CHAPTER II
ARNOS PADIRI alias

Fr. JOANNEs ERNESTUS HANxLEDen-EARLY LIFE

Fr. Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, the German missionary who is, believed to have come to Kerala in 1701\(^1\) was the most prominent figure among the missionaries who contributed to the literature and culture of Kerala. Along with the missionary activities, he not only mastered Sanskrit and Malayalam, but did extensive literary exercises as well, like writing of books in the languages he learnt, surpassing most of his contemporary scholars.

Fr. Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden was born at Ostercappeln near Osnabruleck in the north-west of Germany in 1681\(^2\). Different lines of thought exist among the scholars about the birthplace of Fr. Joannes


Ernestus Hanxleden. Most of the scholars accept Ostercappeln in Germany as his birthplace. After completing his education in Philosophy, Hanxleden’s ambition was to spread the gospel of Christ in the whole world. He came into contact with Fr. William Weber, a Jesuit priest who was in charge of recruiting candidates for the Jesuit missions in India, particularly in South India in the surroundings of Calicut.

During this period, the ‘Society of Jesus’ influenced most of the religious congregations and they wanted to get the amazing secret of the successes of their missionary work. Different from the missionary works of other congregations, the ‘Society of Jesus’ adopted an innovative strategy of selecting a new team of volunteers who would be given

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4 D. Ferroli, op. cit., p.316-17. Fr. William Webber was born at Erfurt the capital of Thuringia on the 21st August, 1663. He joined the ‘Society in Mainz’ (15-7-1685), who was destined by his superiors to start a new mission in the surroundings of Calicut. So he was in search of candidates to be recruited for the Jesuit missions in India. He was highly impressed by the spirituality, politeness and earnestness of Hanxleden and he adopted him as his spiritual son. Also see, Franz. Kasper Schillinger, Persianische u. Ost-Indiische Reise, Nuerenberg, 1707, p. 58-101. Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, Arnos Padiriyude Malayalam Vyakaranam, (Mal), Renjima Publications, Mammood, 1993, p.15.

5 The members of Society of Jesus were known as Jesuits. It was a Catholic Religious Order founded by St. Ignatius Loyola.
training for undertaking a number of tasks so as to equip themselves to do their work in the most effective way wherever they go. The sense of the mission of Jesuits was complimented by the then Pope Paul VI thus:

Hence the missions, a concrete and moving testimony of the ‘mission’ of the society and the solicitude of the poor, for the sick, for those on the margins of the society. Wherever in the church, even in the most difficult and extreme fields, in the crossroads of ideologies, in the frontline of social conflicts, there has been and there is confrontation between the deepest desires of man and the perennial messages of the Gospels, there also have been, and there are Jesuits.

Hanxleden was impressed by the activities of the great Jesuit St. Francis Xavier in India and he wanted to follow in the footsteps of Francis Xavier. He was convinced that he could fulfil his dream only by committing himself to serving as a member of the ‘Society of Jesus’. Fr. William Weber was impressed by the spirituality, politeness, commitment and earnestness of Hanxleden; he was thereby accepted as a member of the

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7 Dr. Samual Nellermukal, Keralathile Samuhika Parivarthanam, (Mal), K.S. Books, Kottayam, 2003, p.97. St. Francis landed in Goa in May 1542 AD. He was blessed with the qualities necessary for a missionary. Dr. Samuel Nellermukal quotes the words of St. Francis Xavier on Paravar community:

I found very great intelligence among them, and if they had any one to instruct them in religion I doubt not they would turn out to be excellent Christians. Also see, Dr. George Menachery, ed., The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia, Vol.3, Vol. I, Thrissur, 1982, p.17. The mission of Xavier acquires an exceptional importance by the mission’s organization and its special character. It can be justly claimed that this was the first typically Indian Mission, purely religious in character. Its organization was simple and adapted to circumstances. Also see, Franz. Kasper Schillinger, op. cit., 58-101.
‘Society of Jesus’. Hanxleden’s decision to work in Malabar became a turning point in his career and in the cultural history of Kerala.

