was not a popular raw material for constructing the foundations, it was sometimes used for the purpose. It was also used to build superstructures in more elaborate and palatial buildings. The compound walls of the churches were mostly made with laterite. The use of bricks was not popular in the region until the advent of the Portuguese and the other colonial powers.

Unlike the presence of rock-cut structural temples⁴⁷ in Kerala, the rock-cut churches are never found. The rock-cut temples of Kerala had an existence before 800CE. Many

⁴⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 442.

⁴⁷ Some examples of the rock cut temples in Kerala are Kaviyoor Thrikkakudy Cave Temple(Pathanamtitta), Madavoorpara Rock Cut Temple(Thiruvaathapuram),Kottukkal Thrikovil Cave Temple (Kollam), Trikkur Mahadeva Temple(Thrissur) etc.. Almost all the above temples dates between 7th century to 9th century.

historians believe that these had Buddhist and Jain origins before they were converted into Hindu places of worship. This happened after the 8th century CE, wherein the revivalism of Hinduism occurred in the region. Even the earliest Buddhist and Jain *viharas* were made out of rocks. The Phase of rock-cut construction ends with the Pallavas. The absence of rock-cut churches is interesting. The probable cause for such a scenario would be the Thomas Christian aversion to rocks on account of its association with idolatry.

The lack of durability of the raw materials used for the construction of the earliest churches had resulted in the absence of surviving models to the present day to facilitate a comparative study and analysis. The earliest churches in Malabar might have been built by using wood and mud. The availability of wood in the area and its versatility to work with made wood as a primary option for the earliest church builders⁴⁸. Also, the wood had the advantage of hassle-free transportation through the inland waterways from one point to another. Most commonly, teak was used as the preferred form of wood for the construction of the churches (and also other buildings) due to its abundance, durability, and stability. The existence of some wooden churches during the period of the Portuguese can be found from the accounts of the Jesuits pre and post Diamper period. Traditions amongst the local people of Palayur has it that the original church located there was built with teakwood. The claim is corroborated with the activities of the Jesuit priest Fr. Fenecio, who built a stone church around the teakwood church of Palayur due to the popular outrage from the people on the fear of consequences in case of the demolition of the old wooden church⁴⁹. Even today teak is favored and used extensively as a good building material in the region.

Bamboos were also known to have been used for the construction of churches in the highlands. Although this is not a popular choice these days, nor are there any known surviving models of churches built with these, there are references to its use as a raw material in the highlands for construction. The Church at Aruvithura or Erattupetta was

⁴⁸ James Fergusson in his book the *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, points out certain merits of using wood over other perishable materials in construction despite its non durability. The ancient Christians might have definitely had the knowledge to work on wood over stone. For a detailed reading on the above see James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1910), 51-52.

⁴⁹ Pierre Du Jarric, "Petri Iarrici Tholosani Societ Jesu Thesaurus Rerum Indicarum", 50-51 as quoted by L W Brown, *Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 204. Also see. Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 142.

initially constructed using bamboos in the model of the temples of the region. However, the church was later rebuilt in a superior style using stone and lime to ensure sturdiness⁵⁰.

Granite was also an important material for the construction of churches of Kerala during the pre-Portuguese times. The use of granite for laying the foundation of the churches continued from the earliest times until they were sometimes replaced by laterite stones from the 11th and 12th centuries. Although it was not exclusively used for making the superstructure of the churches, the foundations of the churches were built by using granite. Besides, the open-air crosses in front of the churches were built using granite. Exceptionally the *Padippura* of the churches at Kanjur and Chenganoor⁵¹ are built with the granite stones that were readily available in the region.

The use of laterite stones in building churches and residential buildings started gaining popularity by the 12th century and continued to be in vogue until mud bricks replaced them by the 21st century. Laterite stones were readily available in the Malabar region due to geographical; particularity and were preferred in building the walls of the churches and other buildings. Also, they were preferred due to their higher durability in comparison with wood. Similar to the Hindu temples along the Malabar Coast, the walls of the churches built after the 9th century were of laterite stone. The thickness of the walls varied from around 1m to 2.5meters. The main concern for building thicker walls may be for safety and stability. The laterite stones were bonded to each other by using a paste prepared by mixing the clayey soil of the region.

The roofs of the earliest churches might have been made of palm leaves. Palm leaves were knitted in an intrinsic style before they were placed on bamboo poles. However, the Christians were allowed to thatch their roofs in the later years⁵².

The floors of the earliest churches may have been plastered with cow-dung in the popular practice that was prevalent in Malabar until recently. Cowdung is considered holy and is said to have antimicrobial properties that make it an ideal choice for plastering the

⁵⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 441-442.

⁵¹ Chenganoor has the ready availability of granite. The Pandavan para, located close to the town is a well known tourist attraction.

⁵² Z N Paret, "Thomas Christian Copper Plates", *Thomapedia* (Ollur:2000), 135-137.

interiors⁵³. Gradually tiles or *tharayodus* began to replace the practice of plastering with cow dung, especially after the Portuguese arrival.

The doors of the ancient churches were made of wood and fixed to the inner wall of the church on either a wooden frame (*kattila*) or a granite frame. The main doors were larger as compared to the lateral doors having decorations with carvings. These doors were fixed on the frame or the *kattila* with the aid of two cylindrical projections(one each at the top and the bottom respectively) that were on the sides of the shutters. These projections were inserted into holes on the frame that were carved as per the measurement of the cylindrical projections to ensure the right fitting. In most cases, the doors had double shutters in a similar style prevalent in Malabar. The doors also had plates and nails made of brass that not only served as a device for joining the wooden planks but also added to the ornamentation. There were *tazhus* or simple latches to lock the door from outside too. The two shutter doors had *sakshas* that were used to lock the doors from inside. Besides, the main door of the church had an additional method of locking from inside wherein a long wooden rod was drawn from one end of the wall to the other end horizontally across the door(figure). The rod was pushed inside a hole that ran through the wall to open the door⁵⁴. This technique accentuated the security of the door and made it less susceptible to attacks from enemies or wild animals.

The churches followed the normal building techniques that were in vogue in the region of Malabar until the Portuguese reformulations. The old compound wall is built in such a way that the wall rises in a convex shape from the base and becomes a concave surface at the top. This particular building technique was incorporated to protect the church and its precincts from the attack of elephants.

5.4.0. Characteristic Features of the Pre Portuguese churches

The pre-Portuguese Christian churches had elements and features that were considerably different from their contemporary European counterpart. While the European churches had the evolution of various styles in its making and floor plan, the Thomas Christian church plans remained consistent across the time until the Portuguese brought in the European elements. The churches before the European encounter had features that were

⁵³ Traditionally, cow dung was diluted in water or cow's urine into a semi liquid paste and was applied to the floors of the interiors and was allowed to dry.

⁵⁴ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 144.

similar to the ‘Hindu’ temples of the period and therefore had exhibited features similar to the indigenous styles of architecture. The church premises had features such as the *Padippura*, *Kottupura*, *Ayudhapura*, *Oottupura*, *Kalvilakku*, *Deepasthambhams*, stone crosses, or *kalkurishu* etc. The interiors of the church on the other hand were kept minimal with little or no decorations other than a Cross.

The following sections will deal with the features in detail.

5.4.1. The Church and its Premises

The Compound Wall or Aanamathil

The church structure at the time of the Portuguese arrival was a building located within fortified high fences that surrounded the compound. Even today parts of high walls exist in some churches as in the case of the Old Syrian Church or the *Pazhaya Suriyani Palli* at Chenganoor, Kaloopara Church, Kottayam *Cheriyapalli*, Arthat Church, etc. These compound walls or *Aanamathils*, translated as elephant fences served two functions, it divided the sacred space from the profane space thus creating a luminal space, in addition to acting as a protection against the attack of the enemies or wild animals. Such walls, therefore, served a spiritual as well as practical function. The height of the compound wall varied between 2 -3 meters. The compound wall of the Kaloopara church was 2 meters and the compound wall at the Kottayam *Cheriyapalli* is around 2.5 meters. The compound walls had granite stone lamps attached to them which were lighted with oil until the use of electricity became vogue. The *Padippura* or the gatehouse opens to the church compound. The *Padippuras* were elaborate structures generally with two stories as in the case of the Chenganoor Old Syrian Church, Kundara Church, and the Arthat Church⁵⁵. It had a massive door with engravings and reliefs that opened to the church premises. The central door of the *Padippura* divided the ground level of the structure into two sections. The structure not only served as the gatehouse but also as a storage space for storing the valuables of the church. In some cases, the priest resided in one of the rooms of the *Padippura* as separate vicarage or parsonage was not build in the churches. These structures were mostly made of laterite with stairs and railing build with wood. The *Padippura* of the Old Syrian Church at Chengannur is

⁵⁵ However the *Padippura* at the Thavalakkaraa church is single storeyed

mostly built of granite with its columns and basements having the best stonework⁵⁶. The granite basement has the figures of ‘Hindu’ Gods Hanuman and Subrahmaniya carved in relief along with the carvings of animals such as crocodiles, fish, etc. The wooden door of the *Padippura* is decorated with carvings of flowers leaves and animals. In some cases, the doors had protruding *muttus* or projections that were designed to prevent the attack from the elephants as observed in the Chenganoor church. The exact period from which the *Padippuras* became an essential component of the church building cannot be precisely provided although it can be assumed to be between the 10th or 12th centuries CE following the use of stone as a building material in the region. Whatever may be, *Padippuras* or gateways were in popularity when the Portuguese had encountered the Thomas Christians.

Flight of Steps

In most cases, there were flights of steps that led to the church owing to its location at the highest point. The steps were either made of laterite or granite and measured in breadth between 50ft to 120ft⁵⁷. In the case of the church at Kadamattom, the existing compound wall is located midway through the flight of steps as the steps continue to escalate beyond the compound wall up a landing near the porch of the church. A different scenario can be found at the Chenganoor church that does not have a flight of steps after the *Padippura*. However, it should be assumed that there might have been a flight of steps before, or the church itself might have been on a little mount before modern roads took over the area. It should be seen clearly that the stone cross located near the church is separated from the *Padippura* by a road that runs close by. The road may have been a later construct. In addition to giving access to the church building, these steps added grandeur and intensity to the churches⁵⁸. Some of the churches that have flights of steps are the ones at Mylcombu, Kuruvilangad, etc. The preferences of locating the churches at the highest point in the village explain the necessity of the flight of steps to access the church from the ground level.

The churches also contained other elements that were shared features of the temples such as the flagstaffs or *Kodimaram*, *Vilakkumaram*, or lampstand. The church compounds also housed huge *Kalkurishus* or stone crosses as mentioned earlier. Except for the *kalkurishu*

⁵⁶ The use of granite for building the *Padippura* may be because of the extensive availability of granite in the region.

⁵⁷ Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 141.

⁵⁸ Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 141.

or the Open-air granite Cross, all these features were commonly found in the surroundings of the ‘Hindu’ temples of the Kerala region⁵⁹. These shared architectural and spatial consciousness are pieces of evidence of the assimilation and cultural syncretism of the faith to the host milieu.

‘Deepasthambhams’ or the Lampstands

Deepasthambhams are long granite pillars with plate-like rings that have wick holders placed all around. These granite pillars are usually circular in cross-section with the circular plate-like projections occurring around the granite pillar at a regular distance continuing to the top. These projections may either remain in a uniform dimension or may become of less circumference towards the top. The number of plate-like projections is kept as an odd count varying between 5 and 11 as odd numbers are considered auspicious⁶⁰. These *stambhams* were lit with *deepams* or lamps by the devotees with the aid of oil or ghee. The oil is poured into the plate-like projections and wicks or *thiris* are used to light them. These *deepasthambhams* usually have a square base with an average height of 30 cm having little carvings and ornamentation. The average height of the entire *deepasthambham* ranged between 2 meters to 5 meters. Interestingly the *deepasthambhams* are an integral part of the temples as lighting the lamp forms an important aspect of the ‘Hindu’ worship till today. The *deepasthambhams* at the Chenganoor old Syrian church is a classic example of the kind with a height of around 2.5 meters and 10 tiers. The base of the *stambhams* is decorated with carvings. Similar *deepasthambhams* are seen in the churches at Niranam, Changanachery, Kundara, and Kalloppara.

Kodimarams or Dwajasthambhams

The *kodimarams* or the flagstaffs were present in the Christian churches as were they present in the Hindu temples of the region. These staffs were originally made of teakwood and thus the term *kodimaram* (*Kodi* in Malayalam means flag and *maram* in Malayalam means wood)⁶¹. Later, these structures were cast in copper or brass and were used to hoist flags during important ceremonies such as the church feasts or festivals. The tradition is in

⁵⁹ Soundara Rajan, *Temple Architecture of Kerala*, 5-6.

⁶⁰ The *deepasthambham* at Niranam however has 8 tiers.

⁶¹ Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 140.

practice even today as the flags are hoisted by the church priest at least 8 days before the church festival. The height of these structures varies approximately between 30 to 40 feet (10-15 meters) making it visible from a great distance⁶². The *Kodimarams* usually have a stone base that sets the entire structure to the ground. Inverted lotus motifs or normal lotus motifs are usually found at the base. *Kodimarams* that are enclosed with copper sheets is seen in front of the Chenganacherry and Chambakulam churches while the one made solely with wood is seen at the Parur church. However these days some flagstaffs are made of various raw materials like copper, steel, and sometimes PVC. The appearance and design of the staff differ slightly with the material of its construction. As the feature was present in both Hindu temples as well as the Christian churches, the presence of a cross on the top of the staff was added to create the difference⁶³. While the staffs with wood are made out of a single log without much carvings and decorations, the ones made with copper are designed with ring-like projections (*vendayams*) at regular equidistant intervals adding to its aesthetic value. Unlike the *Kodimarams* of the Hindu temples that are placed in front of the temple structures, the *kodimarams* of the churches are usually positioned in line with the *Padippura* irrespective of the position of the main door to the church.

The Open Air Crosses or Nasrani Sthambhams

The most interesting and outstanding piece of the church architecture in Kerala is the huge free-standing stone crosses erected in front of the church building. These open-air crosses are termed as *Nasrani Sthambhams*⁶⁴ and are mostly monolithic. Jornada also supports the uniqueness of these crosses by stating that they ‘are not found in any other part of India, and much less in Europe’⁶⁵. These crosses were built with granite and had engravings on them. It may be assumed that these open-air granite crosses served as an ‘identity marker’ that differentiated the church building from the similar constructs nearby. The presence of a cross in front of the ancient churches is relevant considering the similarity in the appearance of both the temple and the church. Generally, such crosses are situated towards the Western side of the church. *Jornada* mentions finding these huge crosses with a base that is not

⁶² The great height of these flagstaffs needs to be understood with respect to the presence of considerably thick vegetation of the region having coconut and arcanut trees growing to almost the same height.

⁶³ Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 140.

⁶⁴ George Menachery has coined the term *Nasrani Sthambhams* for the open air crosses that were present in front of the Thomas Christian churches.

⁶⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 188.

decorated along the roads as well. It is also understood that these Crosses had a huge impact on non-Christians too as they venerated and submitted their offerings at the Cross⁶⁶.

It is not clear from exactly which point of time such crosses were adopted by these Christians, however, the scholars attribute the 10th century as the period of their adoption. Various theories are postulated by scholars on the origin and evolution of these edifices. There are striking similarities between the style of the *balikkallu* of the 'Hindu' temples and these open-air crosses. Identifies the similarities between the *balikkallu* and the open-air crosses⁶⁷. The base of both structures appears to have common features. The *balikkallus* are mostly erected in front of the temples in open, ranging in height from around 40cms-3meteres. These are square-based structures with each side having sculptures of various designs. During festivals, offerings are placed on top of the *ballikallu* by the priests as well as the devotees⁶⁸.

In broader terms, the entire structure can be described as a large cross fixed on a circular platform that is locked on a square base. To be more precise, the whole structure of an open-air Cross can be divided into two parts, the sub-structure or the decorated base and the superstructure or the cross. The average height of these open-air structures including the decorative base varied between 8m-10m. The sub-structure is comprised of a pedestal made of three basic geometric shapes; a square base, a hexagonal mid portion, and a hemispherical structure that supports the main cross. In some crosses, there are provisions at the base to hold wicks for lighting, wherein lamps are lit throughout the night. The superstructure that consists of the cross was longer than the sub-structure. The shafts of the cross are usually modest with hardly any obvious ornamentation or relief works.

The open-air cross at Chenganoor has projections on all sides of the base and cavities on the platform to hold lamps. Projections are also found on the shaft of the cross to facilitate lamp holding thereby serving the purpose of a *kalvilakku* too. Interestingly the ends of the arms of the cross have a spearhead shape. The granite cross at Chenganachery *Valyapalli* might be one of the oldest of such crosses found in Malabar. The carvings of peacocks along

⁶⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 187.

⁶⁷ Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally", 287.

⁶⁸ William A Noble, "The Architecture and Organization of Kerala Style Hindu Temples", *Anthropos* Bd 76, H 1/2, (1981) :7-8.

with angels are present all over the base of the granite cross⁶⁹. Peacock has always found representation in the culture of India, especially that of Southern India. According to P Thankappan Nair, the Dravidians adored and worshipped the peacocks as Mother Earth from ancient times and carries several legends narrating the origin of the peacock⁷⁰. Peacocks not only enjoyed an unrivaled position in Indian iconography but also fired the imagination of several artists across space and time⁷¹. Peacock is considered as the vehicle of Subrahmanya, who is devoted as a principal deity in South India. Moreover, as the flesh of the peacocks is never decayed they are considered as symbols of immortality and resurrection⁷². The abundance of motifs and icons representing the indigenous culture and beliefs reflects the degree of cultural syncretism achieved by Thomas Christians. Carvings on the base of the cross at Chenganoor have the depiction of hunting scenes and motifs of animals such as deer. Such Ancient crosses are found in churches of Mattom, Udayamperoor, Kayamkulam, Mavelikkara, Chungam, etc. Most of these open-air crosses predate the arrival of the Portuguese although the cross at Kadathururthy church is supposed to have been build in the last decade of the 16th century and blessed by Menezes⁷³.

Kottupuras or Vadyapuras

The *Kottupuras* or the music houses were specific spaces meant for the playing of musical instruments during church feasts and festivals as well as for the storage of the instruments. These *Kottupuras* were positioned close to the *Padippura* within the church premises but detached from the main church building. This may be because of the influence of caste prejudices that were common among the society in the Malabar region, as the players of such instruments were usually from the lower castes of the 'Hindu' Malabar society who

⁶⁹ James Menachery brings out some interesting notes on the presence of peacock carvings at the base. He points out two possible reasons for this. Firstly the importance given to peacocks in the Indian culture and 'hindu' mythology is stressed. Secondly he associates the legend of the death pertaining to Thomas the Apostle to the presence of peacocks. According to one legend in circulation amongst the Thomas Christians, Apostle Thomas was mistaken by a hunter for a peacock and was arrowed. Read Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 139. However the presence of the carvings of female peacocks might lead in arriving at different conclusions.

⁷⁰ P Thankappan Nair, "The Peacock Cult in Asia", *Asian Folklore Studies*, 33, no 2(1974), 94.

⁷¹ For a detailed reading on the adoption and depiction of peacocks in various sculptures and coins from India, see, Nair, "Peacock Cult", 118-127.

⁷² Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, "Problem of St. Thomas Crosses", 290.

⁷³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 194.

were not permitted into the main church building. *Kottupuras* are seen in the churches at Palai, Kuruvilangad, Ramapuram, and Arthat. Although *Kottupura* was not an indispensable part of the churches, many ancient churches had them in their premises at the time of the Portuguese arrival but only a few of them survived to the date.

Ayudhapura

Ayudhapura or arms house was another important feature of the pre-Portuguese churches. These were the places where the Thomas Christians kept their arms when they entered the church interiors as carrying of arms into the church interiors were considered ungrateful during the worship. It should be noted that the Thomas Christians were known for their skill as great and efficient warriors whose help was often sought by the local rulers during the time of wars and feuds. It is not clear if there existed a separate building to store the arms in all churches as the Jornada notes that these Christians used the front porch or the *Mukhamandapam* for storing the arms which they carried everywhere they went other than inside the churches.

Oottupura

Oottupura or dining house is another feature that was present in some of the old Christian churches. Such *Ootupuras* were relatively large halls where common meals were served to the devotees during the church feasts and other important days such as Good Friday. The possibilities of having these structures within the churches cannot be completely given away owing to the practice of conducting common meals among the Malabar society. However, it is not certain if these structures were existing from a very early period as most of the specimens that exist today appear as recent constructions. Besides, in most cases, such *Ootupuuuras* are seen in churches that are considered as pilgrim centers like the Arthat Church and Ollur Church(built-in the18th century).

‘Pallikulams’ and Wells

The presence of a water source such as a well or a pond (*pallikulam*) on the premises was another significant feature of the Thomas Christian churches. This was similar to the presence of the *ambalakulam* or the temple ponds in the ‘Hindu’ temple premises that were meant for ritual bathings. In most cases, wells are positioned in the northeastern corner of the church within its compound. However, exceptions to the case were found at the Kaloopara church where the well is positioned towards the southeastern corner of the church compound.

Ponds could be seen in the churches of Palayur, Kokkamangalam, etc. Although most old churches are located near water bodies, the presence of ponds within the church premises needs introspection. The most accepted explanation is the possibility of these churches being 'Hindu' temples of worship which were converted into churches following the conversion of the local 'Hindu' community. However, the researcher assumes that sources of water were preferred within the church premises in case of the relative distance of the place from the nearest water body or in cases where the church was close to the seas. Considering the importance given by the Thomas Christians to cleanliness before entering the churches, it is likely that such ponds served the purpose. Decree XIII of Session VIII, notes the Thomas Christian observation of ablutions to the extent of considering them superstitious⁷⁴. The Synod of Diamper Besides, it should be noted that ponds are seen in those churches that are located close to the sea coast. The seawater being salty may not have been preferred by the then Christians for their ritual bathings justifying the assumptions of the researcher. It is also possible that these ponds were used for performing baptism or for ritualistic bathings as was done by the local upper caste 'Hindus'.

Aalthara

The presence of *Aal* (banyan tree) and *Aalthara* (a platform surrounding the tree) were considered to be normal in front of some of the Thomas Christian churches⁷⁵. This was in similarity to the presence of the *Aal* in front of the Hindu temples which continues to be an indispensable component in the temple premises even today. However, the presence of *Aal* in front of the churches should not be associated with the prevalence of nature worship observed among the Hindu community but rather as a privilege bestowed upon the Thomas Christians by the rulers of the lands⁷⁶. Menachery identifies the presence of *aal* at Pudukkad church near Enamavu⁷⁷. Nevertheless, the researcher was unable to find the existence of such *Aaltharas* or *aals* in any of the churches under consideration. The researcher is of the assumption that either the *aal* never gained significance as a 'privilege' like the *Padippuras* or the processions .or may have been cut down long back due to its explicit link to the nature worship of the region following the regulations of the Synod. Furthermore, the researcher thinks that the gradual delinking of the Thomas Christians from the indigenous cultural spaces in the post-

⁷⁴ Zacharia, *Synoid of Diamper*, 188.

⁷⁵ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 141.

⁷⁶ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 141.

⁷⁷ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 141.

European contact epoch might have been the driving force behind the disappearance of the specimen with ‘Hindu’ connections.

Additional Accessory Buildings

Olivieri mentions the presence of certain accessory structures within the church compounds such as the *Vedipura* or the house of fireworks as seen in Muttuchira, *Yogasalas* as well as *Nadakasals*⁷⁸. Although the researcher was able to identify *Vedipuras* still existing in some ancient churches, the researcher wasn’t able to locate *Nadakasalas* and *Yogasalas* predating the Portuguese through the course of the field study. The structures might have either been demolished or discarded over time.

Burial Practices

The Christians followed the practice of burying their dead unlike the practice of cremation prevalent among the indigenous people. The burial practices of the Thomas Christians before the Portuguese and the evidence on the presence of cemeteries within the church premises could not be concluded due to the paucity of evidence on the same. The Thomas Christians did not have the practice of leaving a tombstone near the graves like in Europe in the pre-Portuguese times. Having a burial place within the Church premises may have been considered as inauspicious although they tended to bury their Bishops within the church itself. It should be assumed that the Thomas Christians mostly buried their dead within the premises of their houses in profane lands as inferred from the Diamper Decrees⁷⁹. Therefore the presence of cemeteries in the pre-Portuguese times is most unlikely.

5.4.2. The Church Building

A typical pre-Portuguese Kerala Christian church hardly looked like its present counterparts. It lacked a façade in the European fashion and instead had an open porch or *Mukhamandapam* similar to that of the indigenous temples. As mentioned in the earlier part of the current Chapter, the church and its accessory buildings were constructed according to the principles of *Vastusatra* as was the general practice of the region. From outside, the churches appeared to have three varying elevation levels, with a low roof of the *Mukhamandapam*, a higher roof of the *Hykala*, and the towering roof of the *Madbaha*.

⁷⁸ Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, “The Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”, 287.

⁷⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 197-198.

Besides, a cross was present on top of the church as inferred from the narratives of Joseph, the Indian⁸⁰. This particular cross was on the top of the pyramidal roof of the *Madbaha*. This cross was an indispensable part of the Thomas Christian churches of the pre-Portuguese times as they attributed a unique existence to the building amidst other traditional buildings with similar architectural features. The roofs of the churches were sloping in response to the demands of the climatic conditions of the region. Initially, during the ancient times up to the Portuguese, the roofs were thatched with palm leaves and later with mud tiles. The walls of these churches were built of laterite and were sometimes plastered with lime mortar following the Portuguese influence. In some cases, the laterite was kept exposed without plastering. The laterite walls had a thickness ranging from about one meter to 3 meters. The interaction with the local people at Udayamperoor disclosed interesting details about the construction pattern of the church. According to them, the walls were constructed in two layers of laterite with sand filled in the hollow space between which was filled with sand.

The absence of bells in the churches is noted by Joseph the Indian, who voyaged in Cabral's ship. These churches do not have any bells and they use Greek rites for worship⁸¹. If at all the bell was absent, drums might have been used to provide announcements to the people irrespective of them being secular or sacred. Synod of Diamper decrees mentions the use of boards to summon people instead of bells⁸². However, an inscription provided on the bell at Mylcombu predates the Portuguese to the 7th century. Nevertheless, the scholars are yet to come to a consensus on the antiquity of the bell as the script of the inscription is different from that of the traditional scripts that were in vogue during the period. Furthermore, the Synod of Diamper decree notes the deficiency of church bells in the Malabar region and if at all it was present were located within the church interiors. As the presence of bells in the Hindu temples are common in the region of Kerala, the scope of their presence in the churches before the Portuguese cannot be dismissed. However, a general survey of the churches that were built before the Synod suggests the absence of specific belfries or bell towers to hold the huge bells as in the European model.

Thazhikakudams

⁸⁰ "Account of Priest Joseph", 102.

⁸¹ "Account of Priest Joseph", 102.

⁸² Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 196.

Thazhikakudams or pitcher like structure was another important feature of some of the ancient Thomas Christian churches. Usually made of brass or bronze, these are mostly decorative devices. This was a feature that was seen in the ‘Hindu’ temples of the region. In the indigenous ‘Hindu’ temples, the *thazhikakkudams* are found surmounted over the roof of the sanctum or *srikovil*⁸³. The best example of a church with *Thazhikakudam* is the Mylkombu church

Mukhamandapam

A typical traditional Thomas Christian church plan has three constituent parts such as the *Mukhamandapam* or the porch, *Hykala* or the nave, and the *Madbaha*. The *Mukhamandapam* or the open porch provides access to the main church entrance. In most cases, churches had a total of three doors. The main door of a typical pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian church was located on the Western side of the building while the other two doors were located on the southern and northern lateral walls of the nave or the *Hykala*. The *Mukhamandapam* or the porch is an important element of the Thomas Christian churches though they were never indispensable elements and therefore are not sometimes present in all the churches. The *Mukhamandapam* is positioned in allegiance with the *Padippura* of the church and as mentioned before, the *Padippura* is positioned at the place that gave the building access to the road or the river irrespective of the orientation of the church building. Thus these porches were either located on the western side of the church, which usually had the main entrance, or at the northern lateral side, even though the main door of the church faced west. If the *Padippura* did not align to the main entrance of the church, as in the latter case, the *Mukhamandapams* were positioned both along the axis to the *Padippura* as well as to the main Western entrance. Therefore the *Mukhamandapam* was positioned at the side that opened to the *Padippura* or sometimes at two sides. The structure of the *Mukhamandapam* was similar to the *Mukhamandapams* of the ‘Hindu’ temples of Malabar. The structure stood on wooden or stone pillars, not enclosed by walls thus leaving it open. This structure was attached to the exterior wall of the *Hykala*.

There is no consensus between the scholars regarding the actual functionality of a *Mukhamandapam*. There are various explanations provided by scholars suggesting the

⁸³ Noble, "Architecture and Organization", 16

purpose of adapting the feature which is focused on religious, secular, and aesthetic values. Most of these explanations are based on the information derived from *Jornada*. The most prominent function that the *Mukhamanpadam* served was that of a place to leave the arms of the Thomas Christians before entering the church interiors in case of the absence of specific *Ayudhapuras* for the purpose. *Jornada* has mentions the space being used by Menezes as a space to retire, rest, and conduct talks with the people⁸⁴. The Synod of Diamper records provides certain interesting details regarding these porches other than them being used as a storage space for arms or a meeting place. The Synod recommends the use of these porches for the sick to lie and prohibits them from lying within the church⁸⁵. Sometimes the *Nerchas* were held at the porch of the church, as described by *Jornada* at Kadathuruthy church⁸⁶. P Thomas in his book, *The Churches of India*, refers to this element as *shala* and considers it as a space to accommodate additional worshippers and pilgrims especially during the time of church festivals⁸⁷.

The researcher was able to locate many churches that have surviving *Mukhamandapams*, some of them are Kadamattom, Chenganoor, Akaparambu, Kottayam *Cheriyapalli*, Kuruvilangad, etc. The churches at Chenganoor and Kalloopara have the *Mukhamandapam* facing towards the northern side in addition to the western side whereas the churches of Kadamattam, Akaparambu, and Kuruvilangad have their *Mukhamandapam* facing the western side.

The Entrance

The main entrance to the church building is positioned towards the western end of the structure so that the altar could be placed at the eastern end of the church facilitating the worship of the devotees towards the east. This could also orient the altar to face towards the direction of Jerusalem in the West. This choice of orientation was irrespective of the location of the *Padippura* of the Church. The main door that provided access to the *Hykala* of the church was built following the principles laid by the *Vastushastra*. The main door of the

⁸⁴ The *Jornada* has various mentions regarding the porch being used as a place of resting by the Bishop. He is said to have engaged in conversations at the porch of the church at Udayemperoore, see Gouvea, *Jornada*, 205. He is also mentioned to have undertaken discussions on matters relating to the upkeep of the church with the Thomas Christians at the porch of the church, see Gouvea, *Jornada*, 299.

⁸⁵ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 197.

⁸⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 196.

⁸⁷ Thomas, *Churches of India*, 13.

ancient churches that was positioned to the Western end of the building was known as *Aanavathil* or Elephant door in Malayalam, owing to its huge size. However, it is not clear if these doors were bigger than the lateral doors in the pre-Portuguese times although it is clear that the size of the main door gained scale following the Portuguese influence. These doors were generally made of teakwood which was in abundance in the Malabar region. The incidence of elaborate carvings and paintings is an exemplary feature of the doors that enhanced its grandeur⁸⁸. The two shutters of the main door of the church at Chenganoor have elaborate and beautiful carvings of flowers as well as birds in relief. Similar carvings of animals can also be seen on the main door of the church at Kothamangalam. The door openings of the churches were arch-shaped with the presence of a threshold space on the doors which was made of granite or wood. Joseph the Indian had already referred to Holy Water kept in the entrance of the church for the devotees to mark themselves before entering the church as well as after leaving from the church. The Diamper decrees mention the presence of holy water font at the entrance of the church thus cementing the claim of Joseph the Indian⁸⁹.

The Madbaha

The *Madbaha* was the most important part of the church as it was the holiest and sacred space. The particular space is known by several terms such as *kuds kudsheen* and *bes kudasho*, both words having Syriac origins meaning sacrifice. The *Madbaha* of a pre-Portuguese church was always built towards the eastern end of the church building. It had higher roofs than the *Hykala* that accentuated its sacrality. The exterior towering walls of the *Madbaha* sometimes had stucco images depicting hunting scenes, figures of peacocks, Persian crosses, etc. A survey of the existing churches reveals that the space of the *Madbaha* as relatively less wide than that of the *Hykala*. However, an exception to this case is found by the researcher at the Mattom *Kurishupalli*, which had similar dimensions for *Madbaha* and the *Hykala*. Also, as mentioned earlier, the *Madbaha* had a vaulted roof made of laterite that was higher than that of the *Hykala*. The Mattam *kurishupalli* however do not have a raised roof for its *Madbaha*. In all the cases the *Madbaha* of the church was separated from the *Hykala* by an arch. The *Madbaha* contained the altar table that was made of wood or

⁸⁸ For a detailed reading of the Church Architecture of the Thomas Christians and the art associated read, Pothen, *Syrian Christians*, 77-80.

⁸⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 190 Session VIII, Decree XVII.

stone. The altar table is known in Malabar as *thronose*, which is derived from a Greek word meaning table. In some churches such as the one at Chenganoor, a ciborium or a canopy over the altar is present. Besides, a veil similar to the iconostasis separates the *Madbaha* from the *Hykala* when the services are not conducted. During some important segments of the service, *Madbaha* is kept under the veil. It should be noted here that this tradition of veiling the *Madbaha* has its roots in the Old Testament, where it is read that the Temple of Solomon had a veil separating the inner sanctum of the Holy of the Holies and to which the entry was restricted except for the high priest once in every year. This is indeed a feature imbibed from the Eastern tradition. The Portuguese have mistaken this ciborium for the roof of the altar as it is stated in *Jornada* that the altars were so narrow and low, that scarcely was it possible to raise the most Holy Sacrament at the altar, which was just two palms in length and one and a half in breadth⁹⁰.

The altars are the most important part of the *Madbaha* as it was the place where the Eucharist was celebrated. The pre-Portuguese altars of the Thomas Christians were simple structures with little or no ornamentation. The appearance of the earliest altars of the Thomas Christians is difficult to reconstruct owing to the lack of resources referring to it. It is most likely that the Thomas Christians either had a stone or a wooden platform towards the eastern wall of the church that served the function of the altar during the initial years. However, the Synod of Diamper records a piece of information that was provided in the Book of Orders, that was condemned to be destroyed alters made of stone, suggesting that only altars of wood and not stone were to be consecrated⁹¹. Therefore it should be assumed that wood was the preferred material over stone for building the Thomas Christian altars at least by the time the Portuguese had found them. However, in Decree X of Session IV, which is found only in the Portuguese version of the Diamper record and not in the Malayalam version, there is a reference about the stone altars and the use of cups made of materials other than gold, silver copper or tin⁹². This may have been a purposeful inclusion by the Portuguese to link the Thomas Christians to their ‘unchristian practices’ and justify their actions of Latinization.

It is not clear what objects were placed or allowed to be placed on the altar or how the Eucharist was celebrated during the earliest days. The gradual percolation of the Persian

⁹⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 340

⁹¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 101.

⁹² Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 140.

elements especially the Persian Cross into the altars of the Thomas Christians might have started from the seventh or eighth centuries due to the influx of the Persian missionaries. The Portuguese in the early sixteenth century had noted the presence of a Persian Cross as the only decoration on the altar. This particular variant of the cross has unique features distinct from the Latin and the Greek Cross and are termed as St Thomas Cross or *Mar Thoma Sleeva*. The back wall of the altar might have remained plain with the absence of any paintings or stucco work which was also a major concern of the Portuguese. The presence of altar backdrop was not common in the Thomas Christian churches of pre-Portuguese origin. The backdrop or a *ruttal* belonging to the Ramapuram church is claimed to be pre-Portuguese, although the researcher has a contradictory opinion on the veracity of the claim. The specimen has a tabernacle at the center which is decorated all around with traditional Kerala motifs and decorative elements as seen in a Hindu temple. These typical styles of decorations are quoted by the claimers to justify the pre-Portuguese origin of the *ruttal*. The researcher assumes that the incidents of the profusion of Kerala style decorative patterns may have been a phenomenon that reigned for a period before the Portuguese styles of *ruttal* designs replaced them in the post Synod times. This practice of decoration, however, has lost its popularity among the Thomas Christians after the introduction of the European style backdrops. The altars belonging to the ancient churches of Chenganoor, Thumpamon, Alengad, and Kundara are made of wood and have the carvings of Persian Crosses, angels, creepers, floral designs, etc. However, the Thomas Christian churches were found by the Portuguese as having no ornamentation and decorations and the mention of the descriptions of these structures are absent to conclude. Besides, the altars that could be authentically considered predating the Portuguese have not survived to the present either. These limitations, therefore, provide the choice of assumptions that could be induced from the scanty mentions of the churches by the Portuguese.