Hanxleden was only eighteen when he undertook the journey to India along with Fr. William Meyer and Franz Kasper Schillinger, a friend of Hanxleden to join the mission at Calicut on October 3, 1699. During the voyage to India, Fr. Weber taught him the constitution, rules, regulations and character of the ‘Society of Jesus’. For this, he had received special permission and orders from Fr. Thirsus Gonzales, the General of the Secretary of the Congregation.

Kasper Schillinger’s description of Hanxleden’s journey to India is the most reliable account from which a researcher gets information about Hanxleden. During the journey to India, Schillinger was much impressed

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8 D. Ferroli, op. cit., p. 317. Fr. William Meyer was born in 1661 at Deckendorf on the banks of the river Danube in the Diocese of Ratibonn. He was Fr. Weber’s fellow traveller and the witness to his death. After finishing Philosophy, Meyer entered the Jesuit novitiate at Landsperg in 1682 and was also destined to work in Malabar. Fr. Meyer also distinguished himself in studies with great dedication and interest. Also see, Franz. Kasper Schillinger, op. cit., 58-101.

9 Kasper was a German barber. He was the boyhood friend of Hanxleden. He wanted to accompany Hanxleden and he got permission from the superiors to travel with them. They passed through Innsbruck, Trent, Venice, Ferrara, Bologna and Florence. Schillinger praises the intelligence and earnestness of his fellow traveller. Hanxleden in his travelogue has left an interesting description of the journey. The travelogue of Kasper Schillinger is the major source material which gives information about Hanxleden and his trip to India. His travelogue is titled as Persianische U Ost Indianische Reise.


11 Kasper Schillinger, op. cit., pp. 58-101. Also see, D. Ferroli, op. cit., p. 317. Fr. Weber expected that Hanxleden would make himself fit to be bonded to the society through his first vows.

12 Ibid.
by the personality traits of the young novice. In his travelogue Schillinger comments on Hanxleden as follows:

I had the privilege of observing him under different circumstances and studying his glorious qualities and apostolic virtues, as he worked in my country. My heart was so strongly drawn to him that I could not take leave of him. That is why I followed him all the way to Augsburg. As the only son of my parents who made me learn the barber’s trade I, a young man of twenty, attached myself entirely to him and requested him to take me along as a companion to India, since, as I explained to him, I greatly loved to wander through strange lands and learn about the beliefs and lifestyles of other peoples. He acceded to my request. On my part I promised that I would always be at his side. He agreed to assist me in all my needs as he had always done so honestly and scrupulously that I have never been in want of anything.13

Ernest was a brilliant student with good conduct and modesty. Several institutions in Europe had invited him to work with them and urged him to give up his journey to India.14 However, Hanxleden refused these invitations, as he had taken a firm decision to spread the gospel to the unknown people in India.

The journey of Hanxleden and his team was adventurous. After four weeks of their journey, the team reached Liverno. On their way from Liverno to Surat they faced a lot of hazards. Their journey from Liverno to Alessendretta lasted for six weeks. They passed through Malita, Salina, and Cyprus and reached Alessandretta on 15 December 1699. On their way, they had to face the Moor pirates. Mediterranean route was notorious for the activities of the pirates. Kasper Schillinger, co-traveller says that from Alexandretta, they continued their journey by land to Bunder Abbas. Like Mediterranean voyage, the land journey was also risky. Travelling through mountains and jungles was painstaking and dangerous. The strange lands were also threats to them. To make the journey more scrupulous, the Turkish soldiers put them under control. The Turkish soldiers prevented them from proceeding further and they had to pay a heavy bridge-toll. The soldiers again questioned them and arrested