Therefore it could be assumed that if at all there were carvings on the altar itself or the back wall, the human figures were absent on the altars belonging to the pre-Portuguese period.

The Hykala

The Hykala or the nave of the ancient churches were spacious than the *Madbaha* with wider dimensions than the *Madbaha*. It had two lateral doors in addition to the main entrance facilitating access to the interiors. These spaces were used for the assembly of the community

for prayers and rituals. Although these spaces were wider as compared to the *Madbaha* it was not as large as the naves of the churches of today. This could be explained based on the demographic distribution of the Thomas Christians during the period and the size of the community that was relatively smaller and sparsely distributed than that of today. Another space called the *Azhikkakam* or the *Kestroma* is present between the *Hykala* and the *Madbaha* which is separated from the *Hykala* by railings and raised in floor level by steps.

The pre-Portuguese churches and the churches until the Synod had little space, simple interiors, and low light. The interiors of the churches were very relatively dark due to the absence of windows that allowed natural light to pass in. From the survey of the churches, it is inferred that the windows that are present in the existing ancient churches of the Thomas Christians were added in the later periods especially after the Synod of Diamper. The researcher assumes the presence of *kilivathil* in place of the windows as the source of a subdued light within the church. The best example of a church where the windows were added is the Puthupalli church. It could be concluded that the only source of light that penetrated to the interiors of the churches was through the doors that were positioned in the Western end and the two lateral walls of the *Hykala*. However, during the church services, the doors were mostly kept closed which reduced the percolation of natural light to the interiors. To combat this issue, the churches had artificial sources of light such as oil lamps, either in the form of a *Nilavilakku* (standing lamp) or a *Thookkuvilakku* (hanging lamp) in the *Kestroma* area of the church, that ignited the *Kestroma* and *Madbaha*. The presence of an ever-burning lamp or a *kedavilakku* within the church interiors of ancient churches is suggested by some scholars.

Unlike the European churches, the Thomas Christian churches had hardly any decorations other than a simple cross (and not a crucifix). John de Marignoli had commented on the absence of paintings in the church at Columbum and how he decorated it⁹³. Joseph the Indian, who sailed to Rome in the ship of Cabral also testifies the absence of any other artifact in the church other than the cross. According to him, the churches were housed with a cross inside⁹⁴ and no other decorations. The Synod of Diamper also noted the iconoclastic

⁹³ Yule, *Cathy and Way Tither*, 216.

⁹⁴ "Account of Priest Joseph", 102.

perceptions of Thomas Christians considering images as idols as the main reason for excluding them from churches or households⁹⁵.

The following sections look into some of the components of the Thomas Christian church interiors during the pre-Portuguese period.

The Persian Cross or the Thomas Christian Cross

In addition to the granite open-air crosses or the *Nazraney Stambhams* of the Thomas Christians which graced the exterior of their churches, there were smaller crosses that adorned the interior of the Thomas Christian churches especially the altar. As mentioned earlier, these crosses show structural differences from the open-air crosses and had drastically different characteristics from that of the Latin and Greek Crosses that became predominant symbols of Christianity especially after the 17th & 18th centuries. These crosses had Persian origin and therefore were commonly known as the Persian Crosses. As these crosses signified the Thomas Christian identity in Malabar and were unique to them, they were also known as the Thomas Christian Crosses or the *Mar Thoma Sleeveas*. Predominantly, these crosses are seen on the altars of the Thomas Christian churches as the main and sole altarpiece although they are also found on the base of the open-air crosses as a decorative element. Most Portuguese records describe such a plain Cross which can be identified as the Persian Cross, although none of the descriptions describe the structure of these crosses.

At least seven such Persian crosses have been identified from the regions of the Thomas Christian presence spreading across the Malabar Coast, Coromandel Coast, and Sri Lanka. Five of such crosses are located in Kerala at places like Kottayam Knanaya *Valiyapalli* (were two Thomas Christian crosses, one larger than the other are located on either side of the sanctuary wall of the church), Kadamattom (St George Jacobite Church), Alengad (St Marys Church) and at Muttuchira (Holy Ghost Church). They appear different from the Latin Cross and the Crucifix that became popular after the Portuguese advent. The general period of the arrival of these crosses is ascribed to the seventh and the eighth centuries considering their antiquity with the smaller cross at Kottayam being believed to be the oldest. The period is ascribed by A C Burnell based on the language and the script of the inscriptions, which according to him “.....the characters and language are nearly those of the books, but are not by any means of the earliest period. If one may judge by the legends and

⁹⁵ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 104.

coins the dates of which are known, the earliest of these inscriptions may belong to the seventh or eighth centuries..”⁹⁶. Unlike the Latin Cross, the *Mar Thoma Sleevs* have almost equal arms⁹⁷ having floral or globular ends. Different from the open-air crosses that are free-standing, the Persian Crosses are carved in relief on rectangular granite slabs of about 1m x 0.75m x 0.50m in size. Most of the Persian Crosses have inscriptions in Pahlavi script that runs down the edges of these crosses as in the case of the crosses at Alangad, Kottayam Valiyapalli, Muttuchira, and Kadamattom. Various scholars have given different translations for these inscriptions thereby producing differential interpretations and a lack of consensus on their actual meaning of the text⁹⁸. The Persian Cross is an aesthetic gem with floral designs at the bottom of the cross adding to its beauty. The slab is bordered around with columns and a semi-circular arch that encircles the cross. From the top, a dove is depicted with its wings spread, which is about to touch the empty Cross⁹⁹.

Other than in Kerala, a similar Persian Cross is found at St Thomas Mount near Chennai, belonging to the same period thus further linking the Thomas Christians to the shrine at Mylapore¹⁰⁰. However, this element rarely entered the discourses on Apostle Thomas in Mylapore. A cross similar to the Persian Cross has been found from Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka although it lacked the Pahlavi inscription. A cross in the style of the Persian Cross has also been found from Goa bearing a Portuguese inscription thus bringing in the assumption that the Cross may have been an imitation of the Thomas Christian Crosses.

According to Fr Vazhuthanapalli, who has done a monumental work on the iconographical aspect of these Saint Thomas Crosses,” ...the St Thomas cross is a symbolic representation of the Christian faith. It is basically ecclesial (Church), theological (God the

⁹⁶ Arthur Coke Burnell, *On Some Pahlavi Inscriptions in South India* (Mangalore: Stolz Hirner, 1873), 313.

⁹⁷ The Thomas Christian Cross found in Mylapore has its vertical beam a little longer than the horizontal beam. Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, “Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”, 289.

⁹⁸ The major reasons for the disparity in the interpretations of the inscription is the lack of clarity of the script, especially when dealing with the author and the last verb. For further conscised reading and reference, see, Cereti, Oliveieri and Vazhuthanapally, “Problem of St Thomas Crosses”, 296.

⁹⁹ For a detailed reading on the particularities, motifs and iconography of the Thomas Christian Crosses or the Persian Cross, read, Burnell, *Some Pahlavi Inscriptions*, 308-316.

¹⁰⁰ For a comprehensive reading on the archaeological and epigraphical aspects of this cross, see, Cereti, Olivieri, and Vazhuthanapally, “Problems of St Thomas Crosses”, 293-302.

father), Christological(Jesus the son), and pneumatological(Holy Spirit the mother). It is biblical and trinitarian, presented in an appropriate cultural and artistic Indian frame..”¹⁰¹

Baptismal Vessels

The presence of fixed and permanent baptismal fonts or the *Mamoodeesatotti* in the pre-Portuguese churches is doubtful from the research conducted. This is on account of the reduced importance given to the practice of baptism despite the sacrament being the most important ritual that initiates a person to the Christian community. The main reason may be because the sacrament was usually performed under the auspicious of the Bishop who came to the Malabar region from Antioch. As there was no regularity in the visit of the Bishop, the sacrament was performed whenever he was on a visit. Another fact that points to its apparent absence are the prohibition of the use of temporary vessels for baptism and advice for the installation of permanent baptismal fonts in the Thomas Christian churches¹⁰². However, the presence of fixed granite baptismal fonts with the absence of the European influence and the copiousness of Indian and Persian elements speculates their existence to the pre-Portuguese times or maybe at least to the pre Synod period. The European imagery and motifs were generally absent on these structures supporting their pre-Portuguese existence. However considering the irregularity of the sacrament and the presence of natural water bodies, the relevance of a fixed baptismal font was never a requisite in the churches. Besides as inferred from the primary sources, temporary vessels might have been used by the Thomas Christians to conduct the ceremony within the churches, in case of necessity. Baptismal fonts having the least foreign expressions are seen in the churches of Mattom, Chungam, Kanjur, Edapally, Kadathuruty, Kadamattom, Chenganoor, and Mayilkombu.

Nevertheless, the presence of baptismal fonts with largely Indian and Persian motifs may point to the assumption that these structures might have been in existence at least in some churches before the Portuguese arrival(maybe due to early Latin missions of the 13th and 14th centuries) or might have gained gradual popularity from the beginning of the 16th century after the interactions of the Thomas Christians with the Portuguese.

The lack of space and the relatively low height of the old churches were a particular concern for the Portuguese. Gouvea notes about the lack of space and height of the

¹⁰¹ Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, "Problem of St Thomas Crosses", 293.

¹⁰² Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, Session IV, Decree XIX, 120.

Udayamperoor (Diamper) church with concern.’. The lack of natural light inside the church, especially in the *Madbaha* area was due to the absence of windows.

Cepo

Jornada mentions the presence of a springe or a *cepo* that was present in all the churches into which the charity funds were thrown by the Christians. These *cepos* were situated near the main chapel buried underground and closed so well that officials were required to be called to open them¹⁰³. Another mention about the presence of a *cepo* at Kadathuruthy St Mays church is mentioned in Jornada, which when open by the local ruler for the greed of its immense alms, had to suffer divine visions threatening him to return the alms money to the church to be spared of his life¹⁰⁴

5.4.3. A Brief Note on the other Particularities of the Pre Portuguese Thomas Christian Church

The churches also contained beams that were supported by brackets in the shape of animal heads. The beams not only gave support to the roof of the church but also had artistic reliefs. The beam of the ancient church at Kundara is an outstanding example of the one with the carving of Goddess Kali on one side and Mary, the mother of Jesus on the other. There is a popular legend in the area that considers Goddess Kali and Virgin Mary as sisters. The animal-headed brackets that supported the beams are present at old churches at Arthas, Kundara nad Mayilkombu. Columns were not a common feature of the Thomas Christian churches that were built before the 9th century. However, there are some columns present in churches like Kanjoor and Chenganoor that were made of granite. The column at Chenganoor has carvings of creepers Adam and Eve etc.

An arch always separated the *Madbaha* from the *Hykala*. The presence of a true arch or the Roman arch became popular amongst them after the Portuguese arrival. Moreover, Indian architecture did not have a true arch until the Turkish entry. It was the architrave or the *Uttaram* that served the purpose of arches in the pre-Portuguese churches. Such architraves are present at the Aruvithura Church, Kayamkulam church, etc.

¹⁰³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 299.

Notes that these *cepos* were never opened by the Christians and sometimes remained so for 80 years or more.

¹⁰⁴ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 435.

The churches of the Thomas Christians before the Portuguese lacked furniture of any kind. Even after the Portuguese arrival and influence, the church interiors remained mostly unfurnished without benches or kneelers as late as the late 20th century after which some benches were introduced to the church interiors. This can be attributed to the relative absence of furniture of any kind such as chairs and tables in the region before the Portuguese contact, It should be heeded that the Malayalam words that are used to denote these items of furniture have Portuguese origins too¹⁰⁵.

The poor boxes were present in all the churches where the alms received were deposited by the people¹⁰⁶. However, the position of the box within the church is not known. Whatever church plates and sacred vessels that the churches had were kept on the altar as the practice of having vestries were not common¹⁰⁷.

It is not evident if small chapels in the model of present-day *Kurishupallis* were among the Thomas Christians in the pre-Portuguese period. However, the presence of small churches with reduced dimensions in Mattom, Kunnankulam, etc provides leads to the possibility of the existence of such churches. It is evident that the term *capella* used to describe the small chapels or *Kurishupallis* of today have Portuguese origins, signifying their introduction to the post Portuguese period .

5.5.0. An Analysis of the Traditional Practices of the Thomas Christians and their Reflections in the Characteristic Features of the Churches

Every element of the church and its premises had social, political, economic as well as functional specificities in addition to the religious and liturgical functionalities they possess. While some of the elements served the nonreligious functions, some of them performed both, and some others purely catered to religious affairs. The researcher had identified major factors that might have possibly structured and justified the presence of certain elements in the church building in particular(although it applies to every other religious building during the 15th century). The factors comprised of the natural conditions such as the climate and rainfall pattern, as well as social and religious elements such as the caste system, the concept of purity, religious, and ritualistic relevance.

¹⁰⁵ Malayalam words for table , chair and benches,;commonly used furnitures of today are all derived from Portuguese..*Kasera*(chair) from *cadeira*, *Mesa*(table) from *mesa* ,*kadrinja*(stool) from *cadeirinha* etc.

¹⁰⁶ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 194.

¹⁰⁷ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 195.

Even though the Thomas Christians had looked upon consciously or unconsciously the model of the earlier Jain temples that inspired the later Hindu temples as a reference to construct their buildings, they might have included only such features that fulfilled their core religious principles and served their purpose of worship. Unlike today where the architectural styles are blindly imitated without evaluating the actual significance of its inclusion, the architecture of the region was more functional than aesthetics. The following discussion will look into the possible functions that were served by the various elements of the church structure considering the social, political, climatic, and religious milieu of the period. This analysis might provide answers on why certain features of the pre-Portuguese churches continued to reflect in the Thomas Christian churches and why some old features were given away for new features after the Portuguese intervention.

The compound walls are an indispensable part of all the churches even today irrespective of their denominations. Unlike the European churches, where compound walls were absent, the Kerala churches followed the practice of constructing compound walls for their churches from ancient times. The compound walls served three major functions, it acted as a fortification against the attack of wild animals or enemies and preserved the church and its properties. Secondly, the social structure of the period, which was dictated and determined by the caste system, demanded the construction of such walls to 'secure' from the 'reach of unprivileged castes. The Kerala society till recently was strictly bound to the ties of the caste system that upheld the 'ideal' of purity. While the higher castes were considered pure, the lower caste people were considered impure and sometimes untouchable. The entry to the Hindu temples was allowed to the *Nambootiris* who were the highest of the caste and the lower castes were completely forbidden to do so. Even the approach roads to the temples were inaccessible to the lower caste people who were forced to worship in temples exclusively assigned to them. The churches, like any other religious building of the land, were considered as a sacred place that authorized access to the 'pure'. The Thomas Christians who perceived themselves to be on par with the *Nambootiris* of the land might have considered the inclusion of the compound wall as imperative to defend their social dignity and status. On a spiritual note, the compound walls of the church delineated the church building and its premises from the profane and mundane environments and served as a demarcation that excluded the profane spaces from the encompassed sacred space within the compound wall.

The *Padippuras* or gateways that facilitated entrance to the premises of a building were also a common feature seen both in the vernacular as well as the temple architecture of the Kerala region. This feature was an important aspect of the churches of the Thomas Christians too. The inclusion of *Padippura* into the architectural style of the Thomas Christians is a direct reflection of their elated position in the society of the period. It is understood that the right to construct *Padippuras* is provided only to the communities of higher status. The grand was bestowed to the Thomas Christians by the Tarisapalli Copper Plate. The *Padippuras* or the gatehouse delivered structural and aesthetic functions. It not only facilitated entrance to the church premises but also added to the overall grandeur of the church. The researcher had encountered various explanations for the inclusion of this element in the church architectural model. One such explanation given by a parish priest of a church in the Alappuzha district was that the ‘Hindu’ style employed in the construction of the *Padippura* was as a token of gratitude in return for the support extended by the local *Raja* for the construction of the church. The researcher was able to find mentions of comparable claims asserted as a traditional explanation by various church authorities in the article by James Menachery¹⁰⁸. Considering the inferences obtained through the field investigation, the researcher finds these explanations not only incredulous but also contrived by the church authorities to provide an alternative legacy to the Thomas Christian community that is aloof from whatever is indigenous and ‘Hindu’. The researcher understands the *Padippuras* as a storage space for grains and sometimes a residential quarters besides functioning as a gateway.

The choice of the location and orientation of the churches was also influenced by a variety of concepts. The indigenous ‘Hindu’ temples of Kerala were positioned within a rectangular plot encompassed by a compound wall. The churches of Kerala also followed a similar positioning of the church. However, while the temples were oriented facing the East so that the deity placed in the sanctum sanctorum faced the East, the *Madbaha* of the churches were placed at the Eastern wall facing the West. The possible explanations for such a choice of orientation have already been dealt with in the earlier section of the current Chapter.

The presence of wells or ponds within the church compounds or adjacent to the compound can be compared to the presence of such sacred ponds within the temple premises.

¹⁰⁸ Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 142-143.

As the concept of ‘purity’ was considered important during the period, entering the religious building with a clean body was a custom in the region. Furthermore, the social structure during the period was bounded under the strict rules of caste, which forbade any social interaction between the upper and the lower caste people, and ‘purity’ meant purity in the sense of non-interaction with the lower caste people too. Therefore it was essential to take a bath before entering the church. The Thomas Christians, although did not fall into the rigid structure of caste, were considered on par with the Brahmins of the lands and were given privileges akin. The significance of water as a cleansing and purifying agent is accepted and recognized. Hence the water bodies facilitated the ritualistic as well as the functional washing before entering the religious buildings. The Thomas Christians adopted many practices of the *Nambootiris* such as bathing multiple times a day, wearing footwear, etc, all markers of elevated standards of cleanliness.

Although the churches at the time of the Portuguese arrival had a similar plan to that of the ‘Hindu’ temple, the term used to denote the building in the vernacular language differed. The churches were called *pallis* which in turn was the term used to denote the Buddhist and Jain temples in the region. The use of the term *palli* to the Christian churches maybe because of the functional similarities of both the buildings. The old Jain *pallis* of the region had an assembly hall analogous to the *Hykala* of the church, a sacred place or the cellar that can be compared to the *Hykala* of the church, and a porch or *Mandapam* similar to the *Mukhamandapam* of the churches. Sunil Edward in his thesis has argued that the model of the traditional Jain temples had influenced the earliest plans of the Thomas Christian churches. A comparative study of the original plan of the Thiruvithamcode church and that of a traditional Jain temple was conducted by Edward to arrive at this conclusion¹⁰⁹. As Jainism declined and their temples were taken over by the emerging Brahminical factions, the plan became ‘Hindu’ and its ‘Jain’ roots were pushed to oblivion. The researcher agrees with Edward's opinion that the plan of the church might have been identified more to the Jain temple if the religion and its specimens were in vogue today. However, it should be noted that the Portuguese who had arrived in the Malabar shores had never identified the churches to the temples of any religions specifically, but has identified them to the temples of the infidels, gentiles, or the idol worshippers. Also, William Logan in the 19th century has observed the similarities between the religious architecture of the ‘Hindus’, Muslims, and

¹⁰⁹ For a detailed reading refer to, Edward, “Study of Indegenous Church Architecture”, 264-268.

Christians to the Jain temples¹¹⁰. Therefore, it is not explicitly said that the Thomas Christian churches looked like the ‘Hindu’ temples. Yet because Jainism had become less popular in Kerala by the time of the Portuguese, it can be concluded that the ‘pagodas’ mentioned by the Portuguese belong to the ‘Hindus’ of the region.

The church building as a whole was conceived as a sacred space and the celebration of the Eucharist was perceived as mystical. Therefore the whole church was planned and designed in a way that induced curiosity, spirituality, and fear amongst the devotees. This mystical ambiance was achieved by withholding windows to the *Hykala* and *Madbaha* and limiting the infiltration of natural light within the church interiors. Besides, the practice of drawing the curtains after the Eucharist and during certain important portions of the ceremony accentuates and intensifies the feeling of awe and mystery. The high vaulted roof of the *Madbaha* focussed the line of sight of the devotees towards the sky that symbolized heaven. The constricted space to the *Madbaha* was also a unique feature that enhanced the element of transcendence of the congregation. The increased height for the *Madbaha* roof was also adopted to emphasize the altar space of the church. The Thomas Christians had adopted this feature from the earlier models of Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu temples and had conceived it as a feature that could be incorporated owing to the spiritual prominence it delivered. Besides, an elevated appearance for the *Madbaha* clearly defined the importance of the space when perceived from the exterior. The space between the inner vault over the *Madbaha* and the actual conical or sloping high roof of the *Madbaha* was kept unused in most cases owing to the sacred character of the space beneath it. However Jornada notes of the host being drawn down to the altar table through a hole on the roof of the vault, which hints at the possible utilization of the in-between space as a space to make hosts.

The *Mukhamandapam* or the front porch of the church although was an integral portion of the church architecture in Kerala was never considered a mandatory element. The feature was an important element of the temple architecture of the region and the inclusion of the element in the church plan may have been due to the regional influence. Despite the aesthetic value, it added to the overall structure of the church, the actual purpose for the inclusion of the element is still debated. Jornada identifies it as a place where the Thomas Christians left their arms before entering the churches. The researcher assumes that the element might have served other functions too. It might have been incorporated as an

¹¹⁰ Logan, *Malabar Manuel*, 185-186.

additional space for assembling for religious or secular activities. For instance, *yogams* or *pallliyogams* that are meant to discuss the affairs of the church and its overall functioning are still conducted in the porches of the churches. The prospect of it serving as a waiting space for unbaptized Christians during certain portions of the mass cannot be disregarded. This opinion was suggested by Sunil Edward in his thesis too¹¹¹. However, there is no conclusive evidence to completely cement the suggestion. The researcher, therefore, is doubtful regarding the actual reason for the inclusion of the element of *Mukhamandapam* despite having an agreement with the hypothesis of Edward. Yet the presence of two *Mukhamandapams* in some churches such as Chenganoor challenges the argument as *Mukhamandapams* are present in the northern lateral side facing the *Padippura* as well as at the Western main entrance of the church. If at all the inclusion of the *Mukhamandapam* was for waiting purposes, it wouldn't have been positioned on both sides, especially for the churches that had its main entrance and *Padippuras* nonaligned. Also, if the purpose of the *Mukhamandapam* was to protect the Western front wall of the church, its inclusion in the lateral walls facing the *Padippura* was superfluous. Therefore considering the location of the *Mukhamandapam* as in line with the *Padippura*, the researcher assumes it served as a transition space between the sacred and the profane, that prepared the Thomas Christians before entering the churches. A space to leave their personal belongings that signifies the profane before entering the sacred and mysterious church interior.

The inclusion of the accessory elements into the church structure had also significant functions to implement in their regard. The *Kodimarams* were installed in front of the churches to hoist flags during the church festivals or the *thirunal*. The flags on the *Kodimarams* announced the impending church festival especially for people who traveled long distances. The flag hoisting ceremony or the *kodiyettam* preceding about 8 days before the church festival is an important event amongst the Thomas Christians even today as it officially proclaims the commencement of the feast of the saints to whom the church is dedicated.

The adoption and adaptation of the open-air *sthambhams* into the architectural style of the Thomas Christians may be an outcome of either a direct foreign influence or the result of indigenous architectural styles in popularity. James Menachery brings compares these granite crosses and the obelisks erected in front of the Egyptian temples linking the foreign

¹¹¹ Edward, "Study of Indigenous Church Architecture", 289.

connection. In his opinion both the obelisks as well as the granite crosses served a similar purpose and function; as a landmark, to signify the presence of a shrine nearby. The trade relations maintained with Egypt by the Thomas Christians is suggested as a possible cause and justification for the argument¹¹². Another opinion amongst some scholars supporting foreign influences is the possible introduction of these crosses by the Persian missionaries who arrived from the 8th century. These scholars adhere to this opinion by tracing the introduction of the Persian Crosses to the period and the presence of these Persian crosses that could be found in the Malabar region. The indigenous influence in adopting the *sthambhams* is based on assumptions from the available monolithic *sthambhams* belonging to various creeds within the Indian subcontinent. Menachery considers the possibility of these open-air crosses being a manifestation of the *sthambhas* popular in India. The inclusion of the element of the *stambhams* can be considered as being a marker of differentiation, a landmark, or as a structure to bear inscriptions. James Menachery identifies *stambhams* as monolithic structures that have manifested themselves into various forms following the various creeds. According to him, the monolithic inscription pillars of the Buddhists, the *deepasthambhams* of the Jains, the statue bearing structures of the Vaishnavites, and the flagstaffs of the Saivites were all manifestations of the monolithic idea of the *sthambhams*¹¹³, thus making the *sthambhams* an unavoidable part of the Indian architecture. George Menachery identifies the *Nasrani Sthambhams* as “a direct descendant of the obelisk”¹¹⁴. He considers it as more congruent with the obelisks than any other Indian pillars “in shape, construction, transportation, erection, function, and solar symbolism”¹¹⁵. The Thomas Christians having coexisted with all the major creeds and shared a common macro cultural realm, might have imbibed the practice into their architectural style. However, rather than blindly reproducing the indigenous patterns the Thomas Christians had produced their variant of the *stambhams* in the form of open-air crosses, which are popularly known by the term *Nazrani Stambhams*. The Thomas Christians however utilized the practice of the *sthambham* culture by structuring it in the form of a cross, which was the sign of their faith. Another possibility that the author assumes is the organic origin of these open-air crosses. The possibility considers the evolution of these open-air crosses to be an outcome of the Thomas Christian aesthetics. Although this postulate cannot be considered completely viable due to the known existence

¹¹² Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 139.

¹¹³ James Menacher, , “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 139.

¹¹⁴ George Menachery, *Facets of India's Christian legacy*, Chapter 2, Kindle

¹¹⁵ Menachery, *Facets of India's Christian Legacy*, chap. 2.

of various forms of *sthambhams* in India especially amongst the Jains and the Buddhists who comprised a considerable population of Malabar in the early centuries of the Common Era. Besides, the Hellenic influence cannot be disregarded as Mauryan pillars and Hellenic influence is an area that is well worked. The researcher thinks that although the introduction of the *sthambhams* to the Thomas Christian fold could be possible from Egypt or Persia owing to the strong trading networks that were maintained in these regions, it is most logical to assume the influence of the indigenous factors in the construction of these *sthambhams*.

George Menachery understands the initiative for the preservation of fire as the major reason for the presence of cavities to hold wicks at the base of the cross¹¹⁶. He also identifies the observations of oil *nerchas* and oil *araas* as well as wall rock lamps on the compound wall of the churches as a measure to preserve the fire

An important practice of the Thomas Christians that has survived the onslaughts of the Portuguese intervention is the *Thirunaal Pradakshinam* or the procession on the feast day. This ceremony was conducted during the annual festival of the church when relics of the saint of the church are taken out for procession around the church premises accompanied by decorated umbrellas or *Muttukudas* and musical instruments. In most cases, the *pradakshinam* is either conducted around the open-air cross or the church building as well. This ceremony shares similarities with the practice of *pradakshinam* around the *chuttambalams* of the Hindu temples¹¹⁷. In most probability, in the post Synod times, statues of the saints replaced the procession that was usually performed with the relics such as *Ambu*¹¹⁸ (arrow) or *Vala* (bangle) following their introduction after the Synod. It should therefore be assumed that the open-air crosses were the central point around which this ritual was conducted and therefore implies its significance as an important element.

5.6.0. Dedication

Dedication of a church to a particular saint and honoring the feast of that saint annually was an important practice among the Thomas Christians. The practice continues to be observed among the community with great reverence and celebration. Considering the Thomas Christian relation to the Church of the East, their churches were dedicated to the

¹¹⁶ Menachery, *Facets of India's Christian legacy*, chap. 2.

¹¹⁷ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 141.

¹¹⁸ *Ambu* or arrow is the relic associated with the veneration of Saint Sebastin, where as *Vala* or bangles are associated with the veneration of Mary, Mother of Jesus and other female saints.

saints of Eastern Christianity. The decrees of Synod of Diamper mention the dedication of a large number of churches to ‘Marxoboro and Mar Phrod ‘ who were Nestorian missionary saints from Babylon¹¹⁹. Similar information is mentioned in Jornada that there were some churches dedicated to *gade jagal* (Kandisangal as were the above saints were popularly known) who were considered as saints by the Church of Babylon¹²⁰.

An analysis of some of the pre-Portuguese church names in the light of evidence obtained from the primary sources, it can be deduced that most of the Churches of the Thomas Christians before the Portuguese arrival were dedicated to Virgin Mary, Mar Saphor and Mar Phrod, Apostle Thomas, Holy Spirit (*Ruha*), Mar Kuriakos, etc. The church of Udayamperoor or Diamper was dedicated to Mar Saphor and Mar Phrod¹²¹. Jornada notes of churches having been dedicated to the Virgin Mary at Mulanthuruthy¹²², Kayamkulam¹²³, and many other places. Similarly, churches at Aruvithura and Kothamangalam were also dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The church at Palayur which is currently dedicated to Apostle Thomas was dedicated to Mar Quriaquas¹²⁴

In addition to dedicating the churches to various saints, the Thomas Christians also had the practice of honoring feasts of the saints belonging to Eastern Christianity. Jornada provides a list of ‘Nestorian saints’ who were venerated and revered by the Thomas Christians that included Nestorios, Diodorus, Barchauma, Theodorus, Narsai Hixoiu. Lixo and many more¹²⁵

5.7.0. Builders of the Church

It is evident from the above discussion that the church building activity amongst the Thomas Christians in the pre-Portuguese times was on a normal pace with the churches being build in areas along with their habitation expansion. As Thomas Christians adhered to the economic activities of agriculture and commerce, expanding their inhabitation to new unused lands was inevitable. This explains the Thomas Christian migration to the interior regions of

¹¹⁹ Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, 194.

¹²⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 22.

¹²¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 302.

¹²² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 156.

¹²³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 153.

¹²⁴ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VI, 85.

¹²⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 94-95.

Malabar and the subsequent establishment of churches in their vicinity. Although permissions were required to be obtained from the local rulers before building the churches, there existed hardly any restrictions on building their churches in the areas of their habitation owing to the excellence and esteem of the Thomas Christians as traders and agriculturists. The local rulers were enthusiastic about granting permissions for their settlement and building of their churches. There is information regarding some churches that were built on lands donated by the local rulers and the high caste people. The church of Kanjur is supposed to have been built on the land donated by a *Nambootiri* Brahmin belonging to the *Murriyas Mana* at the request of a Maharaja of Cochin¹²⁶. The church at Edapally was built in the 6th century CE on the lands donated by the king of Edapally¹²⁷. The reasons for the rulers in instigating land donations in favor of the community may be their commercial and military expertise, which were an inexplicable factor for the sustenance of the kingdom. K Rama Pisharotti also mentions a possible political reason for the land donations to the Kanjur church. According to the author the step was taken to ensure and keep in check the rising power of the *Aghor Nambootiris* by ensuring the presence of a strong Christian community to counter the *Aghor Nambootiris*¹²⁸.

In addition to donating lands for the Thomas Christian settlement and their churches, the churches were also endowed with lands for their upkeep and functioning by the local rulers. Some of such churches that were provided with land endowments are those at Pala, Kuruvilangad, and Kadathuruthy¹²⁹. However, it should be noted that the patronage was provided to the Thomas Christians and not to the religion of Christianity as in the case of Europe..No ruler or kingdom had adopted Christianity as a state religion¹³⁰ despite having immense respect for its followers and none had given royal patronage for churches in the region¹³¹.

¹²⁶ Rama Pisharotti, "The Cochin State Archaeological Reports on Kerala Christians", in *Thomapedia*, ed.George Menachery, 153.

¹²⁷ Kurien Matten and Mathew Alummootil,"Edapally", *Thomapedia*,ed.George Menachery (Ollur:2001) , 203

¹²⁸ Pisharotti, "Cochin State",153.

¹²⁹ L K Ananthakrishna Aiyer, *Social Anthropology of Syrian Christians* (Ernakulam:Cochin Government Press),176.

¹³⁰ Also see for references to Villarvattom Raja., Gouvea, *Jornada*,22.

¹³¹ Athapally," Kerala Church Architecture", 151.

Specific examination and evaluation of the various copper plates that were issued to the Thomas Christians would shed further light on the argument. In the 9th century CE, Ayyan Adikal, a chieftain under King Sthanu Ravi, had issued a total of three Copper Plates out of which two plates are connected to the Thomas Christians. Despite the divergences in opinion regarding the date of issue of the copper plates, their relevance as invaluable source material is accepted unanimously by the historians owing to the list of grants and privileges ascribed to it¹³². These Copper Plates, also known as the Tarisapalli Copper Plate or the Syrian Christian Copper Plate, the king not only granted a place to build a church in Kollam but also provided members belonging to various castes such as Ilava, Vellala, a caste of carpenters, etc for the maintenance and upkeep of the church and its premises. Additionally, the ‘church’ was made the custodian of weights, Kappan or seals as well as the steelyards which were possessed by the king until then. The ‘church’ was given the right for judicial trials of their people and also was provided with protection¹³³. However, it is not explicit if the grants and privileges were solely bestowed on the ‘church’ and its authorities or the community of Thomas Christians associated with the particular church alone. Yet considering the elements of commerce and trade such as taxes, weight, seals, etc that are mentioned in the grants it is probable that the privileges were given to the mercantile community of Thomas Christians to whom the church was meant for.

It is evident from the plates that the grants and privileges given to the Thomas Christians not only authorized them to administer their community but also entitled them to engage in the governance and administration of the areas under the suzerainty of the king along with the officials of the king. Unlike the case in Europe, the Thomas Christians had better freedom to practice their religion in Malabar from the earliest times. However, there are certain cases from the post Diamper period where the Christians were not allowed to use the church bells as they created disturbances for the temple deity¹³⁴. Although this can be true to those churches that were very near to the ‘Hindu’ temples and might have been a situation that came up following the Portuguese instruction for keeping the belfry in the post Diamper era.

¹³² For a brief reading on the various dates put forth by historians, refer to the foot note 3, in, Mathew, “St Thomas Christians”, 55.

¹³³ K S Mathew, “St Thomas Christians”, 57-58.

¹³⁴ Aiyar, *Social Anthropology*, 150.

5.8.0. Functions of the church

The church acted as a meeting point and as a cultural space where the sacred world met the profane. The churches not only played as the epicenter of the religious life of the Christians but also played a key role in the everyday life of the Christians. The location of the church in the highest point of the church made it the most ideal place for shelter during the time of natural calamities like floods. Besides, the high compound walls of the churches acted as a natural siege that acted as a fort during the time of war. Gouvea notes of finding high walls around the church at Mangate(Alengad) that saved the people for nearly two years during their war with the kingdom of Parur¹³⁵. The compound wall also protected the church from the attack of animals. The wall also demarcated the sacred space from the profane space.

From Decree XXXI of Session VIII. It can be inferred that there was an existing practice among the Thomas Christian community in bringing the sick and ill people to the church and housing them there. It could be assumed that such a practice was common among the community in virtue of their belief in a miraculous cure for their ailment or a blessing for their soul to attain eternal life. A similar suggestion is put forth by P Thomas in his work describing the churches and their functionality in the pre-Portuguese period¹³⁶.

5.9.0. Remarks on the Thomas Christian Architecture and Iconography

The Thomas Christian art, architecture, and iconography until the 16th century was a concoction of Indian and West Asian elements with varying unfathomable proportions. It is an onerous task to differentiate and deduce the varying levels of such influences as the entire process was an outcome of the cumulative effect of various forces; historical, religious, and cultural. Although it can be assumed that the corpus of Syriac theology posed to be the fundamental source of the Thomas Christian iconography owing to their organic association with the Church of the East, their contiguity with the Indian culture and cultural realms has marked considerable influence on their aesthetic consciousness.