15 Franz Kasper Schillinger, op. cit., p.58-101. Kasper Schillinger explains in the travelogue that from Florence they reached Liverno, a fortified harbour, known throughout the world. A French ship named St. Anne sailing from Marseilles was anchored there. Its Captain, Mr. Rossie agreed to take them to Alexandretta in Syria for a combined fare of 40 thalers. The ship was loaded with French goods destined for the merchants in Alexandretta. A small cabin of the ship called St. Barbara was assigned to them. They kept all their belongings including generous provisions for two months 180 pounds of biscuits, 120 bottles of Florentine wine and an equal amount of vinegar, olive oil, salted meat, dried fish, 20 pounds of butter, and grease, cabbage, turnips, radish, potatoes, pears, green peas, haricots, barley etc. We also had a goat and 48 chickens, some fowls and few ducks. The duty to look after these animals was bestowed on young Hanxleden. From Alexandretta, they continued their journey by land to Bunder Abbas. Also see, C.K. Mattam, Arnos Padiri, Ajantha Press, Perunna, 1967, P.13. D. Ferroli, op. cit., p.318.


17 Moor pirates were active in 15th century along the Mediterranean coast.
Kasper and Hanxleden doubting that, they were slaves who had run away from their masters\textsuperscript{18}. The soldiers decided to take both of them to their leader for further scrutiny. Schillinger writes about this incident in his travelogue:

Our dearest Fr. Weber was neither understood nor listened to, I trembled and feared for our lives. In such an extremity God enlightened the caravan leader, who spoke strongly in our favour. A little money brought the rascals to their senses and finally they let us pass. Heavens! How happy we were to have escaped those wild bears. Fr. Weber and the two of us thanked the leader and paid him double of what he had given to the Turks.\textsuperscript{19}

Within ten months, they reached Bunder Abbas. The long journey and the unhealthy climate made them sick. Nevertheless, they could not take rest and continued the journey by sea to Surat in India. In spite of the difficulties on their route to India, they were given vigilant direction and guidance by Fr. William Weber to keep their spirits high. Hanxleden curiously listened to his teacher and learned the lessons from him. He obeyed his master and was ready to do any work. He believed in prayer and it was his spiritual power that sustained him throughout the journey to


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
India. From Bandar Abbas to Surat, they took five weeks and five days. During this passage, because of the long journey and unhealthy climate the leaders of expedition, Fr. William Weber and Fr. William Meyer got seriously sick and Fr. William Weber died on the way on 25th of November 1700. After three days they lost Fr. Meyer also. Both of them were buried in the ocean.

The death of these two missionaries was a great loss to the team. Hanxleden was deeply spiritual and aware of his responsibility. With immense presence of mind and determination, he took up the leadership of the mission. After the death of the leaders he had to face problems even in their ship, their co-travellers robbed them of valuables. The chief steward took away the beds on which they had passed away. The navigator grabbed a most beautiful and rare pocket watch, and other knick-knacks, which Fr. Weber proposed to present to the King of Calicut in order to get consent to preach the gospel in his dominions. Hanxleden was helpless and could not resist them.

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20 D. Ferroli, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-319. Schillinger writes, *Often times I have seen Ernest kneeling behind a rock, either reading his prayer book or saying his beads when the fathers recited their Breviary.* (Breviary means more brief, a summary, often a book containing prayers, hymns, and readings. It also meant that the small hours for canonical hours) the office of the Mother of God or of other saints.


23 Ibid. Also see, Mathew Ulakamthara, *op. cit.*, p.51.
After completing the most adventurous and audacious journey, Hanxleden reached Surat on 13 December 1700 AD.\textsuperscript{24} In 1701 he went to Goa,\textsuperscript{25} joined the College of St. Paul, a reputed centre of learning under the Portuguese administration of Padruvado\textsuperscript{26} and continued his novitiate there. During those days, there was an ideological rift between the Portuguese and the Roman creed. However, this rift between Portuguese Padruvado and Roman Propaganda was not a barrier for Hanxleden even though he was a follower of the Roman propaganda. Hanxleden’s lovable nature and politeness attracted the Rector of the College of St. Paul. However, they were at two extreme ends of ideas; even then the Rector permitted him to continue his novitiate there.

After completing his studies, Ernest left Goa and reached Ambazhakad near Chalakudy in Thrissur district, where he joined the Jesuit Seminary\textsuperscript{27}. After his theological studies, Ernest was ordained as a priest and continued as a teacher there for a short period. There he was

\textsuperscript{24} D. Ferroli, \textit{op. cit.}, P. 319. Also see, Mathew Ulakamthara, \textit{op. cit.}, p.51.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{26} A ad Silva Ergo, \textit{Le Patronage Portuguese de l’ Orient}, Lisboan, 1957, p.7. “In 1493 Pope Alexander VI divided the newly discovered world and entrusted the western region with Spain and the eastern region to Portugal for missionary activities. The Pope gave official recognition to the ‘right’ of Spain and Portugal to the ‘monopoly’ of economic and political activities in their respective regions, and placed all religious activities under the patronage of the two conquering kingdoms. It was called in Portuguese and Spanish language as “Padroado” (patronage).

appointed as the Secretary to Arch Bishop Reberio for four years\textsuperscript{28}. Afterwards Fr. Hanxleden went to Thrissur. During the period under reference, Thrissur was a centre of Brahmin scholars where they had run a Sanskrit Academy of eminent men\textsuperscript{29}.

Fr. Hanxleden wanted to study Sanskrit during his stay in Thrissivaperoor\textsuperscript{30}; but it was not an easy task for him because of the complexity of the caste structure prevailing there. In those days the teaching and learning of Sanskrit was the monopoly of the Brahmins. The Brahmins were reluctant to teach Sanskrit to the lower castes. When Fr. Hanxleden initiated his missionary activities in Kerala, the Kerala society was not free from caste and other rigid social institutions. The caste system was a strong and complicated problem of Kerala even in the eighteenth century\textsuperscript{31}. Other than the Brahmins, the Kshathriyas and the Vaisyas were also considered as high castes. Even their own women had no right to study Vedas. Shudras, the lowest group in the social order were treated as untouchables. A Shudra, who happened to hear the recital of the Vedas, was reportedly punished by the elite by pouring boiled oil into his

\textsuperscript{28} D. Ferroli, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 322.

\textsuperscript{29} D. Ferroli, \textit{op. cit.}, p.319. Also see, Paul Manavalan, \textit{Kerala Samskravum Christava Missionarymarum}, (Mal), D.C. Books, Kottayam, 1990, pp. 274-275. Thrissur Brahma-svam-madham (monastery) considered as the Sanskrit Academy where young Brahmins were trained.

\textsuperscript{30} Thrissivaperoor is the early name of Thrissur

ears. Apart from all the above factors, Fr. Hanxleden, a foreigner, who was from a far off land had no permission to study Sanskrit and Vedas. The higher caste people feared to teach Sanskrit to a foreigner, because they believed that violating any caste rule would endanger their religion.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, Fr. Hanxleden had to face other situations, such as the initiatives of Archbishop Alexis Menezes towards Latinisation of the Kerala Church and his attempts to bring the Syrian Churches here under the order of Rome. Menezes took bold steps to dispense with the Hindu practices and Hindu literature from native Christians at the Synod of Diamber, in 1599. What took place at Diamber was a part of modification of the customs and practices according to the true spirit of Christianity. So the Synod of Diamber scrutinized the books in Syriac language, declared them as heretical ones and resolved to burn them. The Synod urged the people to give up all ‘superstitious beliefs

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32 L. K. Anantha Krishna Ayyar, *Cochin Tribes and Castes*, 2 Vols. Vol.1, Higgin Bothams & Co, 1909, pp.57, 108. The higher castes practiced and followed a kind of untouchability towards the lower castes. Untouchability had existed among the low castes also. For example the ‘Pulayas’ did not consider the ‘Parayyas’ as equal and the ‘Nayadis’ were considered lower to the ‘Pulayas’ and ‘Parayas’. If a ‘Pana’ and ‘Kaniyan’ happened to touch each other, both of them had to take bath. So much was the complexity of the caste system in 18th century. Also see, Samuel Mateer, *op. cit.*, p.35. P.J. Thomas, *Malayala Sahithyavum Christhyanikalum*, (Mal), Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd, Kottayam, 1961, p.97.


and practices’. The norms of the Synod of Diamper were continued even in the eighteenth century. Therefore, Fr. Hanxleden had many challenges to face in the study of the vernacular language and Indian classical literature.