The inclusion of animals into the iconography of Thomas Christians is frequently attributed to the larger impact of the ‘Hindu’ cultural, spiritual, and mythological traditions over the Thomas Christians. However, the theological aspect is not given ample importance.

¹³⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 137.

¹³⁶ Thomas, *Churches of India*, 8.

Olivieri has done a commendable analysis of the theological aspect of the various artistic elements included in their article,;’ *The Problem of Thomas Christian Crosses*’.

Peacock finds favor in Thomas Christian art on a great scale. The peacock is considered as the symbol of immortality and resurrection. The legends associated with the martyrdom of Apostle Thomas has references to the person apparating to a peacock. The significance of the peacock as a motif has been already discussed elsewhere in the chapter.

Similarly, multiple instances of depictions of elephants can be found in the surviving ancient Thomas Christian art and architecture. The researcher assumes both religious as well as geographical particularities as the reasons behind the adoption. There are multiple references to elephants in the Old Testament where elephants are symbolized for valor and strength¹³⁷. Olivieri points to the Jewish Christian tradition of considering elephants as the symbols of baptism owing to them giving birth in water¹³⁸. In Indian traditions, elephants are considered a sacred animal and find innumerable references in mythology. Ganapathi is depicted as a God with the face of an elephant.

Lions are also found depicted in the Thomas Christian iconography. With grandeur and might, lions are often attributed to a semi-divine character¹³⁹. The lion is the symbol of the tribe of Judah who was the only tribe to survive and emerge as a stable nation. Indian mythology reveres the lion as the vehicle of Durga and Narasimha, a half lion half man avatar of Vishnu is celebrated as the destroyer of evil.

The arches that are proficient in the Thomas Christian art and architecture have architectural and spiritual relevances. Arches in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions symbolize magnificence and grace. In Paleo Christian traditions arches symbolize glorification of Jesus and Christianity. It is most likely that these arches might have become prevalent in the Christian art and iconography after the 7th century as similar use of arches can be seen in the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple and Kailasnath temple at Kanchipuram which were build in the 7th century CE¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁷ 1 Mac 6,37

¹³⁸ Cereti,Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally,” Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”, 291.

¹³⁹ Cereti,Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally,” Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”,291.

¹⁴⁰ Cereti,Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally,” Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”,290.

Steps are an important element in the Thomas Christian iconography. As discussed earlier in the Chapter, most ancient churches have steps leading to them. Besides, steps are leading to the *Madbaha* not only giving it an elevated look but also giving theological meanings. In Christian iconography, steps lead to the mount of Golgotha where Jesus sacrificed his life for saving mankind¹⁴¹. The *Madbaha* is the place where the sacrifice of Jesus is celebrated by the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore the inclusion of steps to *Madbaha* has spiritual significance. Steps are also represented in the Saint Thomas Crosses as well.

Lotus flower finds representation in the Thomas Christian iconography. The baptismal fonts are designed in the form of the Lotus. There is the depiction of lotus in the Thomas Christian Crosses too as these flowers form the throne for the Cross. In Hindu mythology, most gods are depicted as sitting on a lotus flower. Statues of Buddha are also represented similarly.

To summarize, it can be inferred from the above points that the Thomas Christian church architecture before the Portuguese arrival had the elements of Kerala style of architecture that was, in turn, a product of the social-cultural and climatic conditions of the land. As James Menachery has stated it is a ‘living entity’¹⁴², having survived the crusts and troughs in its 2000 years of existence.

The typical Kerala church of the pre-Portuguese times was built on a simple model. They followed the traditions and techniques that were known to them as well as those that were feasible with the climate and topography of the land. Even after a hundred years of Portuguese existence in Kerala, no considerable influence on the church architecture was brought under them, until certain rules were imposed following the Synod of Diamper.. Gouvea who wrote in 1599CE notes that Gouvea in his book *Jornada* describes the old churches of Kerala built in the “style of the temples of the gentiles”¹⁴³.

The chapter argues the presence of a well-defined conception of church architecture that was prevalent among the Thomas Christians in the pre-Portuguese period. There does not exist any churches that preserve the unadulterated form of architecture today, which is a

¹⁴¹ Cereti, Olivieri and Vazhuthanapally, “Problem of St. Thomas Crosses”, 292.

¹⁴² Menachery, “Thomas Christian Architecture”, 137.

¹⁴³ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 29.

derivative outcome of the community's association and interaction with the patterns established by European Christianity

CHAPTER SIX

THE PORTUGUESE LATINIZATION DRIVE AND CHANGING CHURCH STRUCTURE

The chapter discusses the impact of the Portuguese Latinization drive on the Thomas Christian church buildings of Kerala. An attempt to analyze the varying degrees of departures from the original indigenous style of architecture focusing on the addition of alien elements and omission of indigenous elements post the Synod of Diamper will be carried out. A further impact of the Thomas Christian contact with the Roman Church that redefined their attitude towards their practices and its influence and reflection on their architecture is studied in brief. The Chapter will also look into whether the Thomas Christian architecture had survived the Western infiltration, as well as an analysis of the translation of features into the Latin rite, will be endeavored. The core aim of the Chapter is to identify and locate the foreign element and features that has blended with the original church structure and its precincts.

6.1.0. Studies on the Portuguese Impact on the Churches of the Thomas Christians

It is practically an industrious task to analyze the various levels of Portuguese impact on the churches of Thomas Christians today. The major reason for the issue is the multiplicity of denominations and factions within the community whose identities are sometimes as overlapping as their claims to pre-Portuguese existence. As discussed in Chapter One, the claims on these ancient churches by various factions having allegiance to different larger congregations of Christianity has further complicated the issues. Commendable work has been conducted in this regard by S Panjikaran and R Vedamuthu, who has analyzed the various changes based on an architectural perspective. The exclusive study of the spatial organization of churches post the Portuguese arrival by Panjikaran and Vedamuthu has found them belonging to two extremities, the ones belonging to the Catholic fold exhibiting western influences and the those belonging to the Orthodox section having the Eastern ecclesiastical traditions¹. They have classified the churches post the Portuguese arrival into three categories based on their spatial organization. The

¹ S Panjikaran and R Vedamuthu, “An Evaluation of the Spatial Organization of the Church Architecture of Kerala during the Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries”. *The Institution of Engineers* (May July 2013): 125.

first category is the indigenous churches having western influences in their internal embellishments but with little or no variation in the basic spatial organization. The second category of churches is those that have western influences in both the internal embellishments as well as in their spatial arrangements. The third category of churches exhibit clear departures from the indigenous church plans and are constructed for the newly converted Latin Catholics according to their ecclesiastical and ritualistic requirements². Panjikaran and Vedamuthu had represented the relative influence of the European architectural influence in a serial diagram showing the magnitude of the influence³. This diagram categorizes the churches according to the varying degrees of European Influence. The implications of the study is of immense relevance as it expresses the levels of the European influences on churches of Kerala.

6.2.0. Portuguese Perception of the Churches of Thomas Christians

As inferred from Chapter Five, it is evident that until their Portuguese encounter the Thomas Christian churches had an unadulterated and original architectural style that was unique to the community. The ‘non-European’ elements of the churches of Thomas Christians were looked upon by the Portuguese with contempt and labeled as ‘unchristian’ which caused them to devise conscious strategies to alter the architecture of these churches to fit into the ‘conventional style’ of church architecture. By ‘conventional style’ the Portuguese accepted and implied the European style of Christian art and architecture and not Byzantine style or any other Eastern architectural styles. The tendency to identify Christianity and its culture exclusively to the West or rather to Europe is due to the prominence of Islam in the West Asian regions which despite having been a hub for Eastern Christianity, had lost its pomp to the Islamic powers.

The Portuguese impressions of the architecture of the local buildings of Kerala are interesting to peruse. The visit of Vasco de Gama to a temple confusing the edifice for a Christian church belonging to the indigenous Christian population and his ensued veneration of *Bagvathi* for the Virgin Mary is a well-documented event. This incident described in *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco de Gama* could be the earliest known description of a religious edifice from the Portuguese perspective that could be considered as their first impression of such

² Panjikaran and Vedamuthu, “Evaluation of the Spatial Organization”, 125.

³ Panjikaran and Vedamuthu, “Evaluation of the Spatial Organization”, 125.

type in India⁴. Even though the Portuguese perception of the temple for a Christian church is acceptable in the light of their relative ignorance about the indigenous religious practices, it should be noted that there exists a great architectural affinity between the pre-Portuguese churches as well as the ‘indigenous temples’ as surmised in Chapter Five. It is hardly probable for Gama to find a Christian church at Calicut as the native Christians, or the Thomas Christians who during that period, confined their habitation up to and around the region of the present-day Chavakkad taluk. Besides, it is most unlikely that the Latin missions which had already been established in Quilon had a presence in the region resulting in the building of churches. Most importantly, the description itself has details about ‘Hindu’ gods. Whatever may be, the description of the edifice can be undoubtedly taken as the Portuguese impression of a religious edifice and reflects their understanding of the ‘non-European other’.

The description goes thus,

“When we arrived at Calecut, they took us to a large church, and this is what we saw:-The body of the church is as large as a monastery, all build of hewn stone and covered with tiles. At the main entrance rises a pillar of bronze as high as a mast, on top of which was perched a bird, apparently a cock. In addition to this, there was another pillar as high as a man, and very stout. In the center of the body of the church rose a chapel, all build of hewn stone with a bronze door sufficiently wide for a man to pass, and stone steps leading up to it. Within this sanctuary stood a small image they said represented Our Lady. Along the walls, by the main entrance hung seven small bells. In this church, the Captian –major said his prayers and we with him..... they(the priests qualifies as described) threw holy water over us and gave us some white earth.....Many other saints were painted on the walls of the church wearing crowns. They were painted variously with teeth protruding an inch from the mouth and four or five arms”⁵.Phillipus Baldeus's account which came up in the 17th century testifies to the incident⁶. The incident has caught the fancy of so many writers who were keen to document the early Christian adventures

⁴ Ravenstein , *Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama*,52. The authorship of the work is dubious. However most scholars consider Alvaro Velho who was a crew member and a soldier in the expedition as the author of the work. This account is infact the oldest known manuscript relating to Gama’s first expedition to India.

⁵ Ravenstein , *Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama*, 52-55.

⁶ Phillips Baldeaus, *A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East India Coasts of Malabar and Coromondal as also of the Isle of Ceylon* ,Vol III (1671), 627.

of Portuguese in India that the event has found a place in so many later secondary writings. *The Jesuits in Malabar* written in the 20th century reproduced the incident in the narrative too⁷.

It is conspicuous from the above description that the structure perceived as a church by the Portuguese was undoubtedly a temple belonging to the 'Hindu' community which is dedicated most probably to Vishnu⁸. Likewise, the structure represented has the presence of idols and paintings that were alien to the iconoclastic Thomas Christians. However, two features are mentioned in the description: the pillar at the entrance with a cock perched and the pillar which is about the height of a man corresponds to the *Kodimaram* and the *Deepasthambham* respectively. Interestingly, the above incident has always been accentuated to substantiate the similarity of the indigenous temple and church architecture. The misrepresentation has also been utilized as a validation to justify the 'ignorance' of Gama or in more specific terms, of the European Christians. However, it should be understood that Gama was not by any chance aware of the church structure of Malabar before his arrival nor had he visited any churches belonging to the Christians of the land before he visited the aforesaid 'church'. The estimation of the temple for a church was therefore an outcome of the Portuguese misjudgment out of ignorance. Hence, this incident, as well as the Portuguese perception of the Thomas Christian lifestyle, should not be considered as a determinant for establishing the 'Hindu' inclination of Thomas Christians, but rather should be appreciated as the uniqueness of the Thomas Christian community's close cultural ties with their native land and culture.

The culture, lifestyle, and rituals of the indigenous Christians of Kerala were unknown to the Portuguese although the knowledge of their presence was known. Therefore the Portuguese minds were conditioned with the doctrines of the Roman church to which they belonged. The Portuguese perception of the Thomas Christian churches is also reflected in the various works produced during their period. The *Jornada* throws light into the general perceptions of the Portuguese that remarks both the structure as well as its upkeep.

⁷ For the reading see, Ferrol D, *Jesuits in Malabar Vol 1* (Banglore: Bangalore Press.1939), 87-89.

⁸ The temple is attributed to Vishnu by Sanjay Subrahmanyam due to the presence of the image of Garuda, which is the vehicle of Vishnu. See ,Subrahmanyam, *Careeer and Legend*, 132.

6.2.1. The Portuguese Church Building Activity in Kerala

The first church to be built by the Portuguese in India was the St Francis Church at Fort Cochin in 1503⁹. The church was initially dedicated to St Bartholomeo. This church was originally made of wood, in pure European style ignoring the indigenous and conventional architectural form of Kerala. However, the wooden structure was later rebuilt under the Franciscan missionaries in stone around 1515CE and dedicated to St Antony. The church had an imposing front façade that was oriented in the North West direction unlike the traditional orientation to the East-West axis. Contrary to the traditional Kerala churches that insisted on a higher roof for the *Madbaha*, the St Francis Church had its *Madbaha* roof lower than its nave.

The Portuguese also build other churches in the region of Cochin which was their capital until 1530CE. The Santa Cuz Cathedral, St Bartholomew Church, St Pauls church, etc were some of the other churches built during the early period by the Portuguese. There are mentions of chapels being build within forts during the early Portuguese period. Francisco de Almeida had built a chapel within the St Angelo fort in Cannanore with materials brought from Europe. A Franciscan convent dedicated to St Antonio was also constructed in the place following the orders of King Manuel I around the same time¹⁰.

Considering the historical and religious milieu of the 16th and 17th centuries the Christian architecture in Kerala existed in two variations; the Portuguese foreign Model and the Thomas Christian Indigenous Model. Both the styles had distinct characteristics and features which echoed their respective congregational inclinations and historic evolutions. The Portuguese models of churches further existed in two distinct forms, the earlier models characterized by the tower over the narthex and the later model having the baroque facades. According to Varela Gomes, the earliest models of churches belonging to the ‘Tower over the Narthex’ model was the Santa Cruz (Holy Cross) church in Cochin dating to 1505CE¹¹. The church which was destroyed in the 17th century is considered older than the NS de Rosario church in Old Goa. The church finds illustrations in drawings of Philippus Baldeus dating to the 17th century¹². The Portuguese

⁹ Kerala Christian Sainthood, 6.

¹⁰ Ferroli, *Jesuits* ,Vol I, 96.

¹¹ Gomes, *Whitewash*, 27.

¹² Baldeus, *Malabar and Coromondal*, 632-633.

Models of churches were reproductions of the styles of art and architecture which they were familiar with and that reflected and recreated the images of their home country. Yet these models were never replicated in their 'purest form' owing to many factors that were impelling as well as inhibiting. While the availability of land was a factor that favored an increase in the scale of the church structures, limited accessibility to the perfect raw materials and the paucity of expertise labor in European craftsmanship crippled the Portuguese in reproducing the exact European models in Indian frames. The alteration in the plans of the Sao Domingos monastery that was sent from Lisbon, to suit the larger landscapes of India is significant. Helder Carita quotes an important statement from King Joa III's(1521-1557CE) Inspector of the Treasury that "this land is not made for small churches" concerning building small churches in relatively larger landscapes¹³.

The history of the construction of Portuguese churches in India is closely connected with the arrival and activities of various religious orders with the Franciscans inaugurating the trend from the beginning of the 16th century¹⁴. A new impetus in the church building activity in Kerala began with the coming of various Christian missionaries belonging to various orders like the Jesuits who were keen to establish edifices in their style. Pieces of literary evidence are throwing sufficient light on the role played by the Jesuits in building churches along the Malabar Coast, especially in rebuilding and renovating the existing churches. A letter written by the Jesuit priest James Fenicio, who stayed in the region between 1600CE-1607CE, points at certain interesting facts regarding the construction of a new church at Palayur. According to the letter "...The stone church which I began two years ago has risen to the height of the windows. At this stage no one would dare to pull down the old wooden building, fearing to be struck down by sudden death: It stood surrounded by the walls of the new erection, but later I have prayed and removed their

¹³ Amelia Aguiar Andrade, 'Novos Espacos Antigas estrategias:O Enquadramento dos Espacos Orientais', in the exhibition catalogue On Espacos do Imperio Estudos, Vol II CNCDP, Lisbon, 1998, 41 as quoted by Helder Carita, "Hindu Tradition and the Vastu Sastra in Indo Portuguese Architecture", in *The Portuguese and the Socio Cultural Change in India*, ed. K S Mathew, Tetonio R de Souza, Pius Malekandathil (Fundacio Oriente, 2001), 211

¹⁴ Carlos de Azevedo, "Churches of Goa", *Journal of the Society of the Architectural Historians*, 15, no 3 Portuguese Empire Issue (October 1956),: 3.

timidity, the old structure was pulled down and the new building stood out in such fine proportion that the Hindus, the Muhammadans, and the Jews flocked to see it”¹⁵.

The *Jornada* notes of many churches built by the Franciscan Friars (Religion of Serafic St Francis), especially by Frei Vincente, who came along with the first Bishop of Goa (who took the office)¹⁶ Dom Joao de Albuquerque and lived in Cranganore. He is said to have to build many churches in the Portuguese style, as all the churches of the Thomas Christians built in the styles of the gentiles¹⁷.

Local church histories describing the historical evolution of the church building as well as the church community had aided in linking the role played by the early Portuguese missionaries in introducing new styles of the church building into the Malabar landscapes. Antony Manjali, who has written about the history of the Putenchira church in 16th *Shatabdi Smaranika*, notes the introduction of Gothic style by Frei Vincente de Lagos in many churches.¹⁸. A clear distinction between the architectural styles of the churches built by the Portuguese as well as the Thomas Christians is defined here. A considerable departure from the ‘gentile style’ may be the mark of deciding the difference in their appearance.

The Diamper Decrees provide passing references on rebuilding the churches, which were either dilapidated or completely ruined. Decree VI of Session VIII instructs on the rebuilding of the church at Travancore¹⁹ which was demolished. It is not clear if the aforesaid description is implied to the church at Thiruvithamkode, which was one of the churches founded by Thomas the Apostle. The Decree mentions obtaining an *olla* or license from the King of Travancore permitting for the endeavor. Nevertheless, there are no further details to estimate the structure or proposed plan of the new church. Also, there is information in *Jornada* that points at the laying of the foundation stone at Kuruvilangad for “a new church which the Christians decided to build

¹⁵ Ramanatha Ayyar, *Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol VI* (Trivandrum: Government Press), 85.

¹⁶ The first person to get appointed as the Bishop of Goa was Francsico de Melo in 1533CE, however he was unable to take charge in the capacity as he died in Portugal in 1526CE before he could depart to Goa. Hence the first Bishop to take in charge of the office in Goa was Dom Joao de Albuquerque

¹⁷ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 29.

¹⁸ Antony Manjali, *16th Shadabdi Smaranika St Marys Forona Palli Puthenchira* (Puthenchura: 1990)

¹⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 182-183.

after the Synod, as the old one was very dark and in the old style”²⁰.The church mentioned here is the church at (Caratnara) Ramapuram in the land of Kadanadu²¹. It can be inferred from the above snippet of information that the ‘old style’ mentioned here is the traditional style of Thomas Christian architecture which was built with a minimal interception of light and ventilation. The ‘new church’ would therefore reflect a style that was similar to the Portuguese style of the church building.

The Portuguese had introduced various styles of European art and architecture to India. The most prominent styles that can be easily identified are the Manueline, Gothic and Baroque styles. Despite its small period of popularity, the Manueline style has found representations in the Portuguese architectural styles in India too. Only a very few specimens of Manueline architecture survive in India., one being the doorway of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Goa and the other at the Church of Our Lady of Hope Vypin near Kochi.

Interestingly the style of church architecture that became popular in Kerala had a difference in the style of architecture that became popular in Goa. Carita assumes the case as the outcome of local Syrian Christian influences as well as an outcome of the predominately Hindu nature of Kerala in contrast to the Islamic influences to which Goa and other northern garrisons fell to²².

In addition to introducing various European models of architectural plans to the Indian subcontinent, the Portuguese had also emphasized the standardization of regulations for the construction of both sacred and secular buildings. The Portuguese particularity in laying down specific norms and rules for the construction of various buildings is dealt with exclusively by Helder Carita. The aversion of the Portuguese towards the traditional building raw materials of the land due to its association with the ‘Hindu’ architectural traditions persuaded them to opt for

²⁰ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 437.

²¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 438.

²² Helder Carita, “Residences Schools”,230-231.

better alternatives²³. However, it is not clear how the Thomas Christians responded to such interventions.

Whatever may be, Poduval believes that “the art tradition brought by the Portuguese entered so deeply into the culture of Kerala that it is difficult to distinguish between the indigenous and the foreign. The Dutch and the British might have replaced the Portuguese political base of Kerala in 1663 and 1795 respectively, but they could not replace the Portuguese legacy of art in Kerala”²⁴.

Despite the Thomas Christians and the Portuguese sharing the identity of a common religion, the Portuguese were not wholly successful in ameliorating and gaining the Thomas Christian loyalties. Unlike the introduction of the Portuguese prototypes of church architecture in Goa which found success, measures to supplant the existing style of church architecture did not gain success in Kerala. This may be because of the strong Christian tradition that had attained deeper roots among the Thomas Christians than the relatively new Christian population of Goa. Besides, there already existed a style of architecture among Thomas Christians of Kerala that was based on the religious and cultural traditions of these Christians, which was a product of the community’s existence through the historical time, their association with the geographical space, and their interaction, assimilation, and syncretism to the cultural realm.

The section summarized the Portuguese perceptions of the sacred spaces in non-European worlds, focusing on the Thomas Christian churches in Malabar. The understandings of the Portuguese was contradictory to the internal perceptions of the religion by the Thomas Christians themselves. which were the product of their differential evolutions and ecclesiastical adherences.

²³ Helder Carita, “Creating Norms for Indo Portuguese Architecture, The Livro de Acordaos e Assentos da Camara de Goa 1592-1597”, *Itinerario* 31, Issue 2 Portugal Indico Essays on the History of Portuguese Presence in the South Asia in the Colonial Period (July 2007);.75.

²⁴ Jayaram Kochu Poduval, “Beginning of European Architecture in India”, in *India and Portugal Cultural Interactions*, Coord by Jose Periera and Pratapaditya (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2001), 12-22.

6.3.0. The Synod of Diamper and the Rules and Regulations on Church Architecture

As apprehended from Chapter Four, the Synod of Diamper or the *Udayampoeroor Sunahadose* of 1599CE was a turning point in the history of the Thomas Christian community. The various tenants and decrees passed during the Synod criticized the ‘unchristian’ practices, both liturgical and cultural amongst the Thomas Christians and therefore took it a cause to bring changes to the church architecture as well.

However, there are some Decrees in the Synod records that are seen exclusively in the Portuguese translation and does not appear in the Malayalam version. For instance, certain decrees in Session V dealing with the type of hosts and nature of wine to be used as well as on the doubt on the consecration of the altar stones of the Thomas Christians, which if included in the Malayalam version might have brought immense hostility from the part of the Thomas Christians of the region²⁵.

The Synod has recommended the construction of chapels within or near to the villages that had Thoams Christian inhabitation, particularly in remote pockets of Thomas Christian settlements, and at places that were distant from the nearest churches²⁶. The decree ensured the imperative administration of the sacraments and observation of the Christian doctrines and practices. Although no direct commands on the characteristics of an ideal Christian church are provided in the decrees, it calls for certain reformations, additions, and omissions that are required to Christianize, or in a more precise language Latinize the churches and their surroundings.

The Synod of Diamper has challenged the iconoclastic nature of the Thomas Christians stigmatizing the practice as heretical and hoped to introduce the practice of Catholic icons to the sacred landscapes of the Thomas Christians. The introduction of statues, relics, and images of Jesus, Mary the Mother of Jesus, angels, and saints to the Thomas Christians was an outcome of the Synod. However, it should be observed that, while the Portuguese intention was to inculcate iconophile inclinations within the Thomas Christian minds, the overt criticism of the iconoclastic nature by the Portuguese resulted in creating fears of superimposition of iconolatry among the

²⁵ For a detailed reading see, Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, Session V, 131-143.

²⁶ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, Session IV, Decree IV, 113.

Thomas Christians. The Synod commended the invocation and veneration of angels, bodies, and relics of saints and their consecration and adoration. Such relics were required to be kept under the holy altars with utmost respect and care²⁷. Interestingly the Synod had postulated the creation of such images and statues in the Latin or Portuguese manner rather than in the indigenous style²⁸. The Portuguese desire to delink the Thomas Christian art from indigenous art is clear from the decree.

Chapter XI - Decree III of Session II of the Synod had introduced the Latria or the representative sign of Jesus on the Cross to the Thomas Christian mindscapes. The emphasis is given to the Latria as the “sign of the Son of Man in the day of judgment”²⁹ needs to be contemplated bearing in mind the role of the *Thoma Sleeva* and Persian Cross among the Thomas Christians. The Mar *Thoma Sleeva* and Persian Cross were the most venerated Thomas Christian elements which carried symbolic meanings and implications. The Portuguese desire to dominate the Thomas Christian liturgical sphere with icons of a different origin and meaning reflects in the decree. The Synod considered the Thomas Christian condemnation of holy images as heretical and emphasized not only the veneration of the images but also the devotion of the rosary³⁰. The case is ironic as the Thomas Christians considered the Portuguese as idolaters while their iconoclastic preferences were perceived as heresy by the Portuguese.

Besides mandating the celebration of the Sacrament of Eucharist on every Sunday as well as on days of religious importance³¹, instructions were provided for the celebration of masses with Holy vestments and chalices that were to be revered and safeguarded within the church premises. Specimens of vestments and liturgical equipment that were introduced by the Portuguese are preserved at the *Sunahadose* church at Udayamperoor(Figure). The new dictum was contrary to the customs cherished by the Thomas Christians in Malabar and therefore required arrangements to cater to the new needs. Another substantial requisite the church was commanded to retain was a palanquin or a net made commodious with carpets to carry sick and

²⁷ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*,87.

²⁸ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*,87.

²⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 87.

³⁰ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 92.

³¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*,126 Session V Decrees 1 & II

aged people to the church for receiving the Viaticum³². Such palanquins exist in the churches in Niranam.

The Synod had also declared the necessity of confession and made it a prerequisite to receiving the Eucharist³³. The Malayalam word for Confession, *Kumbasaram*, is derived from the Portuguese language. Although the Decrees does not mention the introduction of Confessionals for the purpose, it should be assumed that the Confessionals or confessional corners might have been introduced to the Thomas Christian churches following the instructions of the Synod. The presence of confessionals in European Catholic churches was already prominent during the 16th century, which supports the argument³⁴.

Ordaining the use of beads or rosaries was another significant Catholic tradition that was introduced by the Synod. Although the term rosary as such is not used by the Synod, it upholds the importance of reciting prayers using the beads or the (prayer) book³⁵. The Malayalam word for rosary is *Kontha*, which is a direct derivative from the Portuguese word *conta*. The initiation of the devotion of the rosary³⁶ has a profound and long-lasting impact on the Catholic faction Thomas Christian spiritual life till today and forms a key element in their daily prayers. Therefore, it is likely that the prominent use of rosaries of the Thomas Christians belonging to the Catholic faction has its legacy to the Portuguese period.

There are certain accessory items that the Synod commanded to be kept in the churches which included three vessels of Holy Oil for use in various sacraments. The Synod commended the making of three vessels for oil out of plate, tin, or glass specifying their respective names for identification. These vessels were to be placed in a box locked at a safe place within the church covered with silk³⁷. The safekeeping of the vessels was entrusted to the Vicar of the church with

³² Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, Session V Decree V,128.

³³ Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, Session V Decree III Session VI Decree II, 127.

³⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/confessional-religious-architecture> Charles Borromeo is credited as the first to use a confessional like structure in the form of a metal grill between the priest and the confessor around 1565 in Milan..

³⁵ Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, Session VII Decree V,159

³⁶ Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, 92.

³⁷ Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, Session VIII Decree VIII, 183-184.

directions to their utmost reverence and care. Besides, the Synod directed to renew the oils every Holy Thursday before Easter. The remaining old oil was either to be burnt in the church lamps or poured down the baptismal fonts.

A complete restructuring of feasts and Holydays was dictated by the Synod which had implications of disengaging the Thomas Christians from their inherent practices that were divergent from the Roman conventions. Observation of Holydays and fasts from midnight to midnight was encouraged and the earlier practice from sunset to sunset as per the Jewish custom was disregarded.³⁸

6.4.0. Redefining Perception of Church as a Sacred Space

The Portuguese idea of sacred space is reflected in their perceptions of similar spaces belonging to other cultures and communities. The concepts of ‘holy’ and ‘sacred’ are perceived and conceived by different cultures in different dimensions. While some cultures draw sharp distinctions between the concepts of sacred, holy, and profane spaces, some other cultures have the sacred realms being poured over to the secular or profane spaces³⁹. Keeping in view the earlier discussion on the Portuguese perception of the Thomas Christian churches, it is clear that the concept of sacrality varied with the two entities⁴⁰. The Synod of Diamper has laid out various decrees that were designed to redefine the nature of the sacred space as conceived by the Thomas Christians. By defining the functional aspects of sacred spaces, the Synod aimed in creating a ‘church-centric’ cultural space for the Thomas Christians. It desired to confine and converge the cultural and social spaces of the Christians to the church and its premises. The decrees made it clear to the Thomas Christians that the rituals associated with important aspects of their personal life such as birth, marriage, and death should be under the auspicious of the church. The Synod, or in a more specific sense the Portuguese, desired the laity to come to the churches for the Masses and made it mandatory for them to arrive in the church for the various occasions. The ultimate motive was to exercise control over the Thomas Christians through an institutionalized

³⁸ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, Session VII Decree XVI, 189.

³⁹ For a detailed reading of the concepts, see, Simmins, “Sacred Spaces”, 9-10.

⁴⁰ The idea varies with religion too. For further reading see, Michael B Hundly, “Sacred Spaces, Objects Offerings and People in the Priestly Texts: A Reappraisal”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no 4 (2013): 749-767. The article discusses how the idea of holy and most holy defined and delivered access of the Jewish temples.

and established church apparatus, that could create a strong, invincible yet unperceivable bond between the individual and the church. The Synod aimed in making the church the only space for blessing marriages⁴¹. The division of the Thomas Christians under various parishes and linking such events to their home parish was aimed to leverage more control over their religious, social, and cultural spaces. To keep a record of such occasions, the Synod has stipulated the creation of separate registers. Registers for marriages and baptisms were to be kept in the churches and managed by the vicars of the respective parishes⁴². Such records ensured a constant monitoring of the community and their incessant practices of instituted Roman traditions.

Moreover, the Synod commanded the division of the Thomas Christian cultural space, which they conceived as a diocese, to various parishes under the authority of Vicars residing at the parish church⁴³. This administrative initiative by the Portuguese created a hierarchical power structure for better execution of the religious functions. This meant the grouping of the Christian community under the umbrella of a church and its respective Vicar. The Vicars were under the jurisdiction of the Bishops who enjoyed authority to divide or unite the parishes for administrative efficiency. The residents of the particular parish were restricted to receive sacraments from any other priests other than their Vicars at their respective churches. The step accentuated the importance of the church and elevated it from the ‘space for worship’ to the ‘cultural core ‘ of the Thomas Christian community.

Decree XVIII of Session VIII introduces the teaching of the religious doctrines to the children, both boys as well as girls at the parish church in Malabar tongue⁴⁴. Such instructions were also made mandatory for the elders belonging to the parish. The church and its premises were used to impart religious education to the community thus becoming a space for transmission of knowledge through religious instruction. In all probability, the aim of delivering such religious instructions was not only to impart the religious doctrines but also for localizing the cultural and social space of the Thomas Christians within the church.

⁴¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 171 & 172, Session VII Decree I & V

⁴² Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 171, Session VII Decree IV

⁴³ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 180, Session VII Decree I

⁴⁴ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 190, Session VIII, Decree XVIII

The Portuguese notions of a sacred space were governed by Catholic standards that evaluated a particular space as 'sacred' or 'defiled'. The Synod put forth several principles that defined the purity of the church and its premises. Bloodshed, spilling of semen, burying of excommunicated, burying of an infidel within the church, and blessing of a church by an excommunicated bishop defiles the church and its premises⁴⁵. Interestingly tainting of the churchyard does not taint the church building within it, whereas, defiling of the church would defile the churchyards too.

The sanctity of the church is ascribed deeper meanings contrary to the Thomas Christian conception by the Synod. The Synod although vindicates the importance of a church-centric Christian life and advises on the significance of a 'Christian burial' in the churchyard, it prohibits the adobe of sick persons within the church building except during the times of war. During such exceptional situations, the sick are advised the use of the porches or the *Mukhamandapams* for the purpose⁴⁶. A clear indication of the Portuguese departures from the conventional conception of the utilitarian aspect of a sacred space is evident.

The level of sacrality that the Thomas Christians attributed to their churches before their Portuguese encounter cannot be ascertained, nor can it be judged with the prejudiced perceptions of the Portuguese. While uniqueness, orderliness, cleanliness, and embellishments defined the Portuguese perceptions of sacrality, Thomas Christian' idea of sanctity was influenced by the ideals of simplicity and reverence.

6.5.0. Dedication of the Churches

Dedication of churches to a particular saint was a practice that percolated into Christian frames from Judaism. The practice has been cherished by both Eastern and Western Christian traditions and continues without rupture. As discussed in Chapter Five, the Thomas Christians also nurtured a strong tradition of dedicating their churches to various saints. However as observed, they confined their dedications to the saints belonging to the Eastern Christian traditions, whom the Portuguese labeled 'Nestorian'. A shift in the convention of dedicating churches to saints of Eastern traditions occurred following the Portuguese intervention, precisely

⁴⁵ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 196-197.

⁴⁶ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 197.

after the Diamper episode. Decree XXV of Session VIII commands for the rededication of all the churches dedicated to the Nestorian saints to the Roman saints⁴⁷. The Synod had prohibited the dedication of churches to the saints of Eastern Christian traditions and had encouraged the dedication of churches to Roman saints. Commands for the rededication of some churches which were erstwhile dedicated to the Nestorian saints explains the Portuguese conviction to delink the Thomas Christian collective memory from the Church of the East. As the commemoration of the initial dedication of a particular church was conducted annually with great festivities, the idea of rededication was an obvious solution to infiltrate and superimpose the collective memory of the Thomas Christians which got recurrently refreshed every year during the feast. The best instance explaining the case being the command for the rededication of the church at Angamali to Saint Hormisda, from the Nestorian saint Hormusio. Instructions were also provided to rededicate the churches belonging to Marxabor and Mar Phrod of Babylon to All Saints and observe festivities and feasts according to the Catholic customs.

Furthermore, the Synod forbids to dedicate a church to another saint without designating a separate feast day for the latter⁴⁸. These steps were aimed at delinking and detaching the Thomas Christian memory from the hagiography of the Eastern church. The introduction of statues and images of Roman saints to the churches should be analyzed in the same context. As memory plays a key role in the survival of traditions, it was necessary to redesign the memory of the generation to achieve the ultimate goal of Latinizing the Thomas Christians.

6.6.0. The Portuguese Impact on the Thomas Christian Churches- An Analysis

As inferred from the preceding Chapter, the development of the pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian architecture in Kerala was simultaneous with their historical evolution imbibing structural changes following the general pace of the architectural development congruent to the region. However, following the Portuguese advent, new elements and features began to appear, encroach and influence the spatial organization and the exterior elevation of the churches reorganizing and creating visible departures from the indigenous style and appearance. The proclivity to such changes may be either voluntary or involuntary as some changes were an

⁴⁷ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 194.

⁴⁸ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 198.

outcome of the community's urge to adapt and imitate some of the architectural innovations erstwhile unknown to them. The increasing Portuguese involvement in the internal affairs of the Thomas Christians and their overt motive to bring these Christians under the Catholic fold resulted in an imposition of novel features into the churches, particularly after the Synod. It is a meticulous task to understand the nature of the changes by unweaving the threads, yet it is possible to arrive at some degree of consensus in identifying the involuntary or imposed elements on the Thomas Christian church architecture by studying the Synod of Diamper Decrees in comparison to the existing church models. The impact of the Portuguese over the indigenous styles of architecture and art needs to be analyzed considering the connections of these features to the core liturgy and religious legacy of the Thomas Christians. The main reason for such retrospection is the differential Apostolic, historical and evolutionary trajectories of the two Christian traditions in the collision.