However, as a missionary, the study of vernacular languages was very vital for Hanxleden. To understand the pulse of the people he had to learn the vernacular language. Fr. Hanxleden loved Indian languages and culture. His dedication and love of learning enabled him to overcome all the initial difficulties. The Brahmins also impressed Hanxleden’s dynamic personality and intellectual traits; soon he could make friends with two Brahmins who were the scholars of the Academy at Thrissur. With their help Hanxleden studied Sanskrit. Fr. Paulinus says:

In that region (Malabar/Kerala) a remote region which otherwise is not kind to the Muses- he immersed himself in the study of Sanskrit language and loving his confreres withdrew to the town of ‘Palur’. There he brought some Brahmins from the Thrissur Academy, which was in the vicinity

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36 C.K Mattam, op. cit., P.13. It is believed that Arookara Ilayad at Velur taught Malayalam to Arnos Padiri.
37 D. Ferroli, op. cit., p.320. D. Ferroli says that it was two of the Brahmins of Angamaly named as Kunjan and Krishna helped Hanxleden in his study of Sanskrit. Most of the scholars consider that the Brahmins who helped Hanxleden were from Thrissivaperoor Academy. Also see, P.J Thomas, op. cit., pp.97-98. P.J. Thomas says that at that time Thrissivaperoor was famous for Sanskrit studies. Fr. Hanxleden began his intensive course of studies in Sanskrit and Malayalam with great ambition with the help of two broad minded Brahmins.
where he had won over with presence and spent 10 or more years in continuous literary pursuit and conversation with these Brahmins. Knowledge is best fostered by social intercourse and familiar discussions, for both nourish the mind, stimulate study and help to consolidate what is learned.  

Fr. Hanxleden gradually conquered the Vedic language, which was unknown to Europe. He studied Sanskrit works like *Judishtiravijaya*, *Amarakosa*, *The Ramayana* and the *Upanishads* with enthusiasm.

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39 P.J Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp.98. It is believed that the first Sanskrit work that Arnos Padiri studied was *Judishtira Vijaya* or the victory of king Judhishtira is an epic poem in Sanskrit. Also see, ‘Letter to Rev. Fr. Alexius Maria of St. Joseph, Discalced Carmelite, and concering the Indic Manuscript Codices of Rev. Fr. John Ernest Hanxleden’, Trans, Dr. M. Luke, O.F.M, Dr. J.J Pallath, S.J., ed., *op. cit.*, p.31. The work describes the war between two old families of Hindusthan, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Judhishthira means "steady in war." *Yudh* means war, and *sthira* meaning steady.  


41 The Ramayana is the great epic of India. It is believed that this great work was ascribed to the sage Valmiki. The Ramayana is regarded as an important part of Indian classical literature. Philosophically, the Ramayana explores human values and the concept of Dharma and historically it says the story of the migration of Aryans from north to the extreme south, Kerala.  

42 The term *Upanishad* literally means, "sitting down near" and means listening closely to the doctrines of a spiritual teacher. It points to a period in time when groups of pupils sat near the teacher and learnt from him the secret teachings in the quietude of forest 'ashrams' or hermitages. *Upanishads* are summits
Hanxleden’s skill in playing chess also impressed the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{43} He took advantage of this to study languages and to converse with the Brahmins in Sanskrit, which strengthened his knowledge\textsuperscript{44}.

A plethora of views\textsuperscript{45} about Hanxleden’s stay and study of Vedic literature have been codified by prominent writers in Malayalam. Gradually Hanxleden acquired proficiency in Indian languages. He was very kind to the people who approached him for help\textsuperscript{46}. The oral sources that are scattered in different parts of Malabar support the view that he was

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\textsuperscript{43} Dr. J.J Pallath, S.J., ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 54-69. It is believed that Azhvanchery Thambrakkal and Illikkal Ilayadu were great friends of Arnos Padiri and Azhvanchery Thambrakkal built a residential building for Fr. Hanxleden in typical Kerala style. The fact is that Arnos Padiri had a deep and friendly relationship with the Namboodiri Brahmins and this healthy friendship was used by Fr. Hanxleden to study the language and clear his doubts in Sanskrit. It was his conversations with these Brahmins that fostered his erudition and helped him to talk freely with the local people.

\textsuperscript{46} Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, S.J. \textit{Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4}, Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne. Also see, D. Ferroli, S.J., \textit{op. cit.}, pp.325-326. Hanxleden was so kind towards his neophytes. There is a version that once a ‘shudra’ was beaten and threatened to kill by his Brahmin masters. He was named as ’Thankayi’. He went to the Church for help and protection. Arnos Padiri accepted Thankayi, and he lived with Arnos Padiri. About this incident Arnos Padiri writes thus: 

\textit{something happened there which brought me great sadness. I had a neophyte, who by God’s grace had been converted a short time before. He was most fervent, and he could not think of Our Lords Passion without shedding tears. A drunken man met him one evening and thinking he was his enemy, wounded him with a lance I was suffered with sorrow, and did not know what to do? But my sorrow abated somewhat when I remembered what the poor man had often told me, that he preferred death to sin. I reminded him of it. Having confessed more than once though he had scarcely any matter for absolution…. O, Lord, he showed such devotion as nearly to move me to tears. He went to heaven on the Sunday after the Ascension, having been baptized 33 days before.}
always very generous. Oral history on Hanxleden revealed that he was well known for his spontaneity and quick reply in both Sanskrit and Malayalam languages. Once, a Namboodiri teased Fr. Hanxleden by calling him *Ganapathi vahana ripu nayana* that means ‘cat eyed’\(^{47}\). He wanted to know the depth of Hanxleden’s knowledge in Sanskrit. Hanxleden quickly understood the meaning of the words and replied soon in the same coin by calling him *Dasaratha nandana dootha mukha*, which means ‘monkey faced’\(^{48}\). Even today, these wits and repartees are enjoyed by the young generation and reveal Hanxleden’s unimaginable mastery in Sanskrit. Hanxleden’s amazing knowledge and fluency in Malayalam also have vogue in Thrissur.\(^{49}\)

On one occasion an ‘Elayad’ (a *Brahmin* sub- caste) told Hanxleden thus: *Padiri villinu bahu visheshame* means that the tree named ‘padiri’ is good for making bows (the word Padiri means Rev. Father in Portuguese but in Malayalam it is the name of a tree. It was used good for making bows in those days.) Arnos Padiri replied *elayadayal eattam nannu* (*Elayad* means young in Malayalam; *elayad* is a *Brahmin* sub-caste also).

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\(^{47}\) D. Ferroli, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 329. *Ganapathy vahana ripu naiyana* means ‘cat eyed’, that is, “You have eyes like Ganapathy’s vehicle’s enemy”. Rat is considered as the vehicle of Ganapathy. Cat is the enemy of rat and so you have cat like eyes.

\(^{48}\) Ibid. Also see, P.J. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p.99. *Dasharatha nandhana dootha mukha* which means monkey faced. Arnos Padiri replied to Namboodhiri that he has the face of the messenger of the son of Dhasaratha. Dhasaratha’s son is Sree Rama and his messenger is Hanuman, the monkey God.

Hanxleden meant still better, if it is tender. These prove that he had the ability to grasp even the inner meanings of the amusing anecdotes about things and people\textsuperscript{50}.

Though Fr. Hanxleden came to Kerala with an ambition to spread gospel, he conquered the highest peak of Sanskrit- the ‘God’s language’ and the people here, through his literary works. The people affectionately called Fr. Ernest Hanxleden, ‘Arnos Padiri’ and the acceptance that he had won beyond the narrow confines of caste and religion\textsuperscript{51}. The sobriquet ‘Arnos Padiri’ is therefore used in the place of Fr. Hanxleden, in this work.