A thorough analysis of the various features would reveal the Portuguese influence as resulting in four consequences; revamping of the overall structure, reorganization of the spatial plan, introduction of the western imagery, and retention of some existing features.

For an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the various levels of Portuguese influence, the features have been categorized under the resultant outcomes. The following sections detail some of the influences noticed following the Portuguese contact on the Thomas Christian churches. The following are some of the significant developments that occurred following the Portuguese incursions,

1. The declining trend of *deepasthambhams*-as they looked pagan
2. The gradual disappearance of some of the accessory structures within the church compound.
3. Addition of façade
4. Introduction of windows in the *Madbaha*.
5. Introduction of statues and images of saints.
6. Introduction of belltowers and belfries.
7. The appearance of altars ruttals and human carvings on the altars
8. Institution of chalices, monstrance, etc
9. Addition of pulpits or the *pushpas*

10. The gradual disappearance of the *Padippuras*.
11. Retention of the compound walls.
12. Institution of *capellas* and grottos.

6.6.1. Restructuring the Exterior

Restructuring of a building is usually undertaken either to contemporize the structure according to the necessities and functions of the current era or to deal with the dilapidation or ruining of the structure to save it from unrepairable destruction. The case of Thomas Christian churches, according to the Portuguese perception, was never a reflection of the religion it represented. The style of their churches as discussed in Chapter Five cannot be connected with any of the models of church architecture that was existing or contemporary in Europe. Besides, the building's strong resemblance to the temples of the 'idolators' of the land annoyed the 'Christian' consciousness of the Portuguese who always contested to demonstrate their Christian allegiance. As the superimposition of a completely 'European structure stands impossible due to the community's strong ties with their legacy, revamping the overall structure of the church was limited to the restructuring of the exteriors of the church. The process involved two distinct yet interrelated operations; the addition as well as the omission of various features to the church structure and its premises. The addition of the façade, plastering, and painting of the walls, introduction of belfries, etc were some features that were initiated to accentuate the exteriors and the church premises. The Portuguese attitude to the indigenous church architectural features such as flagstaffs and lampstands, although never negative, was neither overtly positive. Therefore omissions of the indigenous elements were not imposed, although a gradual disappearance of the features occurred in a long run.

Introduction of façade

The introduction of the front façade was the greatest of all the features that were instigated by the Portuguese focussing to 'link' the Thomas Christian church structures to the European models. The front façade to the ancient churches of Kerala was undoubtedly a foreign addition. The survey of the existing ancient church buildings shows indications of later construction which clarify the addition of facades at a later stage in churches at Vadakara, Kalloopara, Mulakulam, and Tumpamons. The facades were added to the thick exterior wall of

the nave, and sometimes to the *Mukhamandapam* at a later stage post-Portuguese influence. Kottayam *Cheriyapalli* is built in 1579 by the time the Portuguese had already gained considerable power and influence in the land. Although the architecture of the church is analogous to the traditional style, it has a front façade both at the Western wall as well as at the entrance to the *Mukhamadapam* which could be a later addition to the original church building besides the addition of the priests' room.

Interestingly, until recently some churches like the ones at Kayamkulam, Kundara, and Kallada (Kadeeshapalli) existed without the front facades, but unfortunately, all these churches are demolished today. A very important point that needs to be noted here is that the three churches belonged to the Orthodox faction of the Thomas Christians who showed resistance and reluctance in accepting the Portuguese advances. However Orthodox churches were not completely aloof in adapting the facades to their churches. The St George Church at Kadamattom has a front façade which was supposedly constructed following the Mysore invasions in the 18th century (figure). The facade is divided into three stories and three bays which is further divided into various compartments with columns and pilasters. The central bays of every story is defined with columns having Corinthian capitals. The central bay of the ground story has the main church entrance from the *Mukhamandapam*, the second story has the oculus and the third has a niche with Mary holding Jesus. The convex volutes that ornaments the lateral bays of the third story are a characteristic feature of the baroque style. Also, there are blind niches that are capped with pediments in the lateral bays of the second and the third stories. Besides the *Mukhamandapam* of the church does not have a façade. Although the façade was not as ornamental as the façade of Portuguese churches in Goa, many elements of European origin had translated to the indigenous imaginations and found expressions. Therefore it cannot be ascertained if the facades were a voluntary or involuntary feature accepted by the Thomas Christians to their churches.

James Menachery, links the appearance of the facades to the *gopuras* of the rock-cut temples of the South owing to its pyramidal shape, vertical projecting members similar to *kalasas*, and exquisite carvings⁴⁹. Menachery's view of the facades being 'slightly Western'⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 143.

⁵⁰ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 143.

cannot be agreed upon due to the incidence of purely Western elements explicit on the facades. By considering the design of the facades it can be concluded that these facades exhibited baroque characteristics which became common in Rome during the second half of the 16th century. The Jesuits were instrumental in introducing such facades to India. These facades were designed based on the façade design of the Gesu Church at Rome, which is considered the mother church of the Jesuits. Although the Gesu church was initially conceived in 1551 CE by Ignatius Layola, the church took almost 33 years to finally get consecrated in 1584CE. Therefore, it should be assumed that the facades might have been introduced and gained popularity after the 1580s. Almost all the facades that were added to the Thomas Christian churches of Kerala had influences of the façade of the Gesu Church at Rome with slight variations in decorative embellishments. Therefore it is justifiable to attribute the introduction and popularization of the facades to the Jesuit missionaries.

The façades introduced by the Portuguese can generally be horizontally divided into three levels in the manner of a grid pattern, with the ground level having the main entrance in the shape of an arched opening. The middle level has arched niches and in some cases, the top-level had the oculus. In some cases, the oculus appears in the second story and the niches in the third level. Entablatures in various styles mark the transition of various stories. Vertically the plane of the façade is separated into various sections by elements of columns and pilasters. Alternatively, stucco images of angels and depictions from the Bible replace the niches. Triangular pediments characteristic of the Classical and the Baroque styles are also incorporated to top the arched niches or the stucco depictions on the façade. Importantly these facades lacked the lateral towers, an important departure from the conventional baroque style facades that came up in Goa.

Most interestingly, the Portuguese style front facades had gained considerable reception from the Thomas Christian irrespective of their allegiance to the Portuguese. The adoption of the façade can be considered as a case of cultural osmosis that took over the Thomas Christians irrespective of their allegiance. Such facades can be found in the churches of both the *puthenkurukkar* as well as the *pazhayakurukkar*. Although it may not be right to state that the facades were an ‘imposition’ on the traditional architecture of Kerala churches, they succeeded in differentiating the Thomas Christian churches from other buildings especially the Hindu

temples with which it had the greatest resemblance. Also, these facades gave a revamp to the Kerala churches by significantly altering their overall size and appearance. Interestingly grandeur was a key characteristic of the Baroque style.

Tiling and Plastering

As discussed in the previous Chapter, the Thomas Christian churches had bare walls and roofs thatched with palm leaves. The Portuguese was keen to depart from the ‘conventional normal’, especially for the churches. In Goa, the Portuguese had constructed churches with laterite and painted them white as the color was popularly understood as accentuating the visibility and aesthetic appeal of the churches. The Portuguese intended to bring the idea into popular adoption in Kerala. Many legislations were brought in favor of such practice around 1600CE, when the Viceroy of Cochin, signed an order that commanded the sale of all buildings without a tile roofing to those who could cover them according to Portuguese norms⁵¹.

Strong encouragement was given by the Portuguese for the use of lime mortar besides envisaging techniques that simplified the process of producing mixtures used for stucco decorations and ornamentations. The use of lime-based mixtures for plasterwork and whitewashing not only accentuated the perfection and aesthetic value of the building but also increased the durability of the buildings on which they are applied⁵².

In all probability, the popularity of tiling the roofs hiked following the Portuguese encounters. As discussed in Chapter Five, the Thomas Christian churches were thatched with palm leaves and were never tiled. The socio-political conditions of the Malabar society that forbade the tiling of roofs of any other buildings other than the temples was a major reason for the predicament. However certain narratives in the *Jornada* throws light on the attempts made from the part of some Thomas Christians in getting their roofs tiled. The Christians at Chenganoor are described to have achieved their otherwise impossible wish with the divine intervention of God, which made the local ruler allow the Thomas Christians to tile their roofs⁵³.

⁵¹ KS Mathew and Afsal Ahmed, *Emergence of Cochin in the Pre Industrial Era, :A Study of Portuguese Cochin*(Pondicherry:Pondicherry University,1990),99

⁵² Carita, “Norms of Indo Portugues Architecture”,77.

⁵³ Gouvea. *Jornada*, 420.

Gradual Disappearance of the Padippura and the Retention of Compound Walls

The gradual appearance of the front façade and the gradual disappearance of the *Padippuras* explains an apparent connection. As *Padippuras* were neutral elements and had secular functions to perform, the existence of the element did not offend the Portuguese consciousness of a ‘Christian church’. There are no available references of the Portuguese demolishing the *Padippuras* in the known sources. However, the introduction of the front facades resulted in a gradual relinquishment of the structure that they are hardly considered as a significant element of the Thomas Christian churches of today. The Portuguese considered the *Padippuras* less appealing to the grandeur of the front façade and therefore did not encourage building them in the churches they constructed. However, they did not consider its presence as unchristian and never engaged in their forced demolition. The aspect is explicit from the surviving *Padippuras* in the ancient churches of Chenganoor, Arthat, etc. In certain instances, such *Padippuras* were also adopted in churches that were built by the Jesuits in the 18th century such as Velur Church in Thrissur district. The main reason for retaining the *Padippuras* in the churches might have been the relatively secular functions it served. The *Padippuras*, as observed in Chapter Five played a crucial role in providing safety and security to the church building and therefore acted as a fortification along with the huge fencing wall. The *Padippura* of the Kanjoor church was demolished as recently as the 1970s as the church authorities and parishioners assumed the structure as blocking the view of the church facade. The *Padippuras* altered in function post the Portuguese influence by either becoming a center of administration or as the Vicarage until separate structures were constructed for the purpose. The *Padippuras* were also used as storage houses to store grains and other food items that were yielded from the lands of the church.

In conclusion, the *Padippuras* existed in the Thomas Christian churches irrespective of the faction to which their allegiance belonged in the post-Portuguese times. However, the element was never considered as an indispensable aspect of the Thomas Christian churches owing to the secular nature of its functions. The Portuguese although did not express their aversion to the structures, they began to lose their importance and popularity following the increasing inclinations to the addition of front facades, whose magnificence became obnubilated due to the *Padippuras*.

Introduction of Bell Towers and Belfries

The sound of bells plays a predominant role in Christianity as the various notes produced by the bells are employed to convey several messages and implications to the Christians. Evidence of bell-like structures being used for both religious as well as secular functions is available from history. While certain crude bell-like structures were used by the ancient Israelites as adornments to the priestly robes and the vestments of the women, the Greeks and the Romans used them as a means to summon and inform the people about various secular affairs⁵⁴. Besides, the bells were rung by the ancient people to ward away the evil spirits. The early Christians in all probability might not have used bells owing to the possible consequences of breaking secrecy can create during the time of Roman persecution. However, after Christianity attained legal status in Europe, the Roman Church has favored the use of bells from the 6th century onwards as an instrument to call the people as well as to announce the various divisions of the day and as a reminder for the recitations of various canonical hours⁵⁵. The structure of the bells used during the times cannot be determined. The vibrations of the sound produced by the bells transform into a language that conveys different messages and signals to the human mind. The sonic effect has a deep impact on the Christian mindscapes as it prepares the individual as well as the community for the religious ritual. The absence of the church bells created an inconsistency between the religious role and the domestic role of an individual. The bells ‘connected’ the individual's mind to the religious duties surpassing the limitations of distance and nature of spaces. In all probability, by mandating bells, the Portuguese idea might have been to create and embed a Christian consciousness amongst the Thomas Christian community by constantly reminding their recitations and prayers.

The introduction of belfries and belltowers to the Thomas Christian churches should be understood in the context of the Portuguese mandate on the recurrence of Christian rituals, practices, and observations. The Synod commands for the installation of bells in the steeples of the church to ring and announce the meeting times and to summon people to the church in case of possible necessities. Instructions are provided by the Synod regarding the positioning of the bells. The bells were not to be positioned inside the church unless there was the presence of a

⁵⁴ Simon Keane, "Bells and their Origin", *The Irish Monthly* Vol 42, no 488 (Feb 1914):94-95

⁵⁵ Keane, "Bells", 97.

temple nearby or in case of instructions from the King of the land. Even in such cases these bells were not to be emplaced occupying much space of the interiors and should maintain sufficient height from the ground level to ring it conveniently with the aid of a rope. Therefore, those bells which were to be positioned within the church interiors need to be at a considerable height⁵⁶. In the cases of those churches having no bells, the Synod grants the permission to make use of boards as per the normal practice of the region until bells are installed⁵⁷.

The Portuguese who emphasized the reverberation of doctrines of the church, specifically the Roman Catholic Church, as a means to embed the faith among the Thomas Christians had found the bells as an important element in the churches. The periodic ringing of the bells was utilized as a means through which specific messages were conveyed to the laity. The Synod made the celebration of Mass compulsory every Sunday and participation in it a mandatory affair for a 'true Christian'. To remind the believers of the impending time of the Mass, church bells were rung at least an hour before the Mass. Besides, the decision to divide the Thomas Christian habitations to various parishes extending tracts of land required a system that could facilitate the transmission of important messages, even of secular nature to the laity spreading across space. The sounds of the bells were the perfect mechanism to deliver the function as it was done in Europe.

From the decree of the Synod of Diamper, it is clear that there might have been some churches that already had the bells within, as the decree regulates the installation of bells and bell towers in the churches which lacked them. For instance, it is mentioned in *Jornada* that when King Philip I of Portugal died, in 1598CE, Menezes had asked for the bells to be tolled while he was stationed at the church in Ignhaperi(Elenji)⁵⁸. But like the Hindu temples of the time, the bells were positioned in the interiors of the churches, and no separate belfries were made for the purpose⁵⁹. These bells were hung at the vaulted roof above the altar as seen in the Tharissapalli of Kollam. Following the regulations made according to the Synod of Diamper, belfries or bell towers began to be built in the Malabar region mostly in the Portuguese style. Yet there are

⁵⁶ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 196.

⁵⁷ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 196.

⁵⁸ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 439.

⁵⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 196

instances of church bells being hung near the altar as late as 1730CE wherein, the bell hung over the altar inside the Martha Mariam Church Kothamangalam, has inscriptions stating that the bell was cast on KE 905⁶⁰. However, the earliest belfries build in the region such as the ones at Punnathara and Kuruvilangad had indigenous features like gabled projections on the roof typical of Kerala architecture. An inscription on the rim of a bell in the tower of the church in unknown writing, possibly Greek is found in the Kuruvilangad St Marys Forane Church. Another Syriac inscription dating to 1581CE on another bell with the church records the gifting of the bell to the church⁶¹.

The bell towers or *Manimalikas* were initially single storied structures like the one at the Punnathara church. Gradually separate towers for housing the bells began to emerge which rose considerably higher and grander. The bell tower at Muttuchira is 5 storeyed whereas the bell tower in Ollur church is 7 stories in height. The bells and the bell towers exhibited largely Portuguese influence where most of such bells were imported from Europe rather than made locally. The main materials used for the construction of these bell towers were laterite and wood. In churches that were built and (or)rebuild from the 18th century had bell towers attached to their facades. The St Xavier's Church Velur, and St Thomas Jacobite Church North Paravoor are typical instances illustrating such an arrangement.

As the ringing of bells was an integral part of the indigenous worship styles in the region, bells probably existed in the region before the Portuguese. Besides, references to the presence of bells in churches having Persian church influence, but the absence of separate belfries or bell towers exist⁶². Therefore, it could be concluded that bells might have been present in the pre-Portuguese churches, but separate belfry is a foreign addition.

Interestingly the belfries are mostly present in the churches belonging to the Catholic faction of the Thomas Christians, which testifies its European relations. The *Puthenkurukar*

⁶⁰ Refer ,*Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VII, 143

⁶¹ *Travancore Inscriptions , A Topographical List*,123. The same church has another set of three bells in a separate outhouse in the same church compound inscribed in Latin dating to 1910CE stating that the bells were cast to the church in 1910AD and dedicated to S Mary, S Joseph and Emmanuel(Refer , 123)

⁶² “The Travels of a Merchant in Persia”,*A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in 15th and 16th centuries* ,Translated and edited by Charles Grey(London:The Hakluyt Society,1873),147.

faction of the Thomas Christians comprising of the Orthodox, Jacobite, and some independent factions do not have such separate belfries in their churches.

Cemeteries

As discussed in Chapter Five, the burial practices of the Thomas Christians can be assumed as not necessarily ‘church centric’. as the presence of cemeteries within the church premises before the Portuguese was not a common practice. Nevertheless, the researcher had known from the various interviews conducted with the senior citizens around the locality of the old churches that they had heard from their ancestors that in most cases the Thomas Christians were buried within the interiors of their parish church or its premises unless he died of leprosy or measles. However, they were not clear about the possible period from which such practices became common. Suggestive pieces of evidence supporting this claim were found in the premises of several churches in Kerala such as the Kottayam *Valiya Palli*, Kadathuruthy *Valiyapalli*, Kothamangalam, Udayamperoor, etc, where stone slabs on the floor bearing the names of the dead can be identified. The practice was in vogue until separate cemeteries were used for burials. Clarity regarding the period from which such a practice gained acceptance among the Thomas Christians can be achieved only through an examination of the various inscriptions that are present in the tombstones belonging to ancient churches. The researcher was able to locate various such inscriptions in the issues of the *Travancore Archaeological Series* that proved helpful in this regard. As far as the author could identify and infer, the earliest comprehensible tombstone is from the Aruvithura or the Erattupetta church dating to KE 708(1533CE), *Makaram* 26, recording the death of Olisemma⁶³. Another tombstone of considerable antiquity is found at Udaymperoor church which records the death of “Matten ..ra of Kandapuram on 24th *Makaram* 735KE(1560CE)⁶⁴”. Examining the available pieces of evidence it is inferred that most probably the practice of burying their dead within cemeteries became popular after the Portuguese influence and became mandatory following the Synod. Decree XXXII of Session VIII. The decree points to the significance and essentiality of carrying the dead bodies to the church and burying the dead in the consecrated churchyards with the

⁶³ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VI, 91.

⁶⁴ *Travancore Archeological Series*, Vol VI, 67.

blessings of the priest⁶⁵. Most denominations of the Thomas Christians today have the practice of bringing the bodies of the dead to the church (their respective parish church mostly) where ceremonies and prayers are conducted for the departed soul, following which the body is removed to a cemetery and laid to rest⁶⁶.

It should be noted the Thomas Christians had the tradition of burying important persons belonging to the clergy and the laymen within the churches⁶⁷. However, it cannot be ascertained whether such a practice was introduced after the Portuguese. There is evidence of Vasco de Gama being buried within the interiors of the St Francis Church at Fort Cochin. It was a common practice in Western Christianity to bury important personalities within the churches. At *Sunahadose* church Udayamperoor, there is a plate stating that the church has burials of three bishops and two kings.

The practice of leaving tombstones was invariably a Portuguese influence⁶⁸, so was the inclusion of a chapel within the cemetery. To arrive at a unanimous conclusion on the matter it is important to examine the available tombstones which are in existence. The study of the family tombs is not possible in Kerala as most of the old tombs have been excavated to give space for the increasing population

Another important point that needs to be noted here is that the death dates on the epitaph of the tombstones were recorded in Kollam Era even after the Synod. It was only around the middle of the 17th century that recording the year of death in terms of the number of years after the Birth of Jesus emerged. Interestingly this addition never meant the removal of the recording in the Kollam Era. Epitaphs with such inscriptions are found in the Kandanad Church, where an inscription in Tamil *Vattezhuthu* is translated as “On the 20th day of the Kumbha month of Kollam 82* which was 165* years after the birth of the Messiah, Thomman Okkauda died”⁶⁹. While the above is the earliest tombstone that has such an additional line specifying the death date in terms of a ‘Christian periodization’, several other tombstones belonging to later dates

⁶⁵ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, Decree XXXII, Session VIII, 197-198

⁶⁶ Thomas, *Churches of India*, 9.

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Churches of India*, 9.

⁶⁸ *Travancore Archeological Series*, Vol VI, 66.

⁶⁹ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VI, 72.

follow the same pattern that can be found from the Kandanad Church⁷⁰. Similarly, chapels within the cemetery can be seen in many cemeteries of the churches. These chapels were constructed to conduct special masses and prayers for the dead. However, no conclusive decisions on the Portuguese link to the appearance of these chapels can be postulated owing to the deficiency of evidence.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the practice of having cemeteries exclusively associated with the Thomas Christian churches might have been a development post the Synod or at least after the Portuguese influence. It is clear from the existing examples of ancient churches that exclusive cemeteries were never included within the church compound as is the practice of today. Yet, it is not clear if the cemeteries were existing adjacent to the compound wall of the church outside. The cemeteries that are attached to the ancient churches of today are located to its southern side. The cemeteries are separated from the church premise by fencing with an arched gateway providing access. Statues of angels are placed on the two sides of the gateway as they guard the tombs. Examples of cemeteries on the southern side can be seen at Kalooppara church, Niranam church, etc.

Capellas, Kurishupallis, grottos, and Stations of Cross

The *Kurishupallis* unlike they are conceived today had all the elements of a Thomas Christian church proper with reduced size and dimensions. They had the *Madbaha*, the *Hykala*, and a small *Mukhamandapam*. These *Kurishupallis* were built in areas that were far away from the location of the main church and thus served as a place for worship for the Thomas Christians who visited the main churches on important days of the year. However, the *Kurishupalli* at Mattom and Kunnamkulam is located close to the main church raising assumptions. Besides capellas, mostly three-tiered are located in important market places termed as *angadis* or *chanthas*. Such structures contain a patron saint and have the facility to deposit offerings and space to lit candles. Similar structures can be seen in important junctions as well. The grottos on the other hand are mostly dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who is conceptualized as appearing within a cave of rocks. The popularity of the grottos is accentuated among the Catholic faction ,who observes the veneration of the Virgin Mary as an indispensable part of their existence.

⁷⁰ For a detailed reading of all such epitats , see *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VI, 72-74.

6.6.2. Retention of the Indigenous Features: Portuguese Attitude To Indigenous Elements of Art

Although there are no direct sources about the Portuguese attitude towards specific native elements of a Christian church, it can be deduced from their existence in churches built after the Synod that elements such as *Deepasthambhams* were not encouraged by the Portuguese in the Christian church premises owing to their 'Hindu' influences. However, the edifice was not completely discarded either. There are no known references of such *sthambhams* being demolished. Many of such structures have survived to the present day. Although the churches that were constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries lacked the presence of *deepasthambhams*, there has been a revival in the construction of *deepasthambhams* in recent times. For instance, Mary Matha Catholic Church at Chenganoor which was constructed in the early 21st century has a stone *deepasthambham* in front of the grotto of St Mary, which is lit by the devotees as *Nercha*.

The attitude of the Portuguese to the granite open-air crosses or the *Nasrani Sthambhams* is peculiar. The best example to support this would be the consecration of the cross at Kadathuruthy by Alexis de Menezes. The motifs and icons represented in the crosses however were given European influences. They imitated the Thomas Christians and build crosses with a square base or steps. These open-air crosses did not disappear from the premises of the Thomas Christians Churches and were one of the indigenous features that survived the Portuguese ascendancy. However indigenous motifs were replaced with motifs derived from the European understandings and perception of Christianity. The icons and motifs in the Kadathuruthy open air cross showcase the coexistence of the European influences and indigenous Christian thought. The provision of holding lamps was gradually discarded with the introduction of the wax candles by the Europeans.

The *Kottupuras*, *Ayudhapuras*, *Ootupuras*, and *Vedipuras* which were part of pre-Portuguese churches of Thomas Christians have not lost their importance post the Portuguese intervention. As discussed in Chapter Five, the accessory buildings within the church premises catered to several functions that were closely related to the Thomas Christian cultural and religious identity. Although *Kottupuras* and *Ayudhapuras* showed a declining trend in the churches that were constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries, they continued to exist in ancient churches. On the contrary, the *Vedipuras* and *Ootupuras* continue to be constructed in the

Thomas Christian churches. While *Ootuthirunaal* or '*Ootunercha*, remains an important occasion and event in the Thomas Christian religious life, *Ootupuras* or large dining spaces are an important element in the churches especially those churches belonging to St Mary, St Joseph, and St George. Wells and other water bodies that came within the churches or near its premises continued to exist. However, ablutions having 'Hindu' influences were discarded as per the directions of the Synod

The *Nilavilakku* and *Thookkuvilakku* that illuminated the interiors of the ancient Thomas Christian churches still find continued presence in many churches today. Despite the Portuguese interventions to add windows to the interiors of the Thomas Christian churches, the churches of the 17th and 18th centuries were still relatively dark as the windows were confined to the *Madbaha* area only. The windows in the *Hykala* area of the churches began to find popularity among the Thomas Christians only by the 20th century. St Johns Forane Church(old) build in Parappur in the 18th century has windows only in the *Madbaha* area. Although the church has three doors in each lateral wall of the *Hykala*, there are no windows in the *Hykala*. Therefore the *vilakku* or the lamps were an inevitable source of light to the interiors. Such *vilakkus* were the major source of light until electric lights became the primal source of light. The lamps depart from the other types of *vilakkus* of the region by having a cross on top of them as a mark of differentiation.

6.6.3. Reorganization of the Spatial Plan

Spatial planning is an expression of the policies in the material that has a direct link to the Portuguese attitude towards the Thomas Christians. However, no drastic realignment of the plan of the churches could succeed in Malabar. The addition of the windows to the *Madbaha* area and the creation of vestries for storing articles belonging to the church did not drastically change the spatial organization of the Thomas Christian churches. The key elements of the Thomas Christain churches, the *Madbaha*, the *Hykala*, and the *Mukhamandapam* retained their presence and respective elevations. The addition of a verandah parallel to the northern lateral wall of the church was a feature that came up following the Portuguese intervention. However, the verandah did not affect the overall spatial plan of the Thomas Christian churches to any displacing degree. Despite minor additions that had happened to the Thomas Christian church interiors, the overall

spatial organization did not change considerably until the second half of the 20th century when pure European styles began to replace the traditional church plans.

Secondly, the longitudinal design of the church was never replaced with any other plan (not even the cruciform church plan which was introduced during the British period). The Synod of Diamper does not mention any details regarding the need for a complete revamp of the Thomas Christian church plan, spatial organization, or structural elevation. Even the churches that were constructed a hundred years post the Synod did not consider it necessary to have a shift in the basic plan of the church. The St Xavier's Church, Velur, which was built in the 18th century retains the three-level basic spatial plan of the church despite having side verandahs and an octagonal chapel on the southern side.

Creation of vestries

The Thomas Christian churches did not have vestries in their churches. The vestries are the places where the articles used for Eucharist are stored. The Synod made it mandatory to keep the church plates as well as the vessels secured in locked cupboards within the vestries. It also suggested that such articles may be secured in the houses of the vicars until the separate vestries were constructed for the purpose⁷¹. Besides the chalices, monstrance and the ecclesiastical vestments introduced by the Portuguese were to be secured within vestries.

6.6.4.Introduction of New Features

Introduction of Pulpits

Pulpits are elevated and enclosed structures within the church interiors from which the sermons and preachings are delivered by the priest during various occasions. Pulpits were an integral part of the European churches irrespective of being Catholic and later Protestant. However such pulpits were not an important element of the Thomas Christian churches. Therefore, the Synod of Diamper directs for the introduction of pulpits in large churches for “the preaching of the Word of God”⁷². The pulpits or the *Pushpakoodu* (sometimes also called as *pushpams*), as they are known in Malayalam, were introduced in the Thomas Christian churches

⁷¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 195.

⁷² Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 196.

to facilitate the delivery of the sermons from a raised platform. According to James Menachery, these structures provided a commanding position for the priests to address the gathering⁷³. Although no specific directions or rules for building the structure is provided in the Synod decrees, considerable knowledge regarding the pulpits was gained through the field visits. The *Pushpakoodus* are wooden flower-shaped structures that are raised from the ground level by 2-3 meters. The base of the *Pushpakoodu* is carved in the shape of a curved stem similar to an elephant's trunk. Overall, the structure appears like a flower stemming from the wall of the nave. The priest stands in the tribune while delivering the preaching. The structures were fixed to the nave walls of the church with the priest given access to it through a door in the rear side of the nave wall. However, with the introduction of microphones and speakers, these structures have lost their importance in today's churches. Pulpits are seen in the churches at Kanjoor, Champakulam, Mattom, Pala, etc. The churches that were built in the 18th and 19th centuries were also equipped with pulpits. Exquisitely carved pulpits of the period are seen at St Antony's Church at Ollur(figure), St Xaviers Church Velur(figure), etc. The pulpits boast the carpentry skills of the artisans of Kerala, who had attempted to sculpt and integrate an alien structure based on the motifs and patterns with which they were familiar.

Interestingly not all the ancient churches had *Pushpakoodus* within their interiors. One of the reasons that governed their presence in the churches would be the size of the church. Larger churches meant bigger congregational capacity and wider dispersion of sound. Therefore a relatively raised position from the floor level is required to envisage complete access to the congregation with a uniform dispersion of sound. Another important point to be emphasized here is that due to the presence of largely indigenous imagery on the pulpits, these pulpits are often considered as being an indigenous Thomas Christian element. However, it should be noted that such *Pushpakoodus* was a European introduction despite the indigenous motifs. The Catholic church as well as the Protestant churches give much importance to preaching and interpretation of the scriptures making the pulpits an integral and indispensable element in the pre microphone era. Moreover, the construction pattern of the pulpits in the Thomas Christian churches have striking similarities with that of the European churches. In the European churches which had the altars at the Eastern end, the pulpits were positioned on the Northern side of the nave. As the

⁷³ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 145.

Thomas Christian churches always had their altars towards the Eastern end, the pulpits were positioned at the northern wall of the nave.

Introduction of Statues and Paintings

The introduction of paintings and statues to church interiors was another major impact made by the Portuguese on the church architecture. The presence of paintings and carvings on the ceilings of the churches is invariably an outcome of the Portuguese influences although the Thomas Christians have already been introduced with the practice in the 14th century when Marignoli painted the interiors of St George Church in Kollam. However, the practice was not in popularity until the Portuguese period. In many of the Thomas Christian churches such as at Kanjur, there were mural paintings in the fresco style. George Menachery has brought out a booklet that exclusively discusses the paintings of the Thomas Christian Churches⁷⁴.

The Synod directs for putting up of sacred images in the main altar as well as the side altars in all the churches that are already built. This was given so much importance that it was to be implemented from the alms money soon after the baptismal fonts are created. It is inferred from the Synod decrees that the Thomas Christians were not free to create their pictures and were required to consult with the prelate for sanctioning every picture⁷⁵. The restrictions should be read in the same lines as the Portuguese prejudice with the indigenous perceptions of art. Besides, the Portuguese motive to ‘Westernize’ and ‘Latinize’ the imaginations of Christian iconography is reflected from such instances.

Paintings were done on various surfaces such as cloths and wooden panels. A large number of murals and frescos began to adorn the Thomas Christian churches following the Portuguese. Mostly the paintings are seen in the walls of the altar and the vaulted roof. Unlike the statues which became popular with the Catholic faction of the Thomas Christians, the paintings were received by the non-Catholic Thomas Christians also. The churches of Cheppad, Paliekara, and Akaparambu have mural paintings that were done with colors made from natural pigments.

⁷⁴ For a detailed reading on the mural paintings in the Thomas Christian Churches, see, George Menachery, *Pallikalile Chitaabasangal*-Malayalam (Ollur:SARS, 2015).

⁷⁵ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, Session VIII, Decree XXIX, 196.

As it is known, there are three types of fresco styles; the *buon* frescos, *secco* frescos, and the *mexxo* frescos. According to George Menachery, there exist relatively a few *buon* fresco paintings in Thomas Christian churches of Kerala. The best example of such paintings of angels can be found at the *Hykala* of Ollur church (18th century). However, the majority of the frescos that can be identified in the Thomas Christian churches of Kerala belong to the *Secco* style or the dry fresco style⁷⁶. He identifies the paintings in the *Madbaha* area of the Cheppad church as belonging to the pre-Portuguese (14th century) period⁷⁷. The paintings depict the mysteries of the rosary, the arch of Noah, Adam and Eve, etc. However, considering the available literary sources and analyzing the popular culture of the Thomas Christians of the period, the researcher assumes that it is most unlikely that the paintings pre-date the Portuguese. Several of the depictions have paintings of Apostle Paul holding a sword, Jesus being beaten by the soldiers, and Jesus holding the Cross, which were considered dissenting by the iconoclastic Thomas Christians. Also, the Thomas Christians in the pre-Portuguese period did not have the tradition of decorating the *Madbaha* with anything other than across. Therefore, in all probability, these paintings might have been added at a later stage, post the arrival of the Portuguese. Yet another case that can probably justify the pre-Portuguese origin of these paintings is mentioned by George Menachery. He relates the appearance of these paintings to the pre-Portuguese period by linking them to the activities of John Marignoli. As mentioned earlier Marignoli had stationed near Kollam for a while and had decorated the church there with paintings. Menachery thinks that although the location of the church is mentioned as in Kollam, the church might be the one at Cheppad. It can also be assumed that the artist might have been inspired by the work at the Kollam church⁷⁸.

The occurrences of paintings in the churches of Thomas Christians can be corroborated without confusion. Fresco style paintings are seen in the Angamaly Church, St John Nepuncian Church Parappookkara⁷⁹, Akaparambu church, Karingachira church, etc. The paintings in

⁷⁶ Menachery, *Pallikalile Chitraabhasangal*, 23.

⁷⁷ Menachery, *Pallikalile Chitraabhasangal*, 31.

⁷⁸ Menachery, *Pallikalile Chitraabhasangal*, 34.

⁷⁹ Not to be confused with St John Nepuncian Forane Church Parappur. Both churches have the same patron saint and there is an interesting story explaining the similarity. The Parapookkara church was constructed in 400CE and dedicated to the Holy Spirit. However by 1720s CE, the parishners had decided to rebuild the church which needed the permission from the Vicarate at Varapuzha to commence. Meanwhile, the residents of Parappur who were

Angamali have elaborate depictions of Hell and the Last Judgment which are compared with the beautiful works at Sistene Chapel.

Besides providing an aesthetic value to the interiors of the churches, the paintings served additional purposes. The paintings were encouraged by the Portuguese for their role in embedding important Christian concepts and biblical episodes. Themes for paintings were usually adopted from both Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the life of saints, concepts of heaven and hell, etc. The paintings at Mar Sabor and Afroth Jacobite Church Akaparambu have various episodes from the Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus. painted with wonderful colors and hues(figure). As mentioned earlier in the section, the paintings at Cheppad church has similar themes depicted. The windows which were mandated by the Synod in the Madbaha area illuminated these paintings and provided a spiritual aura to the Madbaha area.

Statues of saints were also introduced into the church interiors by the Portuguese. Special mention in this regard should be made to the introduction of the crucifix or the Latria, which forms an important element of veneration in the churches as well as households of some factions of the Thomas Christians today. The crucifix unlike the Thomas *Sleeve*, is not an empty cross. It represents the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth and hence emphasizes the sacrifice of Jesus for the redemption of mankind.

An important aspect that requires to be retrospected is that the introduction of statues and paintings in the European model of art had influenced and infiltrated the imagination of the Thomas Christians even to the present day. It has resulted in the domination of Thomas Christian imaginations by the European idea of Jesus and other saints which has crystallized to a more or

attending the Sunday Qurbana at Mattom church were dissatisfied with their inability to attend the whole Mass due to issues with commutation. They had approached the Vicarate at Varapuzha for permissions to build a new church .and had decided to dedicate their church to St John Nepuncian who was elevated as a saint in 1729CE. The authorities in Varapuzha had commissioned a statue of the saint from Rome for providing to the church. Things took a turn when, the parishners of Parapookkara who had come to seek permissions for their new church were confused for the residents of Parappur and were handed the statue. The parishners of Parapookkara were excited to receive the statue all the way from Rome and dedicated their new church to St John Nepuncian. When the authorities became aware of the mishap, a new statue of John Nepuncian was later made for the Parappur church.

less perfect' and 'real' understanding. In a way, this has inhibited the Thomas Christians in imagining Jesus from their perspective and norms of ideality.

Interestingly, the Portuguese favored wood over stone for the making of the statues. The major reason for this according to P Thomas was the association of granite or stone to the indigenous architecture and art of the region⁸⁰. In many cases, statues were brought from Europe instead of being made in Kerala. The idea was to minimize the involvement of Thomas Christians or indigenous craftsman in the making of the statues, which was considered as the primal channel for the infiltration of local ideas and imaginations of artists.

The Portuguese wanted the introduction of images to the households of the individuals as well as to 'all decent places'⁸¹. The introduction of statues and paintings in every possible space can create a sense of familiarity and emotional embeddedness in the minds of the Thomas Christians which was most desired. The Jesuits who worked with the Portuguese Latinizing mission were aware of the importance and significance of images in trespassing the language barriers and its potential as a mnemonic code⁸².

Another important aspect that the researcher thinks might have governed the impetus for encouraging decorations in the churches might be the Protestant favor to minimalism and subdued embellishments. This attitude might have been the product of the Reformation movement and the Counter-Reformation ideas that were subsequently produced. The Baroque style of art, which can be synonymously referred to as Counter-Reformation art owing to the idea of the triumph of the Catholic church for which it stood for, encouraged artistic grandeur. Although there are no direct references to justify the idea from the available sources, considering the period of the Synod and the religious milieu of the period, there is nothing improbable in assuming.

⁸⁰ Thomas, *Churches in India*, 15.

⁸¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 87.

⁸² Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). 8

Introduction of niches and Roopakoodu

The introduction of niches to the Thomas Christian church interiors can be probably attributed to the Portuguese. Although no clear pieces of evidence can foster the argument, the evident functions that these niches served can provide a convincing conclusion. The addition of niches to the walls of the churches may be understood in context with the introduction and statues and paintings to the Thomas Christian churches. To accommodate the paintings and the statues, niches were provided in the walls of the churches. It should be noted that the idea of accommodating statues and paintings to the interiors of the Thomas Christian churches appealed to the Catholic faction of the Thomas Christians and therefore the incidence of the niches in the churches of the Catholic factions is more than their counterparts. Also, these niches played a key role in breaking the monotony of plain walls of the Thomas Christian churches, thereby bringing in ample variety. Paintings within the niches can be found in the Kadathuruthy church where a winged cross is painted. within a niche. Niches can also be seen in the old churches at Chungam.

Besides containing the statues within niches made on the church walls, separate wooden structures in the form of a reliquary or a casket, known as *roopakoodu* in Malayalam are used to place the statues of the saints. The *roopakoodu* usually has a door, which is kept open during the masses and the feast days and is shut otherwise. Owing to the introduction of the statues to the 16th and 17th centuries, the origin of the *roopakoodus* can be attributed to the same period. Such *roopakoodus* are present at the churches at Udayamperoor, Thumpamon, Niranam, etc,

Interestingly, there exists an important tradition amongst the Catholic faction of the Thomas Christians, called *kooduthurakkal* that takes place on the feast day of the patron saint of the church, during which, the *roopakoodu* is opened by the Vicar and the statue of the saint is taken out for the procession.

To conclude, the introduction of statues into the Thomas Christian churches created the requirement for specific structures to keep the statues which saw manifestation with the *roopakoodus*.

Addition of Windows

The introduction of windows inside the church especially in the *Madbaha* area is the most important effect of Portuguese influence. The Portuguese were concerned about the low light and ventilation within the churches. The addition of the windows brought more light into the interiors. The Synod instituted for having windows fortified with iron rods and positioned in such a way it hindered the heathens a chance to behold the divine mysteries during the services⁸³. This might be the reason why the windows that were added following the directions of the Synod were positioned at a relatively higher place. In some cases, there were only small windows located high up the rising wall of the *Madbaha*. In most cases, the windows were placed 5-6meters above the floor-length, mostly on the towering eastern wall of *Madbaha*.

These windows did not have shutters of glass but were made of wood. Windows in the *Madbaha* can be found at Jacobite church at North Paravoor. However, windows at the *Madbaha* area are absent in the church at Kadamattom. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier in the current Chapter, the windows in the *Hykala* was never popular among the Thomas Christian churches until the 20th century.

Addition of Balcony at the Western End

The researcher prefers to read the addition of the balcony towards the Western entrance of the church in the light of various Decrees put forth by the SAynoid of Diamper on the celibacy of the priests. A similar line of thought is postulated by Sunil Edward who thinks that the balconies at the Western ends of *Hykala* were created for the unmarried priests to stay within the church⁸⁴. These balconies are made using wooden beams and planks towards the western end of the church. The access to the floor is either given from within the church interior as in the case of the Udayamperoor church and given from outside the church as in the case of the Kallooppa church. Yet, there are references to the construction of the *murithattu* or a balcony inside churches to provide space for the increasing parishioners⁸⁵.

⁸³ Zacharia, Synod of Diamper, p 196

⁸⁴ Edward, "Study of Indigenous Church Architecture", 78

⁸⁵ Parappur Church Souvneir, 2017

Altar Backdrops or Retables

Retables refer to the painting or decorative panel that is located behind the altar table. These retables serve the purpose of ornamenting the backdrop of the altar and adds to the aesthetic value. The retables, popularly known by the term *thronose* are a foreign addition to the indigenous Thomas Christian churches following their interaction with the Portuguese. In churches that were either build by the Portuguese or build in the regions under Portuguese influence, retable triad or three retables are a major feature. In such instances, the church will have a main retable behind the altar table and two other altars located on each of the sidewalls of the arched opening to the altar. The retables were either attached to the wall behind the altar or were detached from it as in the case at the Akaparambu Qandisangal church. The iconography of the retables is derived from the standard Catholic traditions.

It could be assumed that as such retables were never a part of the Thomas Christian style of art, they might have either been completely imported from Portugal especially after the Jesuit influx or might have been designed and modeled indigenously on the Portuguese directions either by the local artists or by artists who are trained in European art. Besides, the retables were characteristic of showcasing the Christian iconography to its zenith and contain images and representative icons which was never tolerated by the iconoclastic Thomas Christians. Since the retables were meant for decorating the wall behind the altar, it can be paintings on the wall surface, carvings on wooden panels covering the wall, or sometimes made with laterite and lime mortar plastered with stucco. These retables were designed to attract the attention of the people who visit the church and bring their focus to the altar and the rituals being performed. Therefore, a vibrant choice of colors, hues, and light were used to enhance the retables making them the most decorated and ornamented portion of the church. In general, the retables of the churches had decorations of foliage that were alien to the region of Kerala, yet were native to the Mediterranean world such as the acanthus, wine creepers, etc clearly echoing their European origins. Moreover, such designs were incorporated into the churches that were built by the Portuguese in Goa, thus justifying its Portuguese origins⁸⁶.

⁸⁶ Poduval, "Beginings of European Architecture" ,22.

The retables made of wood were specimens of intrinsic artistic expressions with embellishments and exquisite detailing. Designed similar in fashion to the façade of the church, the retables were divided into various segments with pilasters, twisted pillars, and other entablatures. Typically the retables are divided into three tiers, each tier having niches to contain the statues of saints. The patron saint of the church is kept in the central niche. Sometimes Biblical scenes are carved in the retables with designs of leaves, flowers, angels creepers, etc.

As could be inferred by Chapter Five, the altars of the Thomas Christians had only the Mar Thoma *Sleeve* as the sole altarpiece. Jornada mentions Archbishop Alexis de Menezes providing the church at Chenganoor with “a chalice, vestments and some more things needed for the divine cult”⁸⁷.

The iconography of the retables of the Thomas Christians could be identified more as the products of the European perception of Christianity and Christian culture. However, the retables are a feature that has percolated into the Thomas Christian architectural sphere irrespective of their liturgical inclinations.

Candles and Candlesticks

It is not clear if candles existed in the Thomas Christian churches before the European advent. However by the time of the Synod wax candles were in use in these churches as in the Portuguese translation of the decrees of the Synod, it is mentioned that the wax candles require to be blessed before being used⁸⁸. However, the candles might have used beeswax to make the candles as the candles made with paraffin wax are a later development.

Baptismal Fonts

As discussed in the earlier Chapter, a clear inference on the presence of the permanent baptismal fonts before the Portuguese arrival cannot be arrived at. The major reason for this is the instructions provided in Decree XIX of Session IV of the Synod of Diamper, which points out to the Thomas Christian practice of using ‘any common vessel’ for baptism, suggesting the

⁸⁷ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 421.

⁸⁸ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 193.

absence of any permanent vessel or structure for the purpose⁸⁹. Also, there are references in the Decrees of the Synod giving clear instructions for mandating the sacrament of Baptism which throws light on the necessity of specific structures for performing the sacrament. The Decree also makes it evident that the sacrament of Baptism was not strictly practiced by the Thomas Christians which makes permanent fonts not mandatory. The Synod has made the sacrament of baptism to be conducted on the 8th day after the birth of a child and also had instructed for the baptism of the unbaptized adults thus leveraging the importance of baptisteries and baptismal fonts. Decree XIX of Session IV recommends the building of baptismal fonts in all the churches. The Decree instructs the placement of the fonts at a 'decent place', preferably at a corner of the church⁹⁰. Instructions are provided in the Decree on the funding for building the fonts and desired such fonts to be built from either the fabric money and alms money of the church or by accumulating funds from the parishioners. Although there are no directions on the desired style and model of such fonts, instructions were provided for cutting a hole at the bottom of the baptismal font to facilitate the flow of water, during the process of baptism. The flowing water may be directed to a veracious place within the church premises where it might not be trodden⁹¹ and made unholy.

Structurally, the fonts are big bowl-like structures into which Holy Water is poured for performing the sacrament. The structure is shaped in the form of a lotus and was held on a heavily decorated pedestal. These fonts had a hole, typically hand-drilled, that let the water flow down from the structure during the ceremony. The fonts were either positioned at a corner near the entrance to the church or were kept within a separate cubicle within the northern wall of the church that could be accessed from inside as in the case of the ones at Mattom and Chungam churches. The carvings on the outer surface of the fonts contained images of lotus petals, figures of angels, floral designs, animal figures, and Persian Crosses⁹². The pedestals on the other hand had the carvings of lions as in the case of the ones at Kanjur, Edapally, Kadamattom, etc⁹³. The font at Chenganoor has the depiction of Persian Crosses, lotus flowers as well as angel figures

⁸⁹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 121.

⁹⁰ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 120.

⁹¹ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 120-121.

⁹² The font at Kanjur does not have the figures of angels carved on it.

⁹³ The font at Kadathuruthy does not have the lion figures on the pedestal as the support.

well carved out in granite. Besides, the pedestal of the font is in the shape of a lotus. Therefore it could be assumed that since baptism was not performed in regularity among the Thomas Christians, the necessity for a separate structure exclusively for the purpose may not have been in general practice among the Thomas Christians. Nevertheless, the absence of Western imagery on the existing baptismal fonts brings in the possibility of their existence pre-dating the Synod if not pre-dating the Portuguese. The researcher was able to identify two earliest inscriptions referring to the donation of baptismal fonts in the churches of St Thomas Jacobite Church at North Paravur as well as at St Mary's Jacobite Church Kandanad. The inscription at St Thomas Church is in the baptismal font in the Malayalam *Vattezhuthu* script and dates to 1625CE⁹⁴. Similarly, the inscription on the baptismal font at St Mary's Jacobite Church Kandanad written in Tamil language and *Vattezhuthu* script refers to the presentation of the font by *Koccokkan, Kuriyada Mani*, and *Iyppa Chummar of Kaiveli* in 1682⁹⁵. Due to the absence of any reference on dates before the 17th century asserting the presence of such fonts in the Malabar region, it is impossible to conclude its existence.

The baptismal fonts are present in almost all churches of Thomas Christians irrespective of being Catholic, Orthodox, or Jacobite. The baptismal fonts are sometimes located within a specific room called baptistery that is located in the northern wall. In other cases, the fonts are positioned towards the entrance of the church within the interiors. In contrast, the baptismal fonts are placed in the *Kestroma* area of the churches belonging to the Orthodox and Jacobite factions. The baptismal font in Kanjoor Church is located within a baptistery in the northern wall of the *Hykala*. The font is placed on a pedestal that has intrinsic carvings of four lions facing each cardinal direction (figure). Baptismal fonts are found in the Old Syrian Church Chenganoor, Orthodox church at Kallooppa, Jacobite Church at Arthat, St George Church Kadamattom, etc. The baptismal font at the Old Syrian church at Chenganoor rests on a pedestal in the form of a lotus, unlike the animal pedestal designs that are seen in many churches (figure). The font at Kadamattom church is placed over a pedestal that has the carvings of lions. Carvings of crosses, flowers, and fluted lotus detail the baptismal font and add to its aesthetic value.

⁹⁴ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VI, 74.

⁹⁵ *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol VI, 74. In this inscription the year is not recorded in the Malayalam Kollam Era.

The researcher would like to examine the issue of the pre-European and Post European existence of the Baptismal fonts by drawing three cases. The first case hypothesises the existence of baptismal fonts before the Synod. The assumption is based on the idea that baptismal fonts might have been present at least in some churches before the Synod and might have undergone structural transformations following the instructions from the Synod. Second, such permanent fonts might have been an addition to the church interiors following the Synod. With regards to Case 1, the presence of such fonts might have been a result of the Persian contact. The possibility can be validated by examining the descriptions of the presence of baptismal fonts in a church near Edessa, which falls under the Persian church, as established in the 15th century travel accounts of an Italian Merchant in Persia⁹⁶. The account describes the font located in the middle of a church dedicated to St Mary. The font is described as made with fine alabaster with splendid carvings and covered with marble. Besides, it is “... supported by six columns of marble as clear as crystal, and these columns also are worked with fine and gorgeous carvings...”⁹⁷. Also the unearthing of a stone structure similar to a baptismal font from Mannar in Sri Lanka that might belong to the church of the Syro Persian Christians of the region⁹⁸. Therefore such baptismal fonts were known to the Thomas Christians owing to their connection with the Persian church. The Thomas Christians might have idealized the motifs on the baptismal font according to the existing models of workmanship on granite with indigenous motifs. However, the absence of any direct references or dates proclaiming the antiquity of the baptismal fonts of Kerala makes it difficult to arrive at the right conclusion on the claim.

An alternative possibility that takes the second case would be the arrival of such baptismal fonts following the European contact. By the term European contact, it is not the Portuguese contact alone that is implied, but from the times of Friar Jordanus(1280-1330CE), who was the first bishop of the Latin diocese of Quilon. Since his presence and mission are attributed to the initial presence of the Latin rite in Kerala, there are possibilities of the idea of permanent baptismal fonts seeping to the Thomas Christians. Later Latin missions under the

⁹⁶ Grey, *Narrative of Italian Travels*, 145-147. The account narrates of finding old churches in the region of Caramit(Kara Amid), which is about five days journey from Orfa(Edessa).

⁹⁷ Grey, *Narrative of Italian Travels*, 147.

⁹⁸ Li Tang, “Traces of Syro Persian Christians in Ancient Ceylon”, in Gottinger Orientforschungen 1.Reihe Syriaca, ed Herausgegeben von Martin Tamcke, ed, Harrassowitz Verlag – Wiesbaden, 2014, 385.

leadership of John de Marignoli describes finding a Latin church dedicated to St George at Kollam⁹⁹ and stayed in the land, might also have had the introduction of the Latin practices and customs to the Thomas Christians.

Case III postulates the introduction of permanent baptismal fonts following the 15th-century Portuguese contact. The hypothesis emphasizes the ‘permanent’ baptismal fonts as being introduced following the Portuguese based on the references in the Synod of Diamper decrees stating the use of ‘ordinary vessels’ for baptism. The absence of inscriptions before the 17th century referring to permanent baptismal fonts justifies the postulate.

Overall based on the available sources, the researcher assumes that baptismal fonts were present among the Thomas Christians following their contacts with the Persian church. However, exclusive permanent structures for the purpose was an outcome of their Portuguese interactions.

Keeping the Interiors clean

The Synod has commanded for the maintenance and upkeep of the Thomas Christian churches. The *capiars* were instructed to be appointed for cleaning the church and its premises. These people were to be paid from the alms money of the church and were to sweep the floors at least three times a week, dust the lamps and the candlesticks, and light at least a lamp at the altar. The Synod has also instructed for keeping away oil vessels for the lamp oil, kettles, and all other indecent things from the church interiors¹⁰⁰.

6.6.5. Percolation of Western Imagery

The percolation of the Western imagery into the churches had begun even before the synod. This might have begun its inception right from the beginning of the arrival of European missionaries before the Portuguese. Nevertheless, these influences had hardly gained acceptance amongst the Thomas Christians until they established close contacts with the Portuguese in the 16th century. The Western Christian imagery had elaborate use of paintings and statues relating to the Bible at large and particularly to the life of Jesus. However, Eastern Christianity lacked this system and so were the Thomas Christians until the Portuguese advent. The Thomas

⁹⁹ Yule, *Cathy and Way Tither*, 216.

¹⁰⁰ Zacharia, *Synod of Diamper*, 195.

Christians were iconoclasts and therefore preferred to avoid any forms of depictions from the Bible.

The percolation and influence of the Western imagery into the Thomas Christian churches were at a slow pace until the Synod of Diamper began to coerce and force its adoption. In all probability the translation of European ideas of Jesus, Mary, and the other saints was gradual. The open-air cross at Kadathuruthy best illustrates the colonization of Thomas Christian imaginations by European ideas of church art and architecture before the Synod. The people of Kadathuruthy were one of the earliest Christian groups to cede to the Catholic side. The Kadathuruthy Cross was built in 1596CE and consecrated in 1599CE by Alexis de Menezes¹⁰¹. The cross has both indigenous and Western Christian imagery coexisting within the piece. The base of the cross is not proportionate to the height of the cross and narrows upwards. The base has the carvings such as that of the elephants, angels, flowers, hunters, and Persian Crosses directly reflecting the tradition of the Thomas Christians. James Menachery considers the depiction of these Persian crosses to the latest specimens carved before the Portuguese imposition of the Latin Cross and Crucifix¹⁰². Despite the rich imagery unique to the indigenous Christians, there appear depictions directly traceable to the Westerner Christian ideals. The depiction of Crucifixion, carving of Mary the Mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene sheds light on the increasing popularity of the Western Christian imagery before the Synod. Similar iconography traceable to the Western Christian traditions can also be seen in the granite crosses at Mutthuchira and Kuruvilangad. Depiction of the crucifixion is also seen in the Open Air Crosses at Niranam, Chenganoor, and Chenganacherry as well. James Menachery suggests the phenomena as an outcome of conscious imitation due to the proximity of these places. However, the researcher would like to understand it based on the gradual percolation of either the Portuguese influence on the church architectural style or as an outcome of increasing acceptance of the idea of crucifixion. The researcher affirms these western images as might a later addition to the crosses following the Synod.

¹⁰¹ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 139.

¹⁰² Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 139.

The Kadathuruthy church¹⁰³ plays a key role in understanding the impact of the Portuguese over the Thomas Christian church architecture in pre and post-Synod times. According to Jornada Kadathuruthy church “was the first place which had rendered obedience to the Holy Roman Church, because of which Menezes considers it as the ”.his firstborn..”¹⁰⁴ . Although the people of the church were initially reluctant and outrageous towards the Portuguese interventions and Roman practices, they submitted themselves to the Roman fold following the tactful intervention of Alexis de Menezes. The people were convinced with the activities of Menezes that they even requested him to bless the open-air Cross which they had already build and was waiting for the consecration from the Prelate.

The description goes thus “As the procession reached the compound of the church, they had made a Cross in its middle, quite big of stone, very beautiful, since two years, and its foot very well adored, which still did not have the night lamp according to the customs they observed among themselves, neither did they decorate it like the others because it was not yet dedicated and blessed because all these big Crosses are to be blessed by their Prelate”¹⁰⁵ .

The events described above had happened at least three to four months before the Synod. which implies that the people of Kadathuruthy had already shown a considerable inclination to the Roman Church and its practices long before the Synod.

Jornada mentions the cross at Kadathuruty that has been made before the Synod. The Cross is described as big with adorations at its foot, although not as elaborate as their usual and having no night lamps. It mentions that decorations are usually made after the crosses are blessed by the Prelate¹⁰⁶. The point requires special remark owing to the period of its construction and consecration. As inferred from Jornada, regarding the Thomas Christian tradition of decorating their Crosses after its consecration, the people at Kadathuruthy likely decided to include European motifs in their decorations along with the indigenous styles. Besides this cross was the first open-air cross that was blessed by Archbishop Alexis de Menezes, who was the greatest

¹⁰³ There were two churches in the place as mentioned in Jornada, one dedicated to St Paul and the other dedicated to St Mary, for a detailed reading refer to Gouvea, Jornada , 434 (footnote)

¹⁰⁴ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 434.

¹⁰⁵ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 194.

¹⁰⁶ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 194.

missionary of the Roman Catholic faith during the period. A similar style of decorating the Open Air Cross with European elements of art can be found at the Open Air Cross at Kuruvilangad, Udayamperoor, and in later churches build in the 18th century such as Ollur.

On the same lines, the Western Christian imagery has also appeared on the baptismal fonts of the Thomas Christians from the Portuguese times. As permanent baptismal fonts were most likely a clear case of European influence, the obvious presence of Western Christian imagery cannot be overlooked. The depiction of the Virgin Mary, Infant Jesus, and other Holy figures find constant appearance on some of the baptismal fonts along with the indigenous motifs. The baptismal font at Kadathuruty Catholic church has the carvings of the Virgin Mary and the Child showcasing an indigenous style of art. Also, the pedestal of the font is in the form of a cylindrical member unlike the popular animal or lotus forms that are usually favored. The hemispherical surface of the font has the carvings of angels in the form of mermaids, Persian crosses, peacocks, etc. The floral designs constitute the carvings at the base of the font. Despite this depiction of the Persian Cross can be found on the font which states the continuity. Besides, there are bead and cable ornamentation which are Indian¹⁰⁷. Western Christian imagery also finds space in the altar backdrops of the Thomas Christian churches in profusion.

6.6.6. Retention of Old Features

Even after the arrival of electricity all over the region of Kerala, the *Deepasthambhams* have not lost their popularity. New churches build even in the Western-style have the incorporation of the *Deepasthambham* as an integral part of the church premises. Although granite has been replaced with concrete and brass in many cases. The church at Koothattukulam has a brass *Deepasthambham* which is considered the highest in the world.

It is not clear if the Holy Water font found in some of the ancient churches are indigenous in origin. Although Joseph the Indian mentions the presence of Holy Water at the entrance of every Church¹⁰⁸, it is not mentioned if the water or *Aanamvellam* was kept in permanent fonts attached to the wall of the church entrance. The granite Holy Water font at Aruvithura has an

¹⁰⁷ James Menachery links the pattern of these ornaments to that of neckings found in the capitals of Thirhoot and Sakissa which boasts the marvels of Buddhist architecture. See, Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 145.

¹⁰⁸ "Account of Priest Joseph", 104.

ancient inscription in *Vattezhuthu* language which states that the font was erected in 1544CE¹⁰⁹, clearly following the Portuguese encounter. However the similarity of these structures with the wall lamps seen in the Hindu temples doubts their complete foreign origin. The researcher thinks that there could be more than two inferences that can be arrived at based on the above-given information. Firstly, it can be the fact that either the listener to Joseph the Indian might have confused the wall lamps to the Holy Water fonts, or secondly, oil might have been stored in the fonts instead of holy water. Thirdly the structure might have been introduced due to the Portuguese influence after the Thomas Christian appeal towards the structure who might have designed it to suit the Indian aesthetics.

6.7.0. A Brief Note on the Variation of the Architectural Features in the Various Denominations of the Thomas Christians

The pulpits or the *Pushpakoodus* are seen only in the Catholic churches of the Thomas Christians as the pulpits are pure European additions. The facades are seen in all the major denominations of the Thomas Christian churches, Jacobite Orthodox and Catholic. Retables with intrinsic carvings are found in the catholic churches, whereas the Jacobite and Orthodox churches have simple retables with floral or geometric decorations.

Although the general architecture of the Thomas Christian churches remains the same the researcher would like to point out certain points that came to the notice

The steps that demarcated the *Kestroma* from *Hykala* had variations in the number. While there were three steps for the Catholic churches, and two steps demarcating the *Madbaha* and the *Kestroma*. In Orthodox churches, the railings separated the *Kestroma* and the *Madbaha* is raised by five steps from the *Kestroma*. The baptismal fonts are found in the *Kestroma* of the churches belonging to the Jacobite and the Orthodox factions. In Catholic churches, such fonts are found in a separate baptistery. Today some Catholic churches have ceramic basins for fonts.

6.8.0. Evaluation of the Thomas Christian Church Architecture in the Post Synod Period

The Thomas Christian churches irrespective of their allegiance to the Patriarch or the Pope had the influences of the European church building styles even after their split. These

¹⁰⁹ Menachery, "Thomas Christian Architecture", 146.

churches exhibited a hybrid structural plan having an ‘indigenous’ superstructure and a ‘foreign’ facades. The spatial organization, orientation, and interior plan mostly remained undisturbed, lest for the addition of side verandas to the northern lateral wall of the churches as well as the addition of side altars and pulpits. The addition of the facades was the greatest of all the influence on the overall exterior appearance of the churches.

Despite having a strained episode with the Portuguese and their Latinization drive by certain sections of the Thomas Christians, especially those factions that deferred and rebuffed in acknowledging the Roman Church, prefer and choose to keep certain ‘Roman models’ in their churches. The most obvious element is the facades. The researcher was curious to identify and comprehend the possible reasons for such a motive. The association of the West Asian region as the Islamic seat of power after the Ottoman victory might have had an impact on the Thomas Christian understanding of their identity. It is not clear if the Portuguese themselves might have created insecurity within the Thomas Christian community regarding their association with the Church of the East which itself was undergoing a tumultuous stage without ample protection from the state. The Thomas Christians of Kerala at some point during their course of association with the Portuguese may have either unwillingly accepted the idea or might have been coerced into accepting by either direct or indirect forces to identify themselves with Europe as the embodiment of Christian faith, irrespective of their denominations. The researcher was able to find that the churches belonging to the Syro Malabar faction of the Thomas Christians have deviated to a large extent in building their churches completely in the European models and no new churches are being built in the traditional Thomas Christian styles although some selected features are retained. The Jacobite and the Orthodox factions on the other hand had fallen in the influence of European Christianity to a considerable extent no matter how much they deny it. Despite sticking into the traditional styles of architecture, their churches had never given up the fancy for facades which is a known Western architectural addition. It may be because they did not have an alternative form of expression to accentuate their churches during the period. Thomas Christians, who identified themselves with Eastern Christianity could not find any models or patterns from West Asia that did not carry remnants of Islamic culture. The Byzantine architecture which was pre-Islamic was by now seen as an incredible part of the Islamic architectural marvels and therefore could not be leaned upon. Therefore the Western facades were the only element that looked Christian’ to behold. This may be identified as the foremost impact

of the Portuguese Latinization drive and the works of the later missionaries. In other words identification of Christian cultural space to Europe has been unconsciously stamped into the minds of the Thomas Christians.

The creation of a hybrid form of church structure was the result of the interactions and amalgamations of the two styles of architecture. The resultant ‘hybrid style’ was ‘reproduced in the nineteenth century as the prototype of the church for the indigenous population’¹¹⁰.

To comprehend the impact of the Portuguese over the Thomas Christian churches following the Synod, the researcher has attempted to analyze and understand the above-mentioned features by considering case studies of two churches that were built before the Synod. In the discourse, the objective is to identify the various features that are visible in these church structures that have a direct European connection.

Old Syrian Church, Chenganoor

The town of Chenganoor (located in the Alappuzha district) today is dotted with several churches’ belongings to various factions and denominations of Christians. However, the oldest edifice that exists as a symbol of the Christian heritage in the area is the Old Syrian Church. The traditional date of construction of the church is 1175CE, yet as can be easily identified from its various features, the church has undergone various phases of renovation at different periods. An additional extension towards the southern lateral wall of the church was done as late as 2009CE to accommodate the increasing population. However, it is applaudable that many parts of the original structure or at least the basic plan of the structure remains to date.

The Old Syrian Church at Chenganoor or the *Pazhaya Suriyani Palli* as obvious from its traditional date of construction has a pre-Portuguese existence and finds mention in *Jornada* too¹¹¹. As could be inferred from *Jornada*, the church was renovated close to the end of the last decade of the 16th century after it was tiled (probably with the traditional *kurods*) after receiving

¹¹⁰ Helder Carita, Residences and Schools in the Religious Indo Portuguese Settlements on the Malabar Coast- Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’. In *Imperial Rome ,Indian Ocean Regions and Muziris, New Perspectives on Maritime Trade* ,New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 2015), 230.

¹¹¹ Gouvea, *Jornada*, 419.

permission from the local ruler¹¹². A closer examination of the *Hykala* wall of the church reveals that the nave was extended towards the western end at some point in time. The walls show a variation in the thickness that can be an outcome of the extension of the *Hykala*. The present church is enclosed within a huge compound wall parts of which still exist. An open-air cross exists across the present road, which perhaps in the olden times would not have been separated by a road. A two-storied *Padippura* or a gatehouse with a huge door opens to the church compound. A small walkway leads to the northern lateral side of the church which has a *Mukhamandapam* which further leads to the main church building. The premises of the church has *Kalvilakkus* or the *Deepasthambhams* which are lit beautifully on special occasions. The church is an existing example of a specimen having more than one *Mukhamandapam*. The Church has a *Mukhamandapam* at the Western main entrance as well as in the northern lateral wall that faces the *Padippura*.

The *Mukhamandapam* on the northern side exhibits the traditional Kerala style of architecture with a gabled roof that is supported by stone pillars; three on each side which rests on stone bases. The pillars are beautifully decorated with various motifs such as those of peacocks, elephants, tigers, cherubs, and flowers. The pillars also have depictions of Hanuman, Sita, etc that are carved. The *Mukhamandapam* measures around 5m in length and 3 m in width (approximate) and has a very low roof. The *Mukhamandapam* towards the Western main entrance of the church is not constructed in the traditional style. The European style façade is seen in the Western entrance. Most probably the European style façade and longer porch might have been added when the *Hykala* was extended to the present form. Although the Thomas Christian churches are mostly entered through the Western main entrance, the Old Syrian Church has its northern lateral entrance prominent.

Entering the church through the northern entrance, the *Hykala* is accessed laterally. The present dimension of the *Hykala* is approximately 22meters x 6 meters, although the dimension of the *Hykala* before its extension can be estimated to around 13 meters. A hanging lamp or *Thookuuvilakku* can be seen hanging in the *Hykala*. The *Madbaha* of the church is separated from the *Hykala* by *Kestroma* which is a little elevated than the *Hykala*. As usual, a wooden railing separates the *Kestroma* from the *Hykala*. The *Madbaha* is separated from the *Kestroma*

¹¹² Gouvea, *Jornada*, 420-421.

by an arched opening and is elevated by four steps. The *Madbaha* has dimensions lesser than that of the *Hykala*. The wooden altar table is set in front of a highly decorated *ruttal* that adores a Mar Thomas *Sleevea*. A stone baptismal font can be seen positioned towards the southern side of the *Kestroma* which is mostly kept covered when not in use.

A brief survey of the Old Syrian Church at Chengannor aids in identifying some of the features of the pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian churches as well as some of the features that have percolated into its architectural forms following the Portuguese influence. Although the present church appears a lot different from its original form, many of the traditional features of the church remain unaltered.

Kalloopara church

The St Marys Orthodox Church Kallooppara is located in the Pathanamthitta district in southern Kerala. The church is located close to the Manimala river. The traditional date of the foundation of the Church is 1339CE. The church was renovated to the present form in 2009CE, keeping the traditional style of construction as reference. The church is a typical example of a church having two *Mukhamandapams* similar to the Chengannoor Old Syrian church. As usual, The church has an old 5 tiered *deepasthambham* located in its premises which has 13,11,9,7 and 5 projections respectively from the base to the top. The *Kodimaram*, the old *Padippura*, and the *Mukhamandapam* are aligned.

Tradition states the building of the Kalloopara church to 1339CE. However, it is evident from the present appearance of the church that the church had undergone various stages of rebuilding and renovation. Although the church has the characteristics of an indigenous Thomas Christian church, the wooden altar backdrop or the *ruttal* is a later addition. The church also has its *Mukhamandapam* positioned towards the northern side overlooking the *Padippura*. However, there are clear additions to the spatial character of the church as windows are added both to the *Madbaha* as well as the *Hykala* with iron bars. The addition of a priest's room can also be seen in the church. The interior of the church has its constituent parts such as the *Madbaha*, *Kestroma*, and the *Hykala*, with the arch separating the chancel and the nave. Wooden railings separate the slightly elevated *Kestroma*. Each lateral wall of the church has five doors that lead to verandas outside that are running parallel to the walls. The front of the church and the two extra side

porches to the lateral sides are products of the recent renovations of the church. Although the front façade has stucco images, pilasters, coupled columns and pediments directly echoing the European style facades, the side porches are replicated in the exact model of the original porches.

6.8.1. Retention of Thomas Christian Church Features on Latin Church Models

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Portuguese missionary activities in Kerala were not unidirectional; rather it was a bidirectional process, which was directed towards the Thomas Christians on one hand and the non-Christians on the other. The missionary activities among the non-Christian population of the Malabar society resulted in the creation of a new community of Christians called the Latin Christians. The Latin Christians, unlike the Thomas Christians, followed the Latin rite and accepted the Roman Catholic church to which they remained in solidarity. The Indo Portuguese style of architecture was adopted by the newly converted Latin Christians along the Malabar Coast. However, in due course adoptions of Thomas Christian architectural elements began to appear in some of these Latin church buildings. The ‘converted Christians’ who were the product of European missionary activities, belonged to the ‘Hindu’ or Muslim communities of the region who chose to convert for social reasons. Although their case was similar to the newly converted Christians in Goa, the presence of an indigenous Christian community with strong cultural heritage and social status proved an inhibiting factor for their exclusive ‘Christian’ identity.

Varela Gomes points to the dire requirement of the newly formed Christian community in Goa to create a distinct cultural space for themselves as the major reason for the flourishing of Indo Portuguese architecture in Goa¹¹³. Thus the adoption of the Indo Portuguese architectural style in Goa may be considered as a step to create a distinct identity for the newly converted Christians, the adoption of Thomas Christian elements could be considered as a channel to create an assimilated identity for the Latin Christians. While in Goa the newly converted Christians were required to create their distinctiveness from the ‘Hindu’ and Muslim communities of the region to which they erstwhile belonged, the situation in Kerala was challenging for these Christians as they had to establish their distinctiveness not only from the ‘Hindu’ and Muslim communities but also create a ‘special connection ‘ with the indigenous Thomas Christian

¹¹³ Gomes, *Whitewash* , 6.

community. The deliberate adaptation of certain Thomas Christian elements into the Latin rite in Kerala may have been the practical solution to create the connection between the newly converted Christians and the ancient Thomas Christians. Therefore it was necessary to assimilate the newly formed Christians with the Thomas Christian cultural space and the adoption of their traits served the purpose to an extent. The introduction of the native Thomas Christian elements to the Latin churches served two purposes. It indirectly created a link between the newly converted Christians and the existing Thomas Christian body.

There are specific features of Thomas Christian church architecture that had found their representations in the Latin churches of Kerala. The granite open-air crosses, *kodimarams*, etc are some of such features that were adopted by the Latin Christians from the Thomas Christian church architectural styles. The Vallarpadam church near Kochi has an open-air cross granite cross-build over a laterite base. However, neither the cross nor the base has the motifs and icons characteristic to the Thomas Christians crosses. The *kodimaras* find representation in the Latin churches and it could be considered as a translation of the feature.

The *Deepasthambham* is hardly seen in any of the Latin churches, probably because of their direct resemblance to similar structures in the temples. The case was a complete contrast to the Thomas Christian churches where *Deepasthambhams* survive even today. Similar to the structure resembling the Open Air Cross in the Vallarpadam church, there exists a *Kodimaram* in the church premises. St Antony's Catholic Church in Thrissur belonging to the Latin rite also has the *Kodimaram* within the premises. The *Kodimarams* served similar functions that it catered in the Thomas Christian churches. Despite the adaption of some of the features of the Thomas Christian churches, the Latin Christians hardly adopted the basic plan and elevation of the Thomas Christian churches.

A brief discussion of a church structure belonging to the Latin Christians is attempted to understand the similarities and differences between the Thomas Christian model and the Latin Christian model of churches.

The Church at Our Lady of Hope, Vaipin.

The Church at Vaipin known as The Church of Our Lady of Hope or Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Esperanca was initially established at the island of Vaipin in 1558CE by the

Portuguese. It is assumed that the original structure was built with timber and later modified. The incumbent church structure is assumed to have undergone renovations in 1595CE and blessed 1605CE by the then Bishop of Cochin, Dom Andrea de Santa Maria.

The church belongs to the Latin Catholic community of the region. The church looks similar to the churches built by the Portuguese in Goa. It has a European style façade oriented towards the west with a central main door and two side doors facilitating the entrance to the nave. The church is contained within a compound wall which has a gateway opening to the west. However, there is the absence of a *Padippura* in the style of the traditional Kerala architecture. The compound has a *kodimaram* or a flagstaff but lacks the *deepasthambham*. Although an open-air granite cross is present in front of the church, the cross is Indo Western or Indo Latin piazza in style with no provision for oil lamps at the base.

The façade of the church, which is Manueline in style, is a three-storeyed structure with three bays separated by engaged columns that vary in design on every story. The engaged columns in the lower story are Tuscan in style, whereas those in the second and the third story are in the fluted and spiral style respectively. The pediment of the façade has a Manueline style motif that holds the Latin Cross. The entrance to the church interior is in the lower story of the façade with the central bay of the lower story having the main entrance. The main entrance is designed in the style of a Gothic portal analogous to the one present at Our Lady of Hope Church Mattancherry. There are two smaller doors on each side of the main entrance that also opens to the church interiors. The doors have threshold spaces on them. The second story has three arched windows with wooden shutters allowing light and air to pass through the church interiors. The oculus of the façade is in the central bay of the third story. The church does not have a *mukhamandapam* or the front porch nor does it have a three leveled elevation design.

The church has a nave, an altar, and a sacristy room. The altar area has a lesser width than the *Hykala* which is a characteristic feature of the indigenous Thomas Christian architecture. However, the external roof of the *Madbaha* is not elevated or raised as in the case of the Thomas Christian churches. There are windows in the *Madbaha* area thus allowing the passage of light. The church has three retables, one at the back of the altar table and the other two each against the sidewalls of the arched opening facing the nave, thus making it a retable triad. The main retable is a two-storeyed structure divided into three bays by fluted pilasters. A

four-centered arch decorated with acanthus and cherubs, crowns the top of the retable. The iconography of the retable is purely European with the paintings of Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Joseph, and an unknown Pope flanking the right and left bays of the retable. The tabernacle is positioned in the middle of the central bay. The side altars have a crucifix and the statue of Mother Mary holding Infant Jesus placed in the center.

The nave of the church is broader than the altar and it has two doors and two windows on each lateral wall. An arched opening separates the nave from the altar space. The *Kestroma* of the church is separated from the nave of the church by wooden railings although space is not elevated. There is a wooden balcony located at the nave entrance of the church which is supported by wooden pillars. Access to the balcony is facilitated through steps that are located outside the nave wall. A pulpit and a baptistery with a stone baptismal font are located in the lateral wall of the church. The interiors of the church do not have traditional style oil lamps or Nilavilakkus situated within the nave or the *Kestroma*.

6.8.2. Continuity of the Thomas Christian Art and Architecture

Despite the active steps taken by the Portuguese to introduce the European style of church architecture among the Thomas Christians, they were not able to completely succeed. They were neither successful in completely changing the basic plan of their churches either. This is seen from the churches build post the Portuguese, eg the Velur church.

Continuity of the Thomas Christian art could be seen. Not only in the churches of the *Puthiyakurukkar* but also in the churches of the *Pazhayakurukkar*. This may be attributed to the deep-rooted links of the Thomas Christians embedded in their history and memory of their Indian shared cultural lineage. To understand the lasting deeper impact of the Portuguese or more precisely the Synod of Diamper on the Thomas Christian churches build nearly two centuries after the Synod, the researcher has taken up the case study of St Xaviers Church Velur, which was built in 1712CE

St Xaviers Church ,Velur

The Church at Velur in Thrissur district was founded in 1712 CE in the name of Francis Xavier by John Ernest Hanxeldon. Although a new church has been build owing to the lack of

space and increasing population of the devotees, the authorities have preserved the old church in its original form which requires appreciation.

The old church (as well as the new church) is situated within an elevated space bounded by a high compound wall. The entry to the church is facilitated by a two-storeyed Padippura that open to the church premises. The old church building is oriented facing the West. Other than for the façades, the church architecture is largely in line with the indigenous Thomas Christian style of church architecture. A granite cross is positioned in front of the old church building, which however varies in structure and style from the Nazraney *sthambhams* which are an integral part of the indigenous architectural style of Thomas Christian churches.

The main church structure has a front façade facing the west, an extended *Mukhamandapam*, a *Hykala*, and the *Madbaha* at the eastern end. The church has undergone structural additions due to limited spatial capacity to hold the increasing population of the devotees. The addition of a hall to the southern side of the altar as well as the extension of the *Mukhamandapam* was done in 1953CE to cope with the need for space. The elevation of the church is similar to the elevation of the traditional churches where the church is designed into three roof levels. The open porch although elongated and concealed with a small façade from outside, the level of the *Mukhamandapam* or the porch has the lowest roof level. The *Hykala* or the nave has a roof higher than the *Mukhamandapam* yet lower than the *Madbaha* thus adhering to the traditional plan.

The structure has a three-storeyed façade with a door that acts as the entry point to the extended porch of the church. The porch is a long gabled structure roofed traditionally with roof tiles and the floors paved with blue colored tiles. The height of the porch is lesser than that of the *Hykala* in the style of the traditional architectural plan. The porch leads to the main door of the church which is currently closed with a collapse shutter instead of the traditional *Aanavathil*. The main entrance wall to the *Hykala* is designed as a simple four-storeyed facade with a pediment crowning the top. A bell tower is attached to this façade which was also a later addition. The main door of the church opens to the *Hykala* of the church, which is approximately 13mx7m in dimension. There are two doors at the northern lateral wall of the church that opens to a verandah on the northern side. The fastening and unlocking system of the doors are on par with the traditional system where extra protection was ensured by using a long rod that would be pulled

inside the wall to unlock the doors and the rod would be pushed horizontally across the door to the other side of the wall to secure the door. Two windows are located in the lateral walls of the church facing each other near the main entrance. However, the window of the northern wall differs in design and style from that of the southern wall implying that the former is a later addition. A balcony is located in the Western end of the church facing the *Madbaha*, which can be accessed through the stairs from the verandah running parallel to the northern lateral wall. The northern lateral wall of the nave also has a wooden pulpit which too can be accessed by the stairs from the upper story of the verandah. The pulpit however cannot be called a *Pushpakoodu* in a real literary sense as its design and ornamentation are different from that of the traditional *pushpas* of the Thomas Christians that resembles a flower. The *Hykala* of the church is divided from the *Madbaha* by an arched opening. Interestingly, the *Kestroma* as well as the altar table is located within the space below the vaulted roof of the *Madbaha*. The altar retable is a laterite structure embellished with stucco work and painted aesthetically with the use of various colors and hues. The retable is divided into two stories, with each story having three bays. The image of Francis Xavier, to whom the church is dedicated is located in the central niche of the second story of the retable within a wooden frame. The retable has decorations with creepers, flowers angels as well as Corinthian capitals in stucco and paint. Side altars are also present on either side of the arched opening to the *Madbaha*.

As mentioned before the church has windows that have wooden shutters to regulate the amount of light and ventilation inside the church. However, the windows are located at an elevated height close to the roof, which made it impossible for a human to see inside the church without any aids incase the doors to the church are closed. This meant that despite allowing air and light into the interiors of the church, this system restricted the visibility of celebration of the mystery and sacraments within the church interiors.

The upper story of the verandah on the northern side provides access to the balcony at the western end as well as to the wooden pulpit. It also provides access to the rooms near the altar which were initially used for residential purposes by the priests. The cemetery is located on the southern side of the church.

To conclude, the current chapter discussed the various structural and functional changes that occurred to the Thomas Christian churches of Kerala following the Portuguese intervention.

An evaluation and examination of the impact of the changes on the liturgical, religious, and emotional practices of the Thomas Christian community are also undertaken in brief. The chapter also discussed the larger consequences of such changes in creating a hybridized form of church architecture keeping in view the various levels of the Portuguese influences. A brief analysis of the continuity of the key Thomas Christian architectural features and their translation to architectural models of the churches of the Latin rite is undertaken to comprehend the level of cultural syncretism that has occurred. The Chapter argues the creation of a hybridized style of Church architecture, which was an amalgamation of Indic, West Asian, and European elements. This hybridized form of the church became the new identity marker of the Thomas Christians irrespective of their denominations- especially the Exteriors

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The Church architecture of Kerala before the Portuguese followed a different trajectory, divergent from the European model. Churches along the style of the Gothic or Renaissance cannot be located in Kerala until the Portuguese advent. The reason could be attributed to two primary reasons: the absence of direct contact with European Christianity and its established models of architecture, and secondly, a rather 'organic' evolution of the Thomas Christians, that identifies more to the indigenous macro culture to which they belonged. The present thesis title “Portuguese Impact on Christianity in Kerala with Special Reference to Church Architecture 16-18th Centuries”, argued the existence of a unique style of church architecture divergent from the European models among the Thomas Christian community which morphed into a hybridized style following the Portuguese interactions by imbibing and amalgamating the indigenous style and the European styles.

Chapter One of the thesis introduced the research rationale gisting the aims, objectives, and scope of the research. The sections further briefed on the sources employed and the methods used to deal with the sources throughout the research. Chapter Two introduced the Thomas Christian community of Kerala, by tracing their inception, historical evolution, and cultural development. The Chapter aimed to establish Thomas Christian' uniqueness and distinctiveness in religious and cultural existence in the pre-Portuguese period. The Third Chapter explored the evolution of the church as an institution as well as a space for worship. The evolution of the Christian space of worship from 'house churches' to the eloquent models of baroque is discussed in brief. Besides the European understanding of sacred spaces contextualized on the religious and historical experiences find expression. The Chapter portrayed the European ideals of a church building which is required to appreciate and compare the sacred spaces in non-European domains. The Fourth Chapter discussed the advent of the Portuguese to the Malabar coasts and the resultant implications of the cross-cultural interactions and exchanges to the Malabar society in general and the Thomas Christians in particular. The Chapter examined the Synod of Diamper as a Portuguese measure to bring the Thomas Christian community under the purview of Rome and the tensions that resulted within the community and its consequences on a wider perspective. The Fifth and the Sixth Chapters exclusively dealt with the architecture of the Thomas Christian

churches in two distinct contexts. While Chapter Five emphasized the organic evolution of a unique architectural style of church structure highlighting the key features of a typical pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian church, Chapter Six explored the ‘new features ‘ that were introduced by the Portuguese bearing European imprints. The Chapter also looked into the aspect of retention and continuity of the various features; both indigenous as well as foreign, in the churches that were built more than a century after the Synod of Diamper. Chapter Seven recapitulated the core findings of the thesis besides suggesting scope for further research.

The research brings out clear marks of differentiations between the features of the churches that were products of indigenous evolution and those of alien imposition and imbibitions. The researcher can conclude the following points regarding the general church architecture of the Thomas Christian churches of Kerala at the time of the Portuguese arrival. The churches were oriented in the East-West direction having the *Madbaha* positioned towards the Eastern wall and the main entrance towards the west. The width of the *Madbaha* was always shorter than that of the *Hykala*. The church compound contained accessory and auxiliary buildings such as the *Kottupuras*, *Ayudapuras*, *Oottupuras*, *Vedipuras*, etc along with the traditional gateway called the *Padippura*. These features were a reflection of the indigenous nature of the Thomas Christian existence and not as a reason for them being Hindu temples earlier, nor was it a case of any architectural imposition.

The advent of the Portuguese introduced the Thomas Christians to a broader and more established form of Christianity which had formulated hierarchies and norms to govern the church as an institution as well as parameters and idealities to construct the church building. The various efforts devised by the Portuguese resulted in the gradual introduction of foreign styles elements and motifs of architecture over the indigenous style which had been the result of an evolution of over a millennium. Features such as the iconic front façade, belltowers, altar backdrops, windows in the chancel, baptisteries, church furniture, statues, and paintings, etc, which are typical features of a Thomas Christian church of today, are the products of Portuguese influences.

The ultimate result of the Portuguese (as well as the later European) influence on the church architecture was the gradual disappearance of the native forms and the restructuring and imposition of a varied style. However, the imbibitions of the foreign elements into the

Thomas Christian architecture should be understood by keeping in mind the historical course that divided the Thomas Christian loyalties.

The Portuguese influence on churches of Kerala could not completely drain off its indigenous character. Some churches which were constructed during the time of the Portuguese had adapted features from the indigenous church plan and had incorporated it with the requirements of the Western tenets of Christianity. Although the Portuguese used coercion and force to reform the Thomas Christians in every aspect, they were not wholly successful. The Portuguese attempt to completely revamp the Thomas Christian Churches to the Western model could not materialize. The continuation of the traditional spatial plan of Thomas Christian architecture rightfully justifies the case. The Portuguese instead did not wholly opt-out of the general plan of the Thomas Christian churches. Certain structural elements were introduced in the churches' existing plan to accommodate the liturgical and ritualistic necessities. However, the introduction of the Baroque façade, which aimed to bring the Thomas Christian churches in harmony with the Western church models gained popularity among the Thomas Christians. Many churches that did not possess the façade before had them added to their front of the church making the structure more imposing. The churches at Changanachery, Pala, Kadathuruty, Chenganoor, Kalliooppara, Kanjur Puthenchira, Palayur, etc have facades build in front of them. These churches prefer building their structures in the traditional style rather than the western style, although some western features have percolated in.

To summarize, the key findings of the research is cemented is that since the Thomas Christians had a different path of evolution and development their churches would also be different from the conventional model of the European Churches. The core argument of the research is that the impact of Portuguese resulted in the formation of a hybridized style of church architecture. Despite the conscious efforts from the Portuguese in bringing changes to the architecture of the church, no major change concerning the basic plan could be brought out. Thomas Christian architectural features continued without major changes until the 20th centuries. Some of the elements of the Thomas Christian architectural traits, such as the flagstuffs or *Kodimarams* have been imbibed by the Latin churches in due course as a means to integrate with their cultural spaces. It is necessary to retain the 'original' Thomas Christian architectural style because it predates the colonial interventions and reflects an original creation.

7.1.0. Scope for Further Research

As the research is limited to the influence of Portuguese on church architecture and does not engage with the other colonial powers. Practical difficulties in mapping the church structures exclusively belonging to the Latin rite can shed significant insights into the aspect of imbibitions of elements of Thomas Christian architecture and its deeper implications. Research on the Christian iconography and its implication, considering indigenous as well as European would be an interesting area to explore. A comparative study of the church murals and the temple murals in Kerala can bring out the parallel circulation of the concepts of spirituality and its manifestations on iconography. The impact of other colonial powers on the church architecture of Kerala and the various building techniques and technologies involved in the construction of the churches in detail can harvest interesting reflections on the construction of secular spaces.

7.2.0. Church Architecture Today

The Christian architecture of Kerala has now been completely revamped with the influence of the Western church models. Most of the churches that are build today have features of Romanesque, Byzantine as well as contemporary models. Instead of the altar-naïve-porch plan, the churches of today are following the pattern of building churches in the form of the crucifix. The St George Church at Edapally, the Puthanpally in Thrissur, the new Angamaly Church, etc follow a mix of the Western and contemporary construction model.

A comparative study of the basic elevational and spatial plan of a pre-Portuguese and a post-Portuguese Thomas Christian Church brings out clarity on the various levels and layers of foreign influence. In the light of the present research, it is possible to understand that the basic plan and elevation of the Thomas Christian churches remained without many alterations and survived to the 20th century. The churches of the Thomas Christians since their Portuguese encounter had departed in varying degrees from the indigenous architecture model that gave a unique existence to their churches. Although the influence of the Portuguese was very slow to capture the Thomas Christians, the influence had a profound impact on their faith and traditions following the Synod of Diamper which in turn reflected in their church architecture

APPENDIX ONE

CHRONOLOGY

A. THOMAS CHRISTIANS EVOLUTION UP TO THE COONAN CROSS OATH

The given chronology is based on the dates and sequences provided by George Menachery in his work *Indian Church History Classics The Nazranis*.

BCE

30	The Crucifixion
40+	Apostle Thomas in the service of King Gondophares in Taxila
52	Thomas the Apostle landed in (Cranganore) Kodungalloor, Thrissur
52-72	Thomas, the Apostle builds seven churches
72	Martyrdom of St Thomas the Apostle at Mylapore near modern Madras
190	Pantaenus from Alexandria visited India and St Thomas Christians of Malabar
345	Thomas of Cana or Kanai Thomas arrives at Cranganore (Kodungalloor) with 72 Christian families from Persia
340-360	Thomas Christians granted special rights and privileges by the Thazhekad Sasanam
522	Cosmos Indicopleusts visits South India
825	Mar Sabor and Mar Proth in Quilon
849	Granting of 72 royal privileges to the St Thomas Christians by Ayyanadikal Thiruvadikal through issuing of Tarisapilli Copper Plate

1293	Venetian traveler Marco Polo visits Malabar as well as the tomb of St Thomas at Mylapore
1324	Oderic, the Italian Franciscan speaks about Mylapore
1329 Quilon	Jordon Catelani appointed the first bishop of the diocese of
1348	The Papal representative John Marignoli at Quilon
1490	Two Chaldean bishops John and Thomas in Kerala
1493	Division of the world and mission lands between Spain and Portugal by Pope Alexander VI
1498	Vasco da Gama lands at Kappas near Kozhikode
1499	Cabral in Kozhikode
1500	Franciscan Friars at Cochin
1502	2 nd visit of Vasco da Gama
1503	Dominican priests at Cochin
1503	Mar Yahella, Mar Denaha, and Mar Yakoob arrives in Kerala
1514	Portuguese Padroado began
1514	Portuguese Funchal rule over Christians of Kerala
1534	Goa Diocese founded. The Parishes of Kannur Cochin, Quilon,Colombo and San Thome came under it
1540	The Franciscan Fr Vincent de Lagos starts Cranganore Seminary
1544-45	St Francis Xavier in Kerala
1550	First Jesuit House at Cochin
1557	Diocese of Cochin erected by Pope Paul IV
1565	Archdiocese of Angamaly founded
1577	Vaipicotta Seminary of Jesuits started
1583	Synod of Angamaly by Bishop Mar Abraham
1597	Bishop Mar Abraham, the last foreign bishop died and was buried in S Hormis Church Angamaly

1599	Fr Francis Roe declared the bishop of Angamaly
1599	Synod of Diamper convened by Archbishop Alexis de Menezes
1600	Padroado rule imposed on St Thomas Christians
1601	Fr Francis Roe appointed the first Latin bishop of St Thomas Christians
1609	Diocese of Cranganore erected, Diocese of Angamaly suppressed
1626	Edapally Ashram started for the religious community of Thomas Christians
1652	Mar Ahathullah at Madras not allowed to enter Kerala
1653	The Coonan Cross Oath at Mattancherry Cochin
1653	Ordination of Mar Thoma I as bishop of Puthenkurukar at Alengad

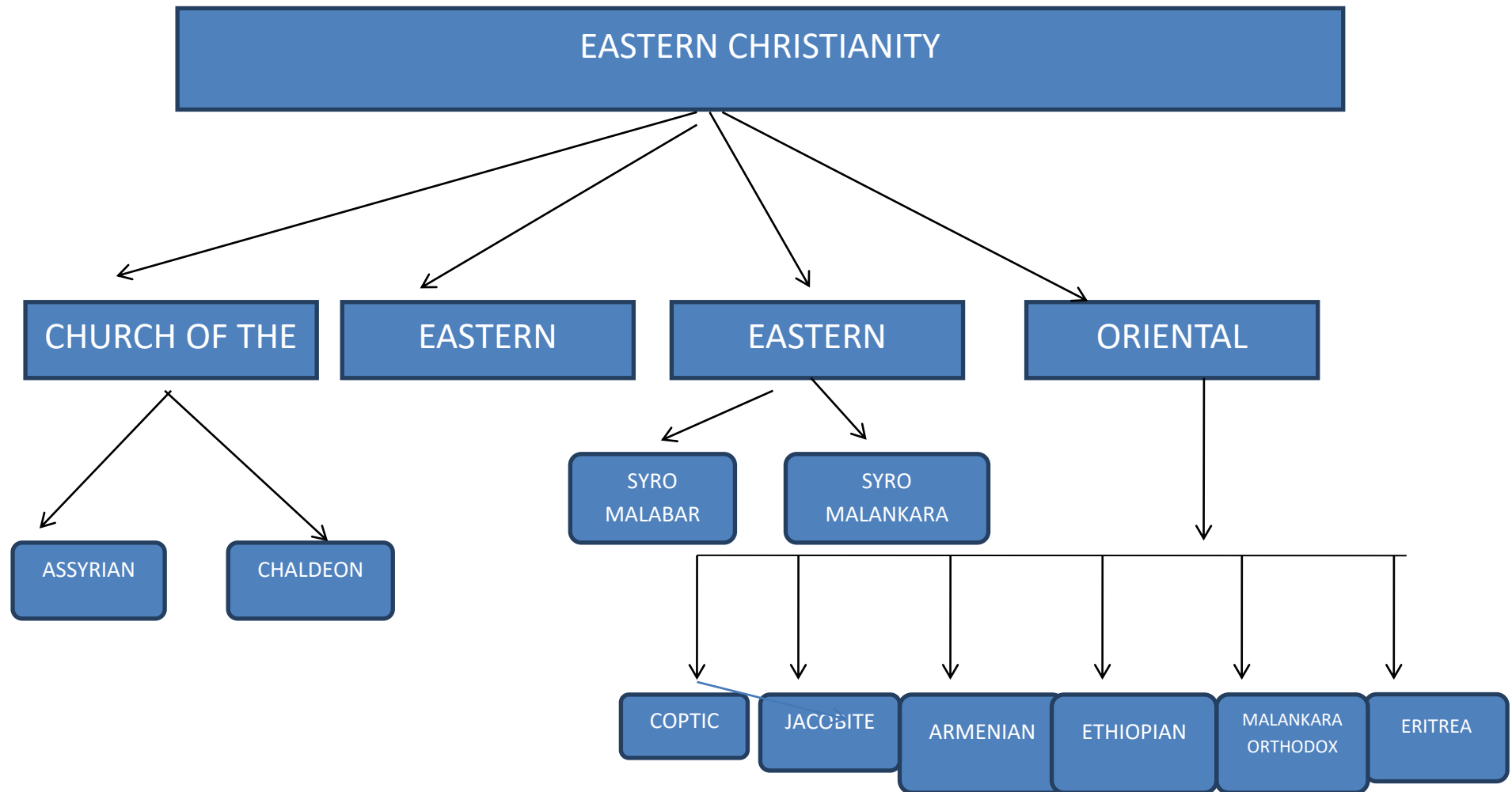
B. CHRONOLOGY OF THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PORTUGUESE IN MALABAR

1498	Arrival of Vasco da Gama in the Malabar Coast on 20 th May
1498	
1502	Second visit of Vasco da Gama
1503	Fort Emmanuel/ Manuel constructed by the Portuguese at
Cochin,	
	Pallipuram Fort Constructed at Vaypin Island- oldest existing European fort
1505	Appointment of Francisco de Almedia as the first Portuguese Viceroy 1505-1509
1510	Portuguese capture of Goa
1518-19	Fort St Thomas or the Thangasseri Fort constructed in Quilon(Kollam)
1523	Fort Cranganore or the Kottapuram Fort constructed in Kodungalloor

1524	Third visit of Vasco da Gama and his death
1530	Transfer of Portuguese Capital to Goa from Fort Cochin
1534	Diocese of Goa formed-Goa becomes a major Catholic center
1542	Arrival of Francis Xavier
1556	First printing press in India began action in Goa
1558	Diocese of Cochin established- 2 nd Latin Diocese in India
1567	First Council of Goa
1573	Printing Press at Cochin
1575	Second Council of Goa
1585	Third Council of Goa
1590	Fourth Council of Goa
1658	Capture of Portuguese fort St Thomas by the Dutch
1662	Capture of Portuguese fort at Cranganore by the Dutch
1663	Capture of Cochin by the Dutch- End of Portuguese supremacy in Kerala

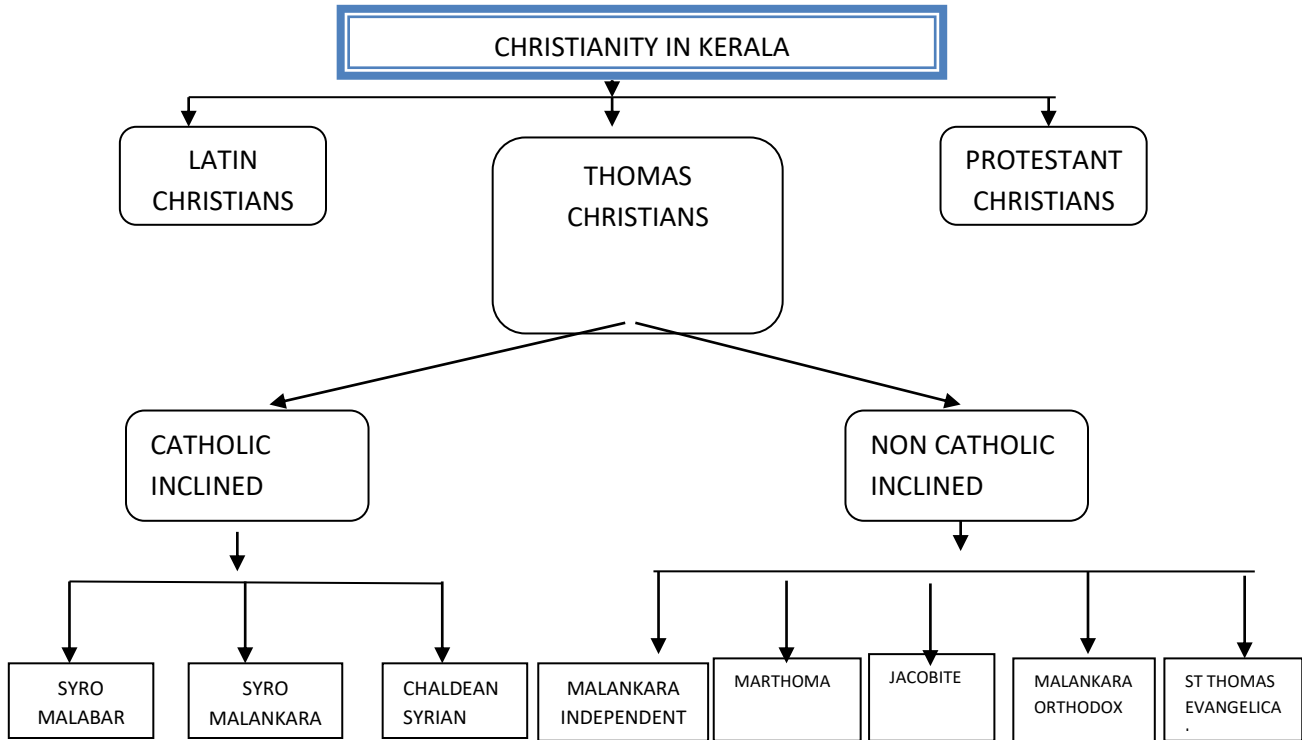
APPENDIX TWO

FLOW CHART ILLUSTRATING VARIOUS FACTIONS OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY



APPENDIX THREE

VARIOUS CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AND FACTIONS IN KERALA



The chart has focused on the Thomas Christian community.

There are various factions within the Protestant Christianity which the chart does not display.

GLOSSARY

<i>Aanamvellam</i>	Holywater. <i>Anamvellam</i> is usually kept in small bowls at the entrance of the church. The visitors can anoint themselves with the water before leaving the church
<i>Aanavaathil</i>	the large main door of ancient churches in Kerala. Such doors continued to exist in the churches until late 20 th century. However, following the renovations and demolitions of traditional models and their replacements with pure European specimens, such exquisite pieces of art began to lose their popularity. <i>Aanavaathil</i> of the Parappur St Johns Forance Church, Velur St Xavier's church etc. are displaced in the Indian Christian historical museum at Palayoor.
<i>Alayam</i>	the word signifies 'adobe or house'. The word also appears in Tamil and bears the same meaning.
<i>Anjuvannams</i>	a merchant guild, operating in medieval south India mostly comprising of West Asian traders belonging to the Muslim, Jewish, Syrian Christian and the Parsi communities. The Tarisapalli Copper Plate and Jewish Copper Plates of Cochin have mentions about this guild system.
<i>Asari</i>	the traditional village architect.
<i>Ayudhapura</i>	place where arms are kept. <i>Ayudham</i> -arm, and <i>pura</i> means shed or house
Bhagavati	a title for female Hindu deities. The word has its origins in Sanskrit.
<i>Balikallu</i>	the sacrificial stone. According to 'hindu' traditions a <i>balikallu</i> represents a diety.
Buon fresco	the technique uses painting with pigments mixed with water on a freshly prepared wet or damp lime plaster.

Capiars	trustee or sexton of the church. The office of Kapiiyar or Capiar is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the church.
Charnockite	a kind of alkali granite rock seen mostly in Southern India, especially Madras
<i>Deepasthambham</i>	also spelt as <i>dipasthambha</i> is the lampstand. It is also known as <i>kalvilakku</i> . The structure is seen in the Hindu temples in Kerala. It was also an important component of ancient Thomas Christian churches.
<i>Devalayam</i>	translated to house of God. The term is mostly used as an alternative for ‘ <i>palli</i> ’ to describe a Christian church.
<i>Devalayasandarshanam</i>	visits to <i>devalayams</i> . The term means visits to the adobe of God. In popular usage the word signifies visits to churches (<i>devalayams</i>)
<i>Ettukettu</i>	a type of traditional Kerala residential building style that has two <i>nadumuttams</i> or the central open courtyard
Hykala	The term has Syrian roots and comes from the word <i>Hykalo</i> meaning ‘temple’.
<i>Kathakali</i>	a classical dance form of Kerala in the story play genere. The five major veshams in Kathakali are <i>Kathi</i> , <i>Pacha</i> , <i>Thaadi</i> , <i>Minukku</i> and <i>Kari</i> .
<i>Kathanar</i>	the term used to signify the Thomas Christian priests. Recently the term has been replaced in popular usage with ‘ <i>Achhan</i> ’.
<i>Kavus</i>	sacred groves. <i>Kavus</i> are related to nature worship, snake worship etc and is considered as a sacred space. <i>Sarppakkavu</i> or <i>Nagatthankavu</i> are terms used to describe sacred groves dedicated to the snakes.
<i>Kera</i>	coconut.
<i>Kestroma</i>	The space separated by railings between the altar and the nave. The <i>Kestroma</i> is usually elevated from the <i>Hykala</i> by a step, yet remains lower than the altar. Usually the baptismal fonts are placed in the Southern side of the

	<i>Kestroma</i> in Orthodox and Jacobite churches of the Thomas Christians.
<i>Kodiyettam</i>	The flag hoisting ceremony. The ceremony is held to commoerate auspicious events especially temple festivals, church feasts etc.In Thomas Christain tradition,flags are hoisted 8 days before the church feasts and signifies the commencement of the festivities.
<i>Kilivathil</i>	<i>Kilivathil</i> can be considered as a version of ‘window’ typical in Kerala style of architecture. Although the structure was entirely different from the more larger ‘ <i>janelas</i> ’ introduced by the Portuguese after 15 th century, the purpose the element was similar despite its reduced dimensions nad size
<i>Kodimaram:</i>	The flagstaff is known as <i>kodimaram</i> . Another word for the structure is <i>dwajasthambham</i> .
<i>Kottupura</i>	an accessory structure located within the church compound of a traditional Thomas Christian church were musical instruments are kept and musicians play music.
<i>Madbaha</i>	The term has Syrian origin and is derived from the Syrian word <i>Dabaha</i> which means sacrifice or offering
<i>Makaram</i>	a month in the Malayalam calendar, <i>Kollavarsham</i> –mid Jnuary to mid February.
<i>Malanadu</i>	hill country, <i>Mala</i> means mountain and <i>Nadu</i> meaning Lands
Malayalam	A Dravidian language spoken in the South Indian state of Kerala and the Lakshadweep islands. Recognized as one of the Classical languages of India
<i>Mammooseesa Totti</i>	baptismal fonts. <i>Mamoodessa</i> – baptism, <i>totti</i> -vessel/font
<i>Manimalika</i>	bell towers. These bell towers are seen in the churches belonging to the Catholic faction of the Thomas Christians and the Latin Christians.A purely Western addition, the towers range in height from two storeys to seven storeys.
<i>Margamkalipattu</i>	a traditional dance form popular among the Thomas Christians of Kerala.

<i>Marumakkathayam</i>	the matrilineal system of inheritance. The word literally means inheritance by sisters children (marumakkal). In this system, the sons and daughters of a particular person are not entitled to inherit the properties owned by him.
<i>Mezzo fresco</i>	painted on nearly dry intonaco so that the pigment slightly percolates into the plaster
<i>Mukhamandapam</i>	<i>Mukhamandapam</i> in Hindu temples is a pillared chamber, closed or open, seen in the opening of the <i>garbha graham</i> or the sanctum. In traditional Thomas Christian churches, the <i>Mukhamandapa</i> was a porch located in front of the main entrance in the western side and /or at the northern lateral side of the <i>Hykala</i> .
<i>Naatturajyams</i>	local principalities under the rule of rajas
<i>Nadumuttam</i>	the central open courtyard inside a building. Another term to describe the space is Naduthalam.
<i>Nalukettu</i>	a type of Kerala residential building style having a single central open courtyard or <i>nadumuttam</i> .
<i>Namboothiris</i>	Kerala Brahmins. The <i>Namboothiris</i> having an elevated status within the community are called <i>Namboothiripad</i> .
<i>Nasrani Sthambhams</i>	the huge open air crosses typically found outside traditional Thomas Christian churches. The structure has an intrinsically carved base and a minimal superstructure in the shape of a cross. Structurally they are different in style from the Latin Crosses
<i>Nercha</i>	offering made to a God or a diety. Money, valuables, food etc are popularly presented as nerchas .
<i>Ootupura</i>	the dining hall where community feasts are held. Today the <i>Oottupuras</i> have morphed into a more multipurpose structures popularly known as the parish hall.
<i>Padippura</i>	the gatehouses which provides access to the interiors of the church compound.
<i>Palli</i>	a Malayalam term with Pali origins, used to describe the worship spaces of Muslims, Christians and Jews in Kerala.

<i>Pandinadu</i>	the land of Pandyas
<i>Panikkar</i>	<i>Panikkar</i> or <i>Asan</i> is the term used to describe the teachers or tutors of <i>Kalaripayattu</i> .
<i>Pathinaryukettu</i>	a traditional model of Kerala residential buildings having 4 <i>Nadumuttams</i> .
<i>Pattayam</i>	deed of land issued as ownership to the land
<i>Pazhayakurukkar</i>	The Old Party, the group of Thomas Christians who remained in alliance with the Portuguese and the Catholic church following the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653CE.
<i>Pushpakoodu</i>	Pulpit, from where the priest delivers the preachings. The structure is a significant feature of various Western Christian factions. In Kerala such pulpits are seen in the churches of the Catholic faction of the Thomas Christians as well as the Latins. As the structure is designed in the form of a flower (pushpam), the structure is called as <i>pushpakoodu</i> .
<i>Puthenkurukkar</i>	The New Party, the faction of Thomas Christians who decided to adhere to the traditional liturgical and ecclesiastical dictums, completely rejecting Portuguese interferences and Catholic allegiances. The group continued alliances with the Church of the East following the Coonan Cross oath.
<i>Roopakoodu</i>	a casket or a box made of wood, within which the statues of saints are kept in the churches. During church feasts the <i>roopakoodu</i> is opened during a ceremony known as the <i>kooduthurakkal</i> especially in the Catholic churches.
Ruttal	the alterpiece or the altar backdrop, which may or maynot be attached to the backwall of the <i>Madbaha</i> .
Secco fresco	the painting style done on dry plaster thus requiring a medium to bind the paint to the surface.
<i>Sunahadose</i>	synod.
<i>Tali</i>	an ornament tied by the groom to the bride during the ceremony of marriages. <i>Talikettu</i> or tying of <i>tali</i> signifies the recognition of marriage analogous to the exchange of

	rings in the Western cultures. <i>Tali</i> is known as <i>mangalsutra</i> in some parts of India.
<i>Tamizhakam</i>	the geographical area occupied by the Tamil people that shared uniform language and culture. The space comprise of todays Tamilnadu, Kerala, southern parts of Karnataka and Andhrapradesh.
<i>Thirunaal</i>	Holy Day. The term is used to describe the feast day of a particular saint or to denote a holy day commemorating an important sacred event .
<i>Thirunaal pradakshinam</i>	processions during the occasion of a church feast during which the relics of the saint is carried in procession within the church compound or sometimes from the churches to the nearest market place and back accompanying with panchavadyam, colourful decorated umbrellas(<i>muttukudas</i>) etc.
<i>Vattezhuthu</i>	a writing system used to write the languages of Malayalam and Tamil. Although the form of writing was gradually replaced by the modern form of Tamil script, it continued to be in use in Kerala and many inscriptions related to the ancient Chera empires are in the Vattezhuthu script.
<i>Vedipura</i>	a place to store fireworks.
<i>Vilakku</i>	lamp. <i>Nilavilakku</i> or floor lamp and <i>Thookkuvilakku</i> or hanging lamps are some varients used within churches.

List of Thomas Christain Chruches till 18th century CE							
Sl No	Present Name	Textual Name	EST Date	Denomination	Geographica; Coordinates	Rennovations	Remarks
1	Akaparambu	Agaparambin	450CE/825	Jacobite	10°09'38.6N - 076°22'59.7E	18th century	recently rennovated
2	Alappuzha	Alapusha	1400CE	Catholic	9.49°N 76.33°E	1992	- NA -
3	Alengad	Alangattu/ Mangatta	1300CE	Catholic	10°6'0"N 76°18'0"E	18th /19thcentury	a church and two oratories
4	Ambazhakkad	Ambalacatta	300CE	Catholic	10.2628° N, 76.2906° E	1971	a church and an oratory
5	Angamaly (Basalica)	Angamale	450CE	Catholic	10.1906°N 76.3828°E	18th/19th cen	- NA -
6	Angamaly 2 Hormis	Angamale	480CE	Catholic	10°11'26.16N -076° 22'58.8E	- NA -	- NA -
7	Angamaly (Jacobite}	Angamale	9th cen	Jacobite	10°11'16.7N- 076°23'05.8E	18th/19th cen	- NA -
8	Arakkuzha	- NA -	999CE	Catholic	9.931614N - 76.599094E	1790CE	dedicated to St Mary
9	Arimbur	- NA -	900CE	Catholic	"10°29'0 N-"76°8'0E	1991	new structure
10	Arthat	Chatacolangaree	10th cen	Jacobite	10°37'38.7N- 076°03'25.9E	1807CE	cross on stone block found
11	Arthungal	- NA -	1581CE	Catholic	9.661114N - 76.300454E	1590CE	- NA -
12	Aruvithura	- NA -	301CE	Catholic	9°41'02.4N - 076°46'43.1E	16thc/1952CE	- NA -
13	Athirampuzha	- NA -	835CE	Catholic	9.6673N, 76.5382° E	1874/1966CE	New structure
14	Barananganam	Anacallungal ?/Baragore	1100CE	Catholic	9°42'00"N 76°43'40"E	1914CE	- NA -
15	Chalakudy	- NA -	600CE	Catholic	10°18'9"N 76°20'22"E	1987CE	New Structure
16	Changanacherry	Chenganare	1117CE	Catholic	9.444141°N 76.536625°E	13th & 18th c	Old structure exisits
17	Chempu	- NA -	1306CE	Jacobite	9°48'26"N 76°23'49"E	1981CE	New Structure
18	Chendamangalam 1	Cenotta	1577CE	Catholic	10.1797°N 76.2097°E	1581CE	- NA -
19	Chendamangalam 2*	Cenotta	1201CE	- NA -	- NA -	- NA -	Could not be located

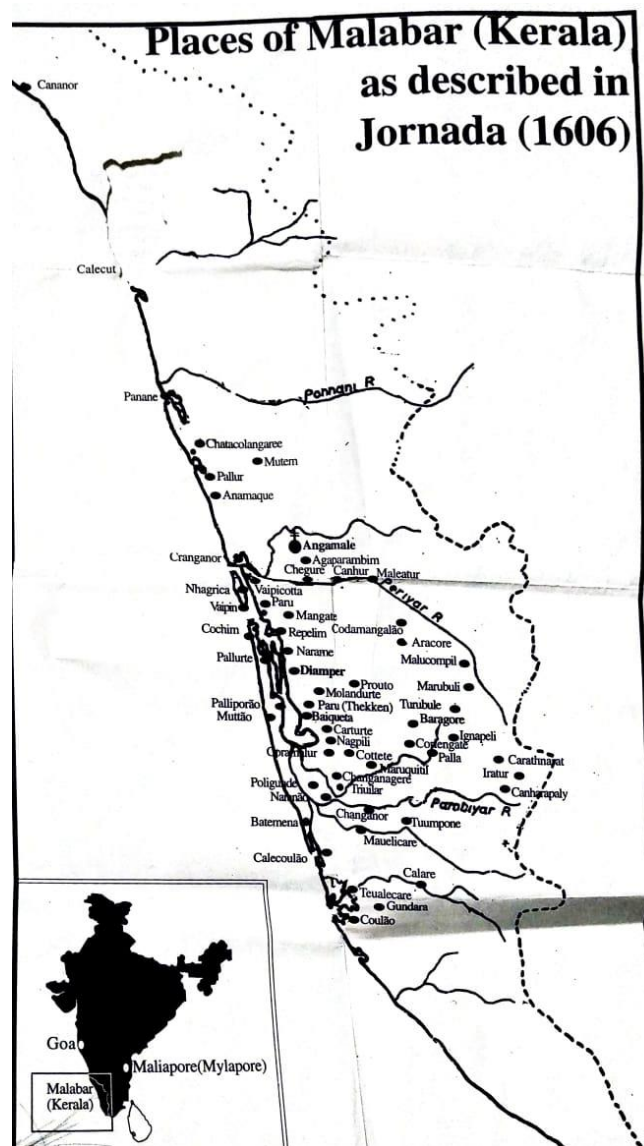
20	Chenganoor	Changanor	1175CE	Mixed	9°19'16.1 N- 076°36'24.2	before 1599CE	Old structure exists
21	Cheppad	Colicorangare	1175CE	Orthodox	9°14'10.2N - 076°28.20.6E	1952CE	ancient paintings
22	Cherpungal	- NA -	1096CE	Catholic	9°41'23"N 76°38'6"E	1111CE/1112CE	- NA -
23	Chowara	Cheguree/Clovare	NA	Catholic	10°7'30"N 76°23'12"E	18th cen	a church
24	Chungam	- NA -	1579CE	Catholic	9.600242°N 76.51742°E	before 1599CE	- NA -
25	Edakochi	- NA -	1199CE	Catholic	09°53'43.3 N- E076°17'50.2E	1709CE	- NA -
26	Edapalli	- NA -	593CE	Catholic	10°1'19"N 76°18'19"E	1911CE/2015CE	old structure exists
27	Elanji	Ignapeli	13th/14th c	Catholic	9.8332° N, 76.5435° E	1660CE/1680CE	- NA -
28	Enamavu	Anamaque	500CE/510CE	Catholic	10.5119° N, 76.0936° E	1795CE	Old Madbaha retained
29	Kaarakunnam	- NA -	1065CE	Jacobite	10.216°N 76.509°E	1300CE	- NA -
30	Kadamattom	- NA -	864 / 950CE	Jacobite	09°58'32.8N - 076° 29'56.6E	18th/19th cen	- NA -
31	Kadambanadu	Caramanate	325CE	Orthodox	9°7'0"N 76°41'0"E	1822CE	a church
32	Kadathuruty Knanaya	Carturte	500CE/510CE	Knanaya	09°45'40.7N - 076°29.29.4E	1456CE	Cross blessed by Menezes
33	Kadathuruty Catholic	Carturte	1009CE	Catholic	09°45'43.6N - 076°29'35.1E	1924CE	- NA -
34	Kallada	Calare	NA	Orthodox	9.0157° N, 76.6526° E	1930S	New structure
35	Kalloopara	- NA -	NA	Orthodox	09° 23'39.0N - 076° 38'15.1E	1339CE/2009CE	Two new porches added
36	Kalloorkkad/Chembakukam	Callurcatta	427CE	Catholic	09° 24'33.1 N- 076° 24'40.1E	1720CE	a church
37	Kanjirapalli	Canharapaly	1450CE	Catholic	09°33'31.9 N- 076°47'33.3E	1842CE	- NA -
38	Kanjoor	Canhur	863/1001CE	Catholic	10° 08'24.5 N- 076°25'49.3E	18th/19th cen	a church
39	Karingachira	Caringacera	722CE	Mixed	9.9515oN - 76.3575oE	18th/19th cen	a church
40	Karthikapalli	Catiapeli	1240CE/ 13th c	Orthodox	09°15'29.5 N- 076°26'58.5E	1581CE	- NA -
41	Karunagapally	- NA -	1240CE	Marthoma	9°3'16"N 76°32'7"E	- NA -	- NA -

42	Kayamkulam	Callecoulao	824CE	Orthodox	9.172°N 76.501°E	1972CE	New structure
43	Kodungalloor	Cranganore	52CE	Catholic	10.233761°N 76.194634°E	- NA -	- NA -
44	Kokkamangalam	- NA -	52CE	Catholic	9°40'47"N 76°22'26"E	1930s/2017CE	New structure
45	Kolenchery	- NA -	650CE	Orthodox	9.982968°N 76.476388°E	1963CE	New structure
46	Kollam 1- port church	Coulao	52CE	Catholic	8.881899°N 76.573781°E	1930s	New structure
47	Kollam 2 Tarishapalli	Coulao	825CE	Catholic	8.884644°N 76.565856°E	18th/19th cen	- NA -
48	Koratty	- NA -	1381CE	Catholic	8.88°N 76.60°E	1987CE	New structure
49	Kothamangalam 1- Valiya	Codamangalao	4th /1240/1343CE	Jacobite	10°03'44.5 N- 076°37'52.2E	1823CE	a church
50	Kothamagalām 2 Cheriya	Codamangalao	1451/1455CE	Jacobite	10.0625°N 76.629°E	after 1790CE	- NA -
51	Kothanelloor	- NA -	826CE/1220CE	Catholic	9.720092°N 76.523691°E	1895CE	- NA -
52	Kottapedi	- NA -	14th cen	Jacobite	10°36'54"N 76°1'43"E	18th/19th cen	- NA -
53	Kottayam 1-Valiya	Cotette	9th c 890CE	Knanaya	9°35'48.9N - 076°30'36.6E	1550CE	- NA -
54	Kottayam 2 Cheriya	Cotette	1579CE	Orthodox	9°35'44.9N - 076°30'40.1E	- NA -	- NA -
55	Kottekkad	- NA -	999CE	Catholic	10.5746° N, 76.1929° E	1984CE	New structure
56	Kudamaloor	- NA -	1125CE/1175CE	Catholic	9°37'18"N 76°30'49"E	1500CE	- NA -
57	Kundara	Gundara	NA	Orthodox	8°58'13"N 76°40'11"E	1930s	New structure
58	Kunnamkulam	- NA -	999CE	Catholic	10.65°N 76.08°E	after 1790CE	- NA -
59	Kuruvilangad	Corolongatta	345/105CE	Catholic	9°45'09.8N - 076°33'59.0E	1663CE	a church and an oratory
60	Maamallasherry	- NA -	1113CE	Syrian	9°54'49"N 76°29'25"E	after 1790CE	- NA -
61	Malayattoor	Maleatur	72CE	Catholic	10.1852° N, 76.5067° E	aftr 1790 CE	a church and an oratory
62	Manarkkad	- NA -	920CE	Jacobite	9°35'59"N 76°35'4"E	1949CE	New structure
63	Manjapra	- NA -	943CE/1401CE	Jacobite	10°12'30"N 76°27'10"E	2001	- NA -
64	Mattom	Mutem	480CE/550CE	Catholic	10°35'47.8N- 076°05'32.3E	before 1599CE	- NA -
65	Mavelikkara/Putiyakavu	Maueicare	943CE	Orthodox	9°15'14"N 76°32'47"E	1930s	New structure

66	Moozhikulam	- NA -	601/650CE	Catholic	10°11'16.02"N 76°19'42.45"E	after 1790CE	- NA -
67	Mulakulam	- NA -	1134CE	Orthodox	9.8428559, 76.4885839	1599CE	- NA -
68	Mulanthuruty	Molandurte	1225CE	Marthoma	9° 53' 55.3 - 076° 23' 17.1E	1575CE	- NA -
69	Mundenveli	- NA -	NA	Catholic	9.927658°N 76.255159°E	1868CE	- NA -
70	Muthalakkodam	- NA -	1312CE	Catholic	9°54'35"N 76°44'0"E	1973CE	New structure
71	Muttam Cherthala	Muttao	1023CE	Catholic	9.8377755°N 76.7126147°E	16th c	a church
72	Muttuchira /Njayapalli	Nagpili	510CE/550CE	Catholic	09°45'22.1N - 076°30'16.3E	before 1599CE	- NA -
73	Mylakombu	Malucompil	600/686 CE	Catholic	9°55'27"N 76°41'58"E	1930s	New structure
74	Nagapuzha	- NA -	900CE	Catholic	9°56'32"N 76°41'40"E	1930s	New structure
75	Nadamel	Nharamel	1175CE	Mixed	9° 56' 45" North, 76° 20' 56" East	18th/19th cen	a church
76	Nediyashala	- NA -	999CE	Catholic	9°53'12"N 76°40'26"E	1967CE	New structure
77	Neendakara	- NA -	1580CE	Catholic	8°56'21"N 76°32'31"E	1930s	New structure
78	Nilaykkal	- NA -	54CE	Orthodox	9.3741321°N 77.00182470°E	1930s	New structure
79	Niranam	Naranao	54CE	Orthodox	9.343044°N 76.5275°E	1912CE	Dutch style
80	Njarakkal	- NA -	1341CE/1451CE	Catholic	10°2'52"N 76°13'13"E	1824CE	- NA -
81	Omelloor	- NA -	1573CE	Orthodox	9°15'3"N 76°45'13"E	1971CE	New structure
82	Pala	Palla	1002CE	Catholic	9°42'19.2N - 076°40'49.6E	1701CE	- NA -
83	Palayoor	Pallur	54CE	Catholic	10°34'51.08N- 076°01'59.7E	1792CE	- NA -
84	Paliyekkara	Pallicare	NA	Orthodox	9°22'39.7N - 076°33'51.2E	1814CE	a church
85	Pallippuram	Pallipuram	290CE	Catholic	10.167483°N 76.182809°E	before 1599CE	a church
86	Parappookkara	- NA -	400CE/5th c	Catholic	10°24'0"N 76°14'59"E	1380, 18th c & 1980	- NA -

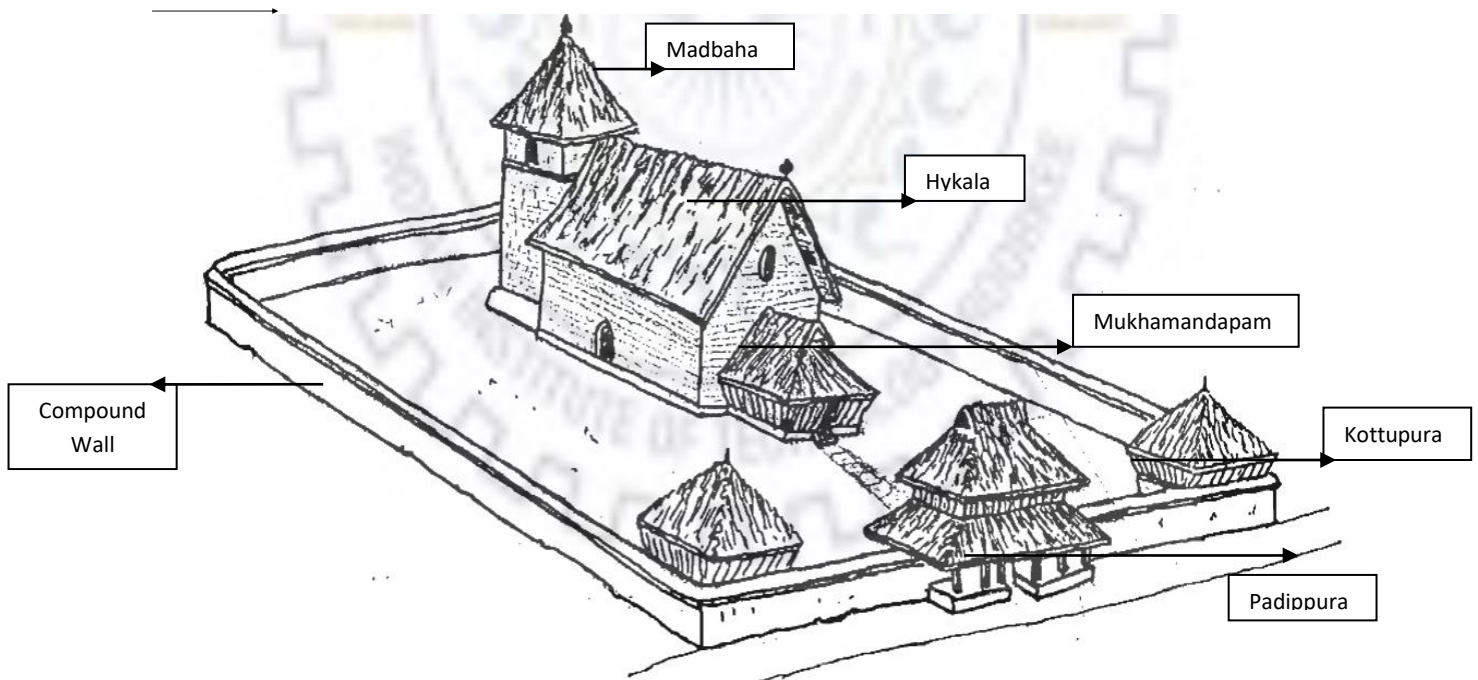
87	Pazhuvil	- NA -	883CE/960CE	Catholic	10°24'55.5N - 076°09'27.0E	after 1790CE	- NA -
88	Piravam	Prouto	2nd or 3rd c CE	Jacobite	9°52'35.5N - 076°29'17.8E	after 1790CE	- NA -
89	Poonjar	- NA -	1381CE	Catholic	9°40'30"N 76°48'28"E	1937CE	New structure
90	Pulinkunne	Poligunde	NA	Catholic	9.412°N 76.41°E	1830s	- NA -
91	Purakkad	Porcaa	400CE	Catholic	9°21'15"N 76°21'55"E	18th/19th cen	- NA -
92	Puthanchira	- NA -	400CE	Catholic	10.2723° N, 76.2421° E	16th cen/1915CE	- NA -
93	Puthupalli	- NA -	1320CE/14th c	Orthodox	9.5520° N, 76.5674° E	2001CE	- NA -
94	Ramapuram	- NA -	1450CE	Catholic	9°47'55.9N - 076°39.51.9E	1599CE	alterpiece remains
95	Tangi	- NA -	1538CE	Catholic	9.7076° N, 76.2975° E	1709CE	- NA -
96	Thakzhekkat	- NA -	NA	Catholic	10.3312° N, 76.2740° E	1930s	New structure
97	Thavalakkara	Teualecare	4th cen	Orthodox	9°1'0"N 76°35'0"E	1965CE	New structure
98	Thiruvithamkode	- NA -	63CE	Orthodox	8°14'54"N 77°17'50"E	after 1599CE	- NA -
99	Thumpamon	Tuumpone	NA	Orthodox	9°13'0"N 76°43'0"E	after 1790CE	- NA -
100	Thuruthipuram	- NA -	1531CE/1533CE	Catholic	10.1968° N, 76.2214° E	after 1937CE	New structure
101	Udayamperoor	Odiamper	510CE	Catholic	9°55'00.6N - 076°21'47.7E	16th c/18th cen	a church
102	Vadakkara	- NA -	1098CE	Jacobite	11°34'2"N 75°36'2"E	after 1790CE	- NA -
103	Vadakkan Paravoor/Kottakavu	Paru	54CE	Catholic	10°08'55.0N - 076°13'05.1E	1304CE/1560CE	- NA -
104	Vadakkan Paravoor 2	Paru	1566CE	Jacobite	10°08'56.9N - 076°13'24.8E	1566CE	- NA -
105	Vadakkan Pudukkad	- NA -	400CE	Catholic	10.5370° N, 76.0885° E	1971CE	New structure
106	Vadayaar	- NA -	997CE/1001CE	Catholic	9°46'30"N 76°25'45"E	1932CE	New structure
107	Vaikkom	- NA -	1309CE	Catholic	9.7216° N, 76.3927° E	1890CE	- NA -
108	Valappad	- NA -	1500CE	Catholic	10.4007° N, 76.1147° E	1890s	- NA -
109	Vechoor/Kudavechoor	- NA -	1463CE	Catholic	9°40'0"N 76°25'0"E	1870CE	- NA -
110	Veliyanad	- NA -	900CE	Catholic	9°51'0"N 76°30'0"E	1971CE	New structure
111	Venmani	- NA -	NA	Catholic	9°58'32"N 76°52'16"E	1930s	- NA -

MAP SHOWING PLACES IN MALABAR AS MENTIONED IN JORNADA



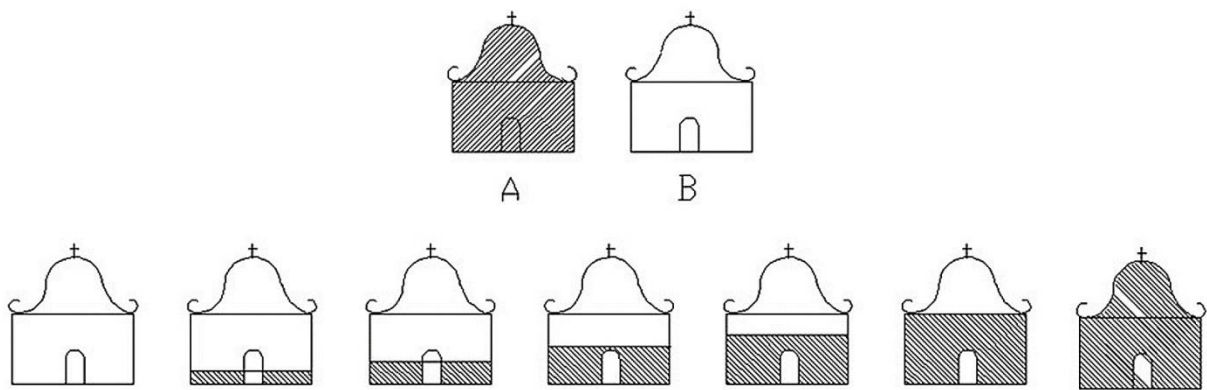
ILLUSTRATIONS AND SKETCHES

Fig. 1.0. Model of a Typical Pre Portuguese Thomas Christian Church as Reconstructed by Sunil Edward



The figure illustrates a reconstructed model of a typical pre-Portuguese Thomas Christian Church of Kerala. The structure is centered within a compound wall, with the *Padippura* providing access to the church compound. *Kottupuras* can be seen on each side of the *Padippura* close to the compound wall. The three-level elevation of the church building with the *Mukhamandapam*, *Hykala*, and the towering roof of the *Madbaha* can be seen. A door The roofs are shown as thatched with palm leaves according to the popular practice in the pre-Portuguese ear. A small *Kilivathil* can be seen towards the roof of *Madbaha*, which should not be mistaken for the windows that were introduced later. A similar structure can be seen in the western end of the *Hykala* wall too.

Fig.2.0. A Schematic representation of the architectural character of churches in Kerala during the 16th and 17th centuries as produced by S Panjikkaran and R Vedamuthu.



A-Catholic churches based on Western ecclesiastical traditions

B-Orthodox churches based on Eastern ecclesiastical traditions

The two extremities of architectural existence are depicted here. The churches occupying the interim positions have varying degrees of western influences

Fig .3.0. The exterior elevation and interior floor plan of a pre Portuguese Thomas Christian Church.

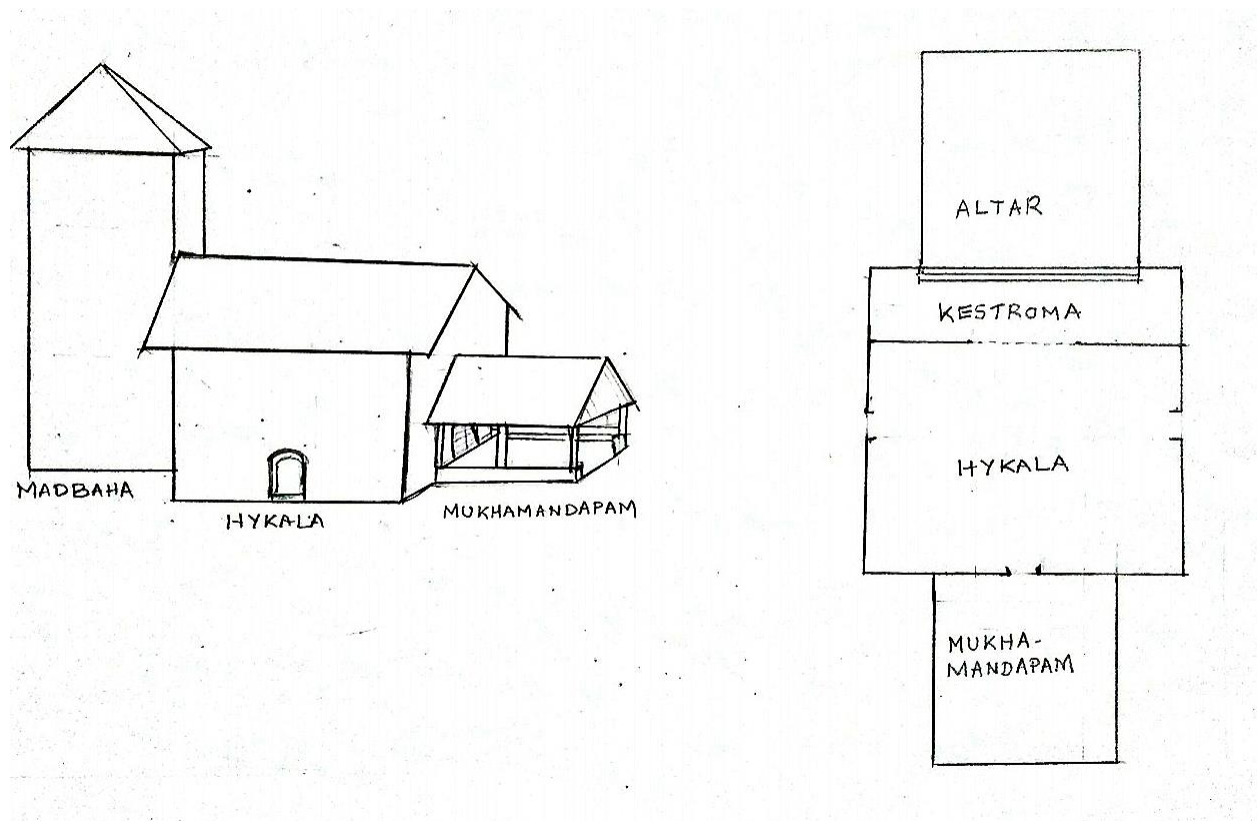
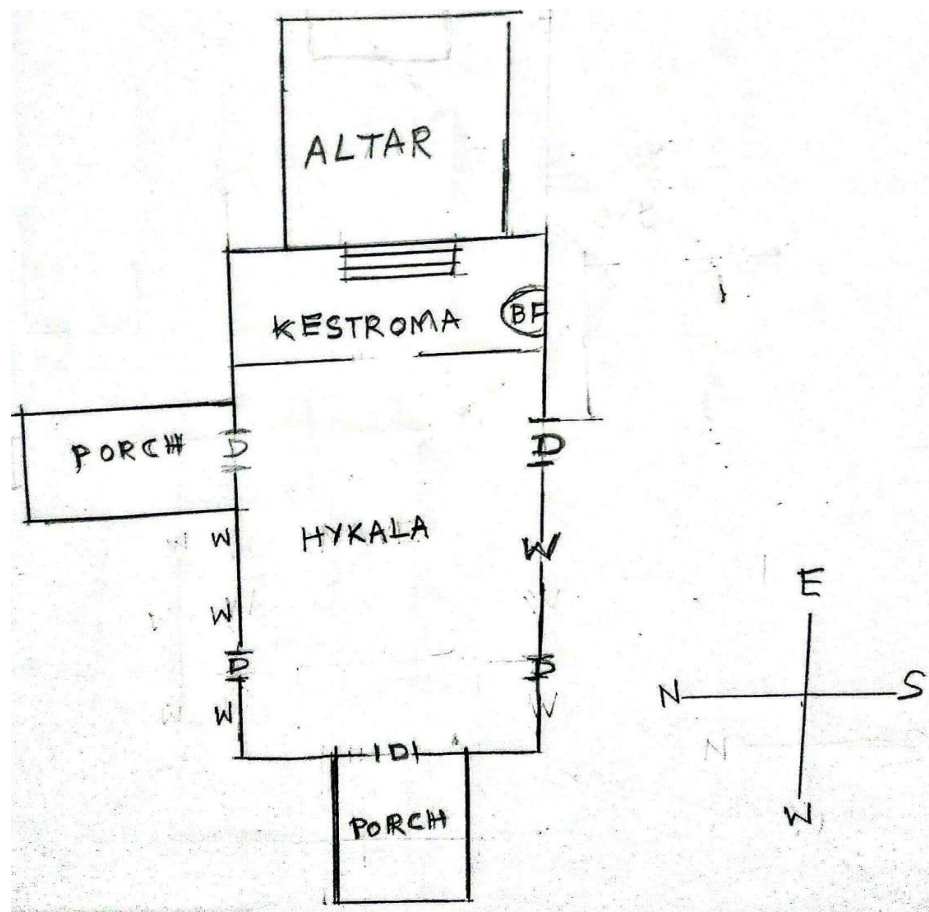


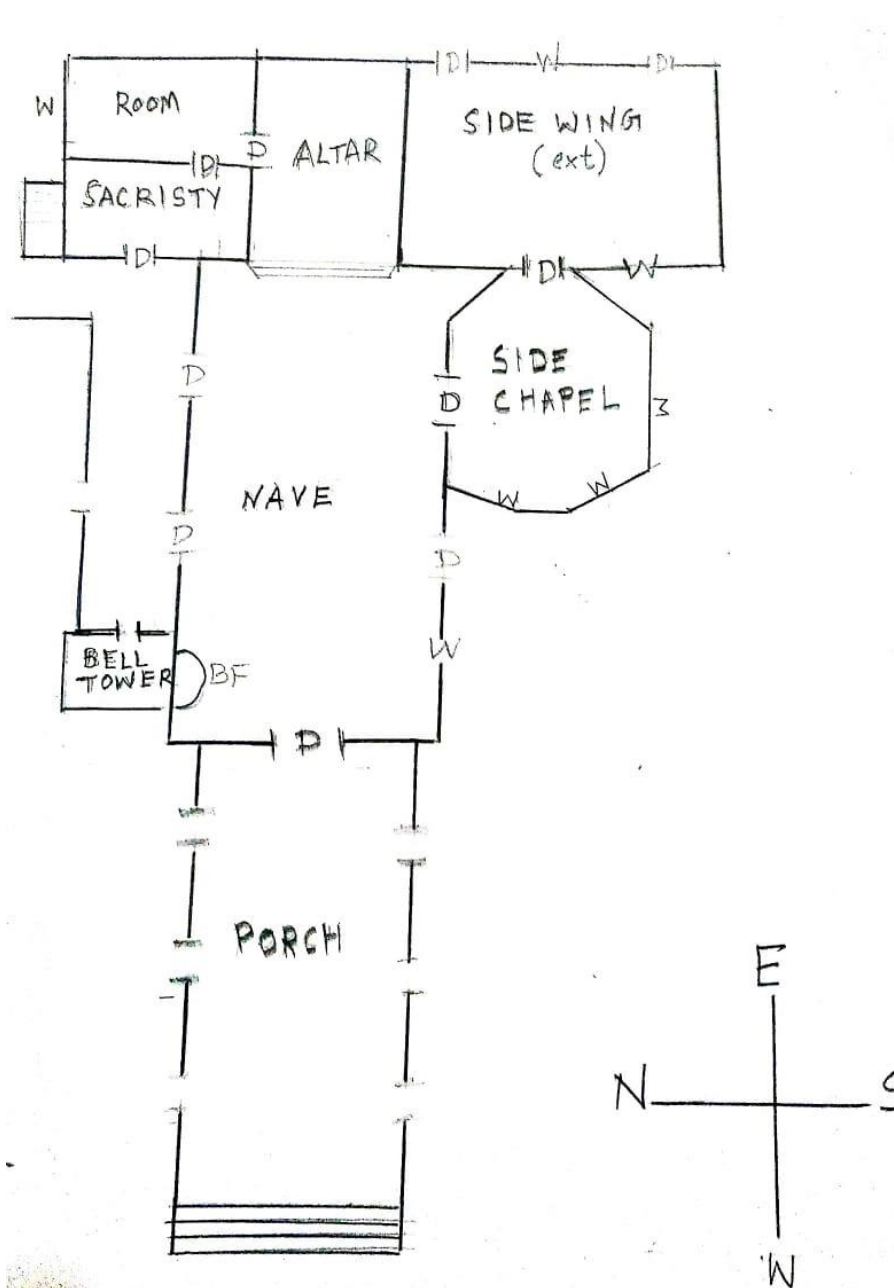
Fig.4.0. Floor plan of Old Syrian Church Chenganoor.



W-Window

D- Door

Fig.5.0. Floor plan of St Xavier's Church Velur

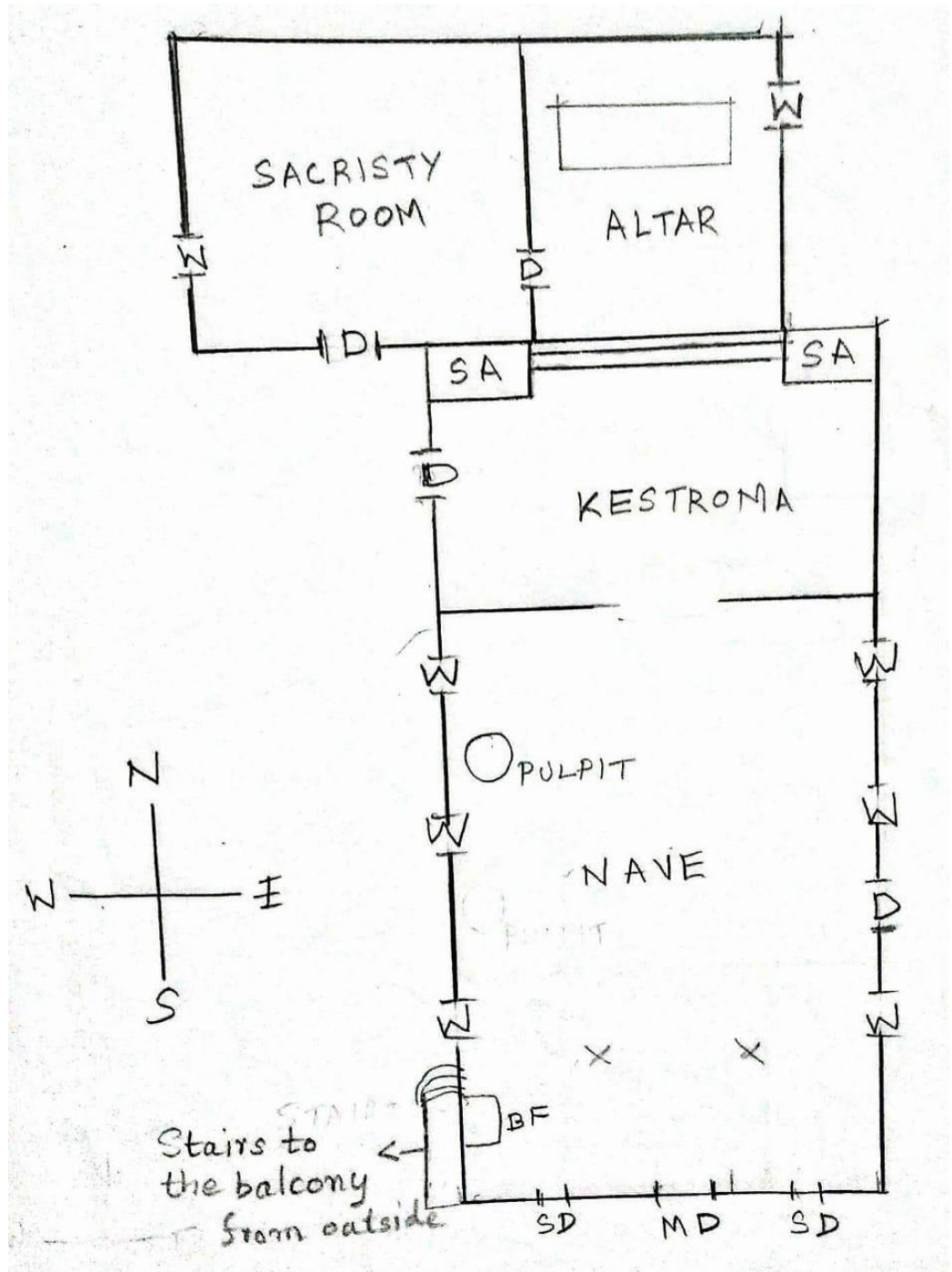


W-Window

D- Door

BF-Baptismal Font

Fig.6.0.Floor plan of Our Lady of Hope Vypin Church



W-Window

D- Door

BF-Baptismal Font

PLATES



Fig.1. Flight of steps leading to a church. St Marys Church Kuruvilangad



Fig.2. The façade in front of the porch. St Xavier's Church Velur



Fig.3. Mattom Kurishupalli



Fig.4. Main faced of St Xavier's Church Velur



Fg. 5.Kalloppara Church before renovation. Source :The Nazranies ,George Menachery



Fig.6. Facade of Udayamperoor Sunahadose Church



Fig.7. Front view of St George Orthodox Church Paliekara



Fig.9. St Mary's Orthodox Church Arthat



Fig.10. Old Church structure, Edapally



Fig.11. View of the northern lateral side of Old Syrian Church Chenganoor
Source: The Nazranies, George Menachery



Fig.12. Padippura of Old Syrian Church Chenganoor located towards the Northern side.



Fig.13. Kottupura or Vadyapura, Palai Cathedral



Fig.14. Kottupura or Vadyapura, St Mary's Church Kuruvilangad.



Fig.15. Manimalika or Beltower, St Mary's Church Kuruvilangad



Fig.16. Manimalika at Punnathara, Source : Thomapedia, George Menachery.

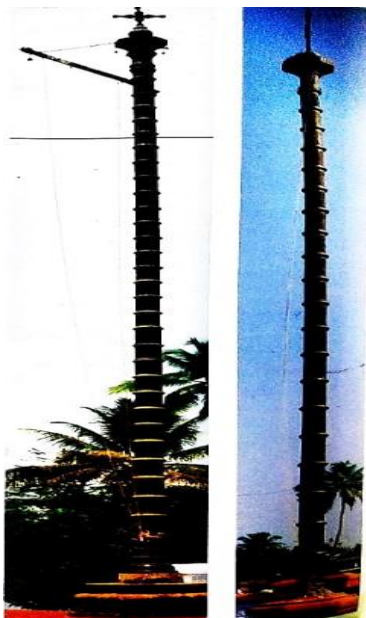


Fig.17. Kodimarams Source: The Nazranies George Menachery



Fig.18. Kodimaram at Kuruvilangad Church



Fig.19. Deepastambham at St Thomas Church Palayoor



Fig.20. Base of the Niranam Open Air Cross



Fig.21. The depiction of Crucifixion at the base of Kadathuruthy Open Air cross



Fig.22. Motif of elephant carved at the bottom of Cross at Niranam

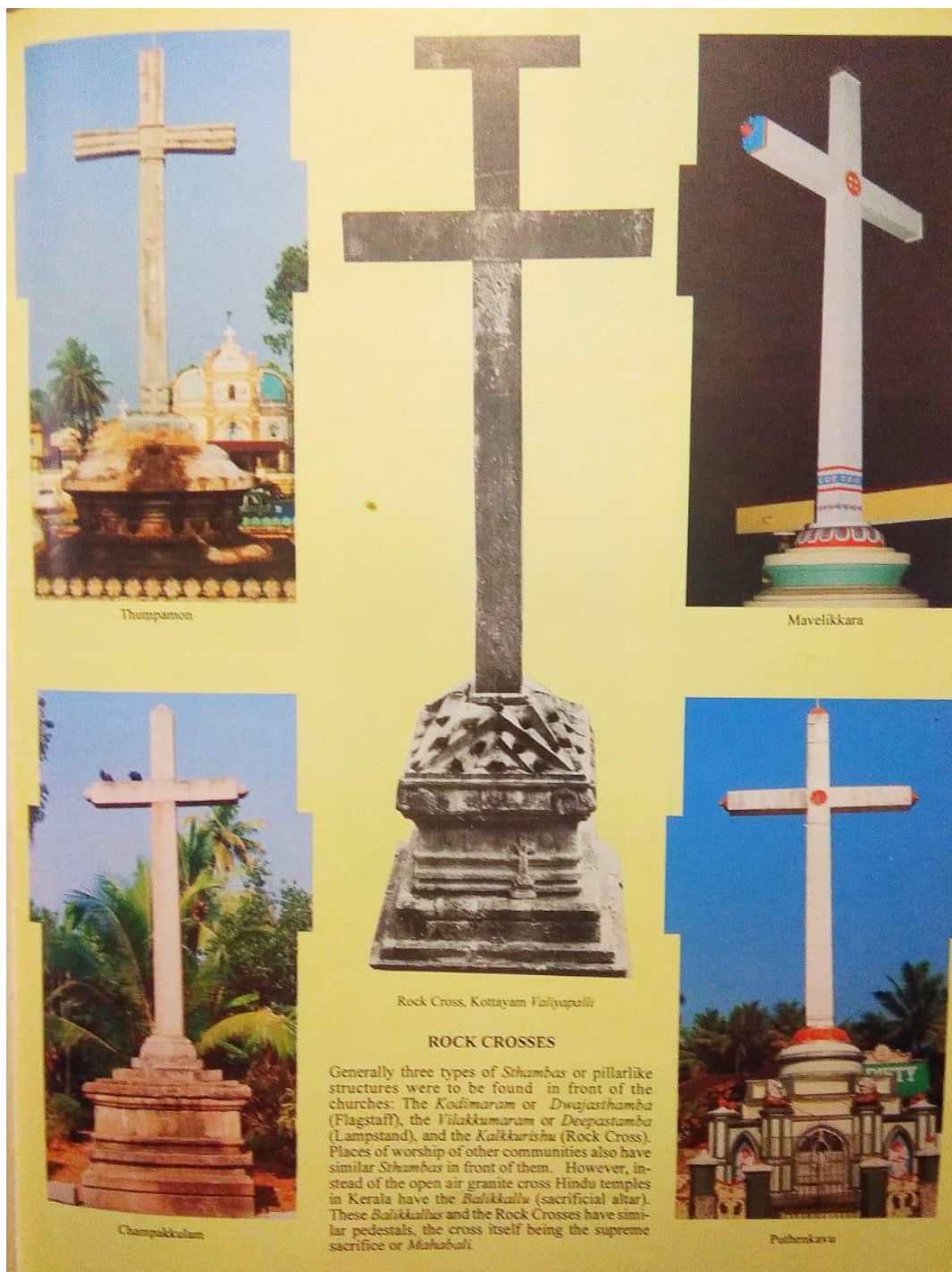


Fig.23. A collection of Open-Air Granite Crosses or Nasrani Sthambhams from various Thomas Christian Churches
Source: The Nazranies, George Menachery.



Fig.24. The view from Mukhamandapam, St Mary's Orthodox Church Arthat



Fig.25. Interior of Kallooppara Church from the Western balcony



Fig. 26. Interior of Udayamperoor Church



Fig.27. The stairs leading to the balcony at the Western end of the Hykala at Udayamperoor church



Fig.28. Door locking system, St Xavier's Church, Velur



Fig.29. Pushpakoodu, St Xavier's Church Velur

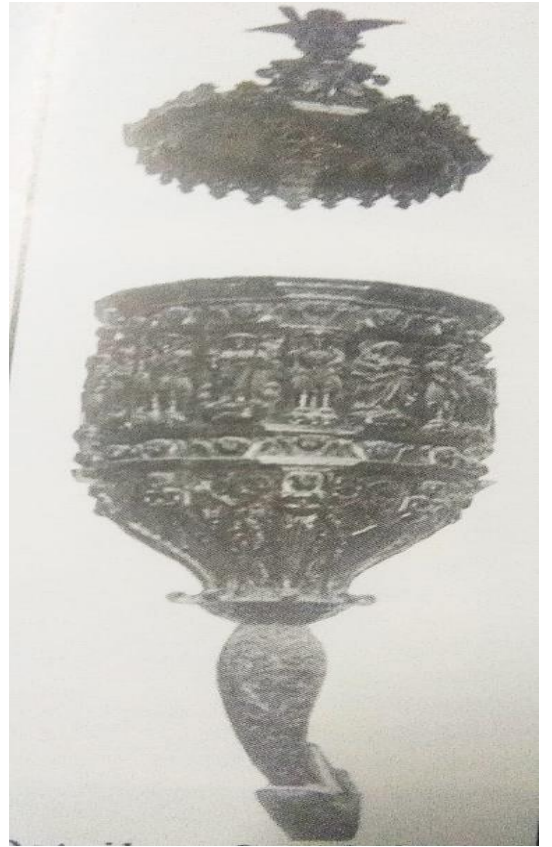


Fig.30. Pushpakoodu in the traditional Thomas Christian style.

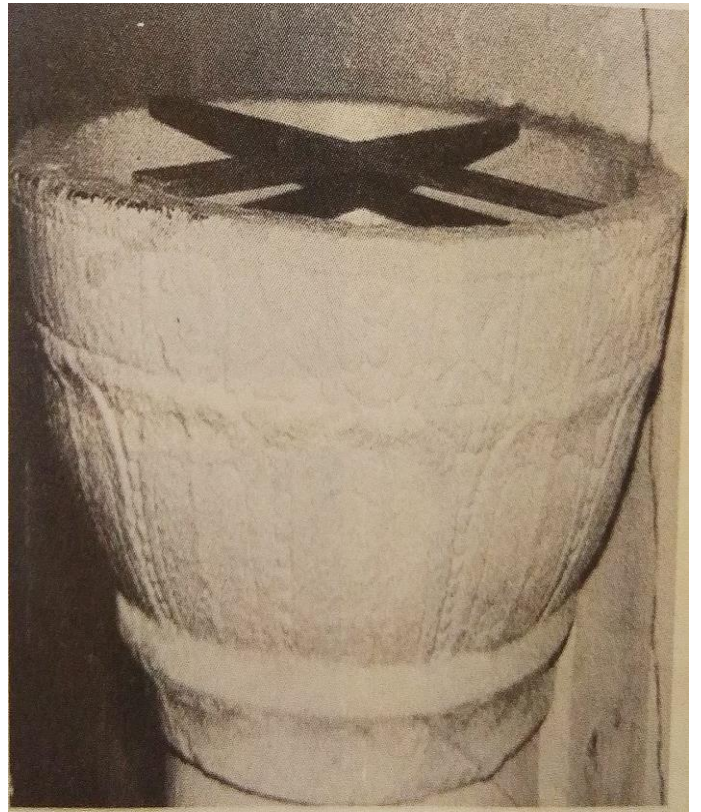


Fig.31. Decorated Retablo and Ceiling of Madbaha St Antony's Church, Ollur



Fig.33. Roopakoodus at Udayamperoor church

Fig.32. Baptismal font. Karthikapalli,Source:The Nazranies George Menachery.



Fig.34. Chalices and monstrance used during the Synod of Diamper



Fig.35. A five storeyed Capella at a market place



Fig.36. A three storeyed Capella across the road.

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Portuguese Impact on Christianity in Kerala with Special Reference to Church Architecture 16th - 18th Centuries

by Sinu Rose

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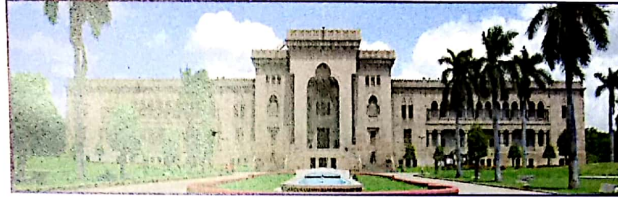
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A CRITICAL STUDY OF JORNADA OF DOM ALEXIS DE MENEZES AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE AND ITS PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Sinu Rose

Introduction

The greatest task of a historian engaged in the study and writing history is choosing out right the sources relevant for his studies. When it comes to the identification of sources and employing them in the writing of history, it becomes mandatory for the historians to have them used in a way that they complement to the area of discussion. Understanding whether a source is primary or secondary source is the most fundamental point in the first place. Primary sources, being created during the historical period under consideration, they need to be examined in the context of the socio economic and political milieu in which they were created and must be looked for the possibilities of biases and eulogies. These primary sources can range from a speech, letter, diary entry, song, painting, a piece of fabric, inscriptions and engravings, artifacts, architectural remains, coins and in the modern sense films, photographs, voice clips etc, which can provide a firsthand information about the historical event or the period that is under examination. There are certain communities and cultures whose history has been either unwritten or corrupted and manipulated by certain forces that are political, social and hegemonic, especially those communities that had a considerable exposure to colonial powers. India has a number of such communities who either lack a proper historical documentation or have their history distorted for ulterior motives. For such communities their collective memories serve as pointers to history.

When dealing with the history of the Thomas Christians during the early period of Portuguese encounter it is important to note that

there are particularly no direct records relating to the period from the Thomas Christians themselves and if at all were there was destroyed by the Portuguese during the Synod of Diamper and following it. Therefore Jornada is interesting because this book along with the Synod of Diamper records acts as a primal source for reconstructing the history of Thomas Christians in Kerala prior to their shift to the Catholic influences. Here again a major problem arises, although the Thomas Christians offered resistance to the Portuguese Latinization advances from the initial phase, there might have been a silent departure of these Christians from their long traditions to the newly encountered contours of faith.

Originally the book of Antonio de Gouvea was titled 'Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frei Aleixo de Menezes Primaz da India Orientali, Religioso da Ordem de S. Agostinho. Quando foy as Serras do Malavar, & lugares em que morao os antigos Christaos de S. Thome & os tirou de muytos erros & obdeiencia da Santa Igreja Romana, da qual passava de mil annos que estavam & reduzio a nossa Sancta Fe Catholica, & obdeiencia da Santa Igreja Romana, da qual passava de mil annos que estavam apartados', which when translated to English means, 'The journey of the Archbishop of Goa, Dom Frei Alexis de Menezes, primate of East India, of the Order of St. Augustine. When he went to the Serras (Mountains) of Malabar and to the places where inhabit the ancient Christians of St. Thomas, he brought them back from many errors and heresies, in which they were found and reduced them to our Holy Catholic Faith and to the Obedience of the Holy Roman Church,

from which they had remained separated for a thousand years'. Originally written in Portuguese in 1603, the book was published in 1606 from Coimbra in Portugal. The book primarily deals with the journeys undertaken by the Archbishop of Goa Alexis de Menezes through the settlements of the Thomas Christians, within a period of five months immediately before the Synod as well as five months following it. The book contains the description of Menezes' journeys among the Christians at large and has a treasure trove of information regarding Christianity and Christian cultural space in Kerala during the 16th century and the issues that came up following the clash of the Catholic faith with the indigenous Thomas Christians.

Despite the importance of the book, it has rarely utilized by the scholars for researches on the history of Kerala during the early Portuguese period. There are both linguistic and academic reasons for the issue. As the book was originally written in Portuguese, a complete mastery of the Portuguese language was essential for the comprehensive understanding of the book. The book received a complete English translation only as recently as 2003 due to the meticulous efforts of Dr Pius Malekandathil. Although a French translation of the book came out from Bruxelles and Antwerp in 1609, it was only in 1745 that a Latin version of the book was published by Joannes Facundus Raulin. The academic reasons for the book being less utilized for the studies of Kerala society and culture are many. The book is written solely on the Portuguese perspective of looking at a culture different from them and therefore has a mix of facts, distorted interpretations, biases and prejudices, preconceptions and ignorance. The book is highly eulogistic of the achievements of Portuguese missionaries, especially of Alexis de Menezes who took it keenly to Latinize the Thomas Christians. Although most of the details given in the text can be corroborated with the records of Synod of Diamper, the Synod itself was again an initiative from the Portuguese.² Therefore the book needs to be read bearing in mind the purpose and objectives with which it was compiled. The Portuguese mentalities to the non Catholic Christian communities in the aftermath of Protestant movement is best visible in the attitude shown by the author in

documenting and interpreting the information on the Thomas Christians.

A major challenge in front of a researcher while dealing with the *Jomada* would be placing it in the proper genera of literature. The title says that the work is essentially the narrative of the journeys taken up by Alexis de Menezes five months before the Synod of Diamper and five months following it. The work can essentially be considered a travel writing, but the real problem comes when the scholar has to decide whether it can be considered as a travelogue, a travel memoir or as a book on travel. Gouvea himself states that his work was based on the information he gathered from the 'most reliable accounts coming from honorable men and people with authority who accompanied the Archbishop during the entire journey, and were eyewitnesses, to all that happened....'³ Moreover he also states that his work consisted only in arranging the accounts written by other eyewitnesses so as to make it more comprehensive, organized and lucid⁴. This makes *Jomada* a mere compilation of the descriptions brought by those who were originally involved in the journey with Alexis de Menezes.

The next important aspect that scholars who wish to utilize the source material of *Jomada* as his primary source have to keep in mind is the background of the author and the circumstances that prompted him to write the particular document. Whether the author was asked to document by force or was his natural instinct that prompted him to write, really alters the quality of the document. Gouvea, in the Prologue to the *Jomada* describes the circumstances that had led him to take up the compilation of *Jomada*. According to the description, the Synod of Diamper saw the 'victory' of the Roman Catholic Church in brining the ancient and indigenous Christians of St Thomas to the obedience of Rome by severing its ties with the Babylonian Church. The incident is rather a matter of great importance, especially as Europe was suffering from the wounds caused by the trend of Reformation, which indeed saw the breakup of Christian fold in Europe. Therefore the success of the Synod was greatly celebrated in Europe too and the Portuguese in India were very keen to pass the information back to the country in the forms of letters and

messages, where the actual incidents were exaggerated or manipulated and different versions of the same event happened to circulate in mainland Portugal. This resulted in the deterioration of the impression among the people who had read them. The situation therefore demanded the creation of a authentic and credible picture of events that had happened in Malabar during the period of the Synod. Therefore the Augustinian priests decided to appoint a 'diligent cleric' who can gather the information, compile and organize them and send it to the Province in the necessity of clarification of doubts regarding any particular detailed described. Antonio Gouvea, who was then teaching Theology in the Augustinian monastery of Convent of Our Lady of Grace of Goa⁵, was chosen to take up the task. It is not mentioned the exact reason for having bestowed the duty of compilation of Jomada with Gouvea. One could only assume the diligent nature of Gouvea that might have, in the words of Gouvea, 'forced'⁶ the Prelates to take up the task. Here it has to be assumed that Gouvea was never pressurized to take up the task, but 'forced' was used as a phrase to nullify his merit as a 'diligent cleric'.

The major themes that are depicted in the work are multiple as the Portuguese tried their best to depict what they observed through their eyes. Gouvea attempts a detailed description of the life and times of the Thomas Christians during the time of the Portuguese as seen by Menezes and his associates. The description touches almost every aspect concerning Christians, Christianity and Christian life of that time ranging from the general physique and appearance of these Christians to their religious beliefs and practices. Gouvea mentions about the location of their habitation, their profession, religious practices, church structure⁷, clothing, culture, food habits⁸ the practice of caste differences⁹ and the supposed presence of unchristian beliefs. The frequent accuses towards the Christians for having poor knowledge of Christian doctrines and sacraments¹⁰ is evident throughout the work. The question of the Nestorian Link of the Thomas Christians is also looked on almost throughout the book. The dress and food habits of the Thomas Christians find space in the Jomada as well. Gouvea claims that the Christians dressed in the same manner

as that of the Malabar, with little or no major departures, with earrings and necklaces as no exception. They were also seem to be carrying swords and other weapons wherever they go except inside the churches¹¹. The Jomada describes at length a lot of information regarding the Christian lifestyle during the period. The book describes at length the practice of the veneration of the cross. There is a reference about the Pahlavi Cross of the Thomas Christians and the book is perhaps the oldest reference to it¹². Studies on the status of the Christian woman in the early modern period would benefit from the study of Jomada. Gouvea describes the Christian woman enjoying a better status than their Malabari counterparts and having lighter complexion and more dainty looks¹³.

Despite the fact that the book had a subjective mode of understanding of the Christianity and Christian cultural spaces of Kerala during the Portuguese period, it is valued for the detailed descriptions of the various traditions, the geographical distribution of the Christian demography, the indigenous Christian customs on marriages¹⁴ death, birth¹⁵ and other Holy days. The work also provides descriptions of the various churches the Bishop had visited throwing light of certain aspects of their architecture and structure. Most importantly the work accounts the final latinization attempts of the Portuguese and the state of the community immediately before and after the Synod of Diamper.

The creation of a religious hegemony by the Portuguese in the minds of the Christians of St Thomas who boast a more deep-rooted and solemn apostolic tradition than the Portuguese can be understood from the book. The Portuguese achieved their aims by articulating the biblical models in the context of the Kerala Christian tradition. For instance, the washing of the feet of the twelve Cassanaras (Kathanars) was seen symbolic to Jesus washing and anointing the feet of his twelve disciples. This very act of Menezes was understood as a mark of their humility and trustful nature.¹⁶ The onslaughts against the Thomas Christians in Malabar following the backdrop of the visit of Alexis de Menezes should be seen from the context of the Counter Reformation¹⁷ trend that was on full swing in Europe during that time as

well as the recent missionary activities that were mushrooming up in the region of Kerala. The Portuguese by the later part of 16th century had already inaugurated the policy of conversion in the coastal regions of Kerala to a significant extend.¹⁸ The Portuguese feared that the difference in customs and tradition of the StThomas Christians which were seen as 'errors' by the Portuguese could spread among the newly converted Christians also. This they feared would again create schism in the block of Christianity as the Reformation movement that had caused split in the Church¹⁹. The other broader areas to which the book can provide leads are to the impact of cultural colonialism, acculturation and cultural syncretism of the Thomas Christians prior to the Portuguese interlude.

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3. Malekandathil, *Jomada*, Prologue, p.LXXXIX
4. Ibid, p LXXX
5. Ibid, p LXXIX
6. *Jomada*, Prologue, p LXXIX
7. Gouvea provides a fair description about the Churches of these Christians. He notes that these Churches were built in the style of the temples of the gentiles. Gouvea notes that the churches had a whole lot of Crosses and notes that the churches in the hinterlands which were far away from the areas of primal Portuguese presence did not have images like those in the Churches in Europe but had Crosses as the sole objects of veneration. Menezes was deeply moved by the condition of the churches of these Christians for he notes there finding them 'dirty with indecent things'. He notes the larger presence of Crosses in these churches and identifies them as Cross of St Thomas. These crosses are said to have been present in both in churches and its premises as well as paintings within it. Read *Jomada*, p 29, p.244, p.237
8. Ibid, p.251
9. Ibid, p.243
10. Ibid, p.250
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THOMAS CHRISTIANS IN THE TRAVEL WRITINGS OF LUDOVICO
DE VARTHEMA**

945

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PERCEIVING THE OTHER: ANALYZING THE DEPICTION OF THE THOMAS CHRISTIANS IN THE TRAVEL WRITINGS OF LUDOVICO DE VARTHEMA

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The advent of the Europeans sets a new pace to the course of Indian history in general as well as Kerala history in particular. Owing to the vast proximity and vast networks of trade the region of South India had always attracted foreigners in all times. Although the primary aim of most of these travelers was commercial, there were a number of others who travelled for the sake of travel. Most of them documented what they observed about the new lands they visited. One of the wonders of the Orient was an interesting theme. E. F. Oaten in his work *European Travellers in India* has pointed out the works of Ludovico di Varthema, Duarte Barbosa and Fernão de Federick as the best source to study the habits and political condition of people of India especially after the European advent. The work of Varthema is chosen for its importance as a popular work that provided people with a mine of information about India and the countries beyond. The work got immense popularity as soon after its initial publication in Italian in 1510, it got translated in various other European languages like Latin (1511), Spanish (1520), German (1534) and French (1563)². These repeated translations are a proof of the fact that the Europeans were keen in knowing about the faraway lands and their urge for Christianizing them. Ludovico de Varthema provides a fair depiction of Christianity and the Christian life in India a few years after the arrival of the Portuguese. Varthema has visited Malabar Coast

a little before the arrival of Duarte Barbosa. Varthema was the native of Bologna, a Province in Italy³. He chose a combination of sea and land route to travel to India and the countries from the period 1502-1508⁴. He had started from Europe in the year 1502 which triggered a long itinerary of travel through Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Mecca reaching Aden by a voyage down the Red Sea, transversing the major cultural commercial and religious hotspots. After a brief period of imprisonment at Aden, Varthema made his way to the Northwest Coast of Africa. From here Varthema followed a zigzag mode of voyage as he travelled to Diu and from there again back to Ormuz crossing the Indian Ocean. After a brief visit at Heart, Varthema voyaged to "Cheo" (Kow) and Cambay. It is from m Cambay that Varthema begins his travel through the western coast of India. He reaches Mangalore after touching Ceval (Chaul), Dabul and Onor. After a brief sojourn at Vijayanagar he travels inland to reach Calicut and later Quilon. From Quilon Varthema travels to Coromondal coast and from there to "Banghella", where he meets two Sarman Christians with whom he proceeds to Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and Borneo. Interestingly Varthema mentions of having heard of a land to the south and of a very cold place where the day only lasted for four hours, which are the earliest references to Australia and Antarctic Circle which were discovered late. On his return back to Europe, Varthema visits Cannanore and Cochin and then departs to Europe in 1507 by the Cape route on a Portuguese ship⁵.

Very little is known about the personal life of Varthema, other than the fact that his father was a physician and that he is a married man and father of several children.⁶ Varthema, born in Bologna was the second European traveler who had visited and described about Vijayanagers.⁷ Varthema had spend almost seven years in the non European world, to use the Eurocentric word, East (1501-1508CE), and observed and wrote extensively about the East. He became the most famous travel writer of the East since the time of Marco Polo before his death in 1517.⁸ Although Varthema marks his Christian identity at Damascus and joins the Mamluk he retains his Christian identity as he reveals his Christian legacy to the Sarman Christians whom he met in Banghella as well as to the Milanese merchants and later to the Portuguese whom he met at Cannanore on his way back from the South East Asia. For Varthema religious identity has worked as a savior. Varthema's tactful use of his knowledge and prudence so as to gain maximum access to lands and cultures makes Rubies describe him as a person who added more to the evolution of the images of the traveler than to the evolution of the images of the East.⁹ The revelation to the Sarman Christians about his Christian backdrop has earned him their friendship and on the other hand with the Portuguese it proved his credibility and authenticity. Switching identities to benefit maximum from the experience of travel helped him in building authentic images of the East. Therefore it is explicit from the description of the role of in the travels of Varthema.

Although there are still debates over the regions Varthema travelled, there is unanimous acceptance of the authenticity of his visit to the Malabar region¹⁰. Varthema was a traveler who travelled "...not with a view to political and commercial possibilities, like the majority of the travelers, but for travel's sake. His motives were twofold, curiosity and ambition; curiosity to see, ambition for the renown of having seen", writes Jaten¹¹. He was therefore a keen observer and employs a style that is best suited for a travel narrative. Stephen Neil considers Varthema as a traveler whose writings can hardly be doubted for its veracity. He writes "...indeed the naiveté of his account of various events and activities give one reason to believe that he is recording and not inventing"¹². Varthema visited the Malabar coast a little before the establishment of

should be noted that there was hardly any impact of the Portuguese presence in the social cultural and religious fabric of the Malabar Coast.

Varthema was one among the earliest Portuguese travelers who encountered the St Thomas Christians of Kerala for the first time. Interestingly Varthema does not find them in the great city of Calicut despite its large scale trading activities and the Christian efficiency in trade. Nowhere in his book does he describes about the particular sect of St Thomas Christians other than first encountering them at Cacolem (Kayamkulam). He calls them Christians of St Thomas or Nestorians and vividly observes differences of rituals from the Church of Rome unto which Varthema belonged¹³. Interestingly Varthema had already encountered some Christians in Banghella (Bengal) whom he describes as Nestorian Christians. He observed that these Christians wrote from right to left and considered them to be Nestorians¹⁴. It should be noted that Varthema does not find any similarities between the St Thomas Christians and Sarman Christians even though he labels them as Nestorians. Varthema also encounters Christians acting as interpreters to the King of Pegu for trading purposes¹⁵. Varthema's Christian identity and his claim to have visited the Holy Land did help him earn the support of the Sarman Christians to a wider extend¹⁶. This therefore explains how religious identity enabled for the cross cultural bonding of people and brought in a notion of imagined community.

Henceforth, it is evident that Varthema had prior contact with Christians other than those belonging to the Roman fold. His contact with the various Churches of the Orient require special mention of his encounter with the Christians belonging to the Greek Churches at Menin¹⁷. His experience and exposure to the various Christian sects coupled with his prudence and skill aided in creating a reliable image of the Thomas Christians.

Varthema describes the country of Malabar in great detail. Interestingly Varthema identifies those who were other than Christians or Mo as 'pagan' and their gods as 'devils'. He mentions of finding the king of Calicut a 'pagan and worshipper of 'devil'. He describes the finding

the private chapel of the Zamorin, which is of the same style as the private temple of Zamorin. He notes all the pictures around the chapel are of St. Thomas. The inferences obtained from the works of Varthema should be seen as an outcome of his inference about the culture and lifestyle of the Christians.

Varthema as mentioned earlier first mentions Christians of St Thomas at Cacilom (Cochin), whom he describes as traders in Coromondal. It should be assumed that Varthema's acquaintance with these Christians as traders is more or less correct. These Christians are reported to have contact with the Church of Babylon as it is mentioned that every three years a priest comes to baptize them, and that he comes to them from Babylon¹⁹.

Varthema should have known the difference between the practices of these Christians as well as the Christians belonging to the Church of Rome. As he clearly defines the demarcation between 'they' and 'us', as well as 'we' and 'they'. He observes certain similarities and differences in the ecclesiastical and rituals of these Christians from the Roman Church. He observes that they keep Lent longer than we do but keep Easter like the Italians. He also notes that they observe solemnities like the followers of Catholic Church, but follows the Greek pattern²⁰.

No much description of the social and family life of these Christians is described by Varthema despite his ample acquaintance with them. He mentions certain names that are often used by the Christians of St Thomas. He notes that John, James, Mathew and Thomas and their personal variations are the common names²¹. Varthema does not mention about the female members of these Christians which were common. After completing his sojourn in Quilon, he proceeds to Coromondal where he finds the tomb of St Thomas. Like Marco Polo Varthema describes about seeing the tomb²².

The Christians whom Varthema might have met in Coromondal may be those belonging to the doctrine of St Thomas. However, Varthema does not give direct mention about the details of these Christians despite the fact that he had acquired good knowledge about the

land and its conditions from them. More information regarding the location of the tomb of St Thomas was obtained from them. Varthema's description contains references to the state of Christians in the region of Coromondal. The Christians faced persecution in the hands of the rulers of the area who is said to have killed and driven away numerous Christians from the region in secret²³. A reference to a miracle that occurred at the tomb of the Apostle also gets mention in the work. According to the miracle, which Varthema heard from a Christian as narrated by his priest, a Christian who was fatally wounded during a conflict with the Moors of the land was cured miraculously after he touched the tomb²⁴.

As he proceeds to Banghalla from Coromondal, he meets up with Christians from Sarman whom he observes as good traders. Interestingly Varthema describes about these Christians more than he did with the St Thomas Christians. It would have been probably due to the greater period of his association with them. He describes about their dress, skin color and religious and ecclesiastical practices and traditions. He describes them of wearing zebra made with folds. He notes that they hardly wore shoes and instead they wore 'a kind of breaches made of silk similar to those worn by mariners. These breaches were said to have fully laden with jewels which of course implies the prosperity of these Christians²⁵. They wear a cap, a palm and a half long made from red cloth²⁶. He also notes that like their breaches their heads were also covered with jewels²⁷. Varthema observes them to be 'as white as we are' with regards to their skin tone²⁸.

Varthema's observation skills demand our attention as he describes about the way these Christians dined and their food pattern. They were said to have been eating on a table like the European fashion. They are described to be the consumers of every kind of flesh²⁹. Varthema might have observed the dining pattern of St Thomas Christians who usually ate sitting on the floor like the Kerala traditional practice.

Varthema reflects about their ecclesiastical practices in detail. Like his description about St Thomas Christian practices he also describes about the religious tradition of these St Thomas Christians. He notes that they believed in 7

and the Twelve Apostles and also in the four Evangelists. He mentions that they have the sacrament of Baptism with water. He further notes that they write in contrary to the format he is familiar too and follows the Armenian format that writes from right to left.⁹ With regards to their observation of the Nativity and Passion Varthema notes that 'they say that they keep the Nativity and Passion of the Christians observe our Lent and other vigils in the course of the year'. Varthema notes that they were not ignorant about the existence of large number of Christians in the region of Europe as he notes that they knew that on the confines of the Rumi that is of the Grand Turke, there are very great Christians kings.¹⁰

Varthema's description of the two sets of Christians, both belonging to the 'Nestorian' tradition is variant. His keen observation and sense indistinguish the characteristics of the two sets of Christians requires special mention.

Varthema therefore attempts to provide a fair description of Christians of St Thomas. Although the details provided by him are not enormous he has attempted to provide light to the social life of these Christians. No other travel writer of the period had referred to the popular Christian names of the period. Duarte Barbosa who visited shortly after the arrival of Varthema had provided a more elaborate description of the Thomas Christians and their culture. However it should be noted that Barbosa being a Portuguese had more reach to the people of the land and also had served the Portuguese factory for over a decade. In addition to this Barbosa's knowledge of the language of

Malayalam had made it easier for him to establish direct contacts and conversations with the native population. Considering the limited exposure of Varthema to the society of Malabar his description and notes should be considered as a result of hardwork and observation. The following inferences can be drawn from the analysis of the people.

Firstly, the St Thomas Christians of Kerala were seen as an exotic group, a group of Christians who had Eastern origin, but 'Hindu' in culture'. Secondly, all these writers undisputedly confirm to the origin of this community to the legacy of St Thomas the Apostle. Thirdly these Christians were looked upon with as Nestorians due to the existence of a number of practices that were in practice in the Eastern Christianity and those which were alien to the Western Catholic Church.

Distinction between a universal, theological interpretation of religions and the practices give a very different interpretation that on one hand represented Christian community in different parts of the world as belonging to a shared religion. In the second approach a survey of its practices showed Christianity as practiced in different parts of the world as widely different. While one may agree that these are the result of divergent practices, this chapter argues that is not only the result of such an approach but also the conditioning of the narrative that forms the dominant historical voice of the authors. Thus, the European depiction of the practices in the travel writings presented the society of the Oriental Christians different in practices and lifestyle.

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