Arnos Padiri moved to Velur about 20 kilometres north to Thrissivaperoor town (Thrissur), a place as mentioned earlier, enriched with scholarly Brahmins, more appropriate for his studies. Therefore, he could pursue here his studies along with his missionary activities. It was in

\textsuperscript{50} Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.54-69. Oral history bears some historical facts about Arnos Padiri. There are many views which can prove that Arnos Padiri was proficient in Sanskrit and Malayalam. He had the ability to grasp even the inner meanings of the silly comments of local people. Arnos Padiri still lives in the minds of the inhabitants of Velur through these stories and anecdotes.

\textsuperscript{51} Fr. Hanxleden is popularly known as Arnos Padiri in Kerala. In Thrissur region Western or Christian names are made to vernacular language. For example they call Ignatius as Inasu and Francis as Pranchi. As such the people at Thrissur call Fr. Earnest Hanxleden as Arnos with love and he came to be known as Arnos Padiri in Kerala. Arnos is the local version of the German name Earnest. And the term ‘Padiri’ is equivalent to Portuguese word ‘padre’, meaning priest. Hence, the name ‘Arnos Padiri’ is used in the place of Fr. Hanxleden, in this work.
1712 that Arnos Padiri settled at Velur⁵². Padiri writes about the people of Velur in one of his letters dated, ⁴ᵗʰ October 1713:

Here there are about 140 Christian families. If one may call them Christians these people are such only by name. …. They scarcely come to Church, at the most once in a year; some even less, and I found one who had been to Church only once in 20 years. They used to baptize the children six months after they were born and some waited over three years. …. But now God has touched their hearts and they themselves admit they have been converted.⁵³

Arnos wished to establish a Church at Velur but it was not easy. He had to face a lot of difficulties to get a piece of land. In one of his letters he says,

We went to Velur, but found the matter not as easy as it looked at first. The Raja, (the reigning king) who had promised us a piece of ground, disappointed us. But we did not despair for we had placed our trust in God. Dearly enough – considering our poverty- we got the required permission from three Rajas, and set our hands to the work. But then the first Raja, who had already disappointed us, put spokes in the wheel, did his best to take our friends away from us, and opposed us in every way. Yet we recommended the matter to St. Francis Xavier, to whom the chapel was to be dedicated, and all the successes were due to him. All had abandoned us; the Christians thought the building would never come up,

⁵² Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, S.J. Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4, Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne. Also see, D. Ferroli, op. cit., p.326.
⁵³ D. Ferroli, op. cit., p. 327.
till the Lord (Commentator) of Cochin D. Bernard Ketel came to the rescue.\textsuperscript{54}

The letter shows that Lord of Cochin D. Bernard Ketel gave support to Arnos Padiri to establish a Church at Velur. The Church which Arnos Padiri established in 1712 was a mud chapel at Pazhayangadi\textsuperscript{55} (old market place) in Velur about one kilometre away from the new chapel. Arnos celebrated the Holy Mass in the chapel on the day of St. Francis Xavier on 3 December.\textsuperscript{56} Arnos wanted to repair and enlarge the church; although, Velur was a centre of high class Hindus and the Christians were a minority. The Hindus feared that the establishment of the Church by the western missionaries would create troubles for them. However, Padiri’s dedication and innocent and laborious efforts earned him success. A broad-minded member from the Hindu community named Peruvazhikkattu Nair offered a piece of land to establish the Church at Velur,\textsuperscript{57} where

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  \item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 326. D. Bernard Ketel was the commentator of Cochin in 1712. At that time he had completed a war against the Zamorine and in spite of the opposition of the Cochin Raja, he brought over the Native Prince and all others who opposed. He gave support to Fr. Hanxleden to establish a Church at Velur. During the period of Arnos Padiri, Pazhayangadi was an important trading centre at Velur. Arnos Padiri established a Church first here which was established in 1712. Also see, Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, \textit{S.J. Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4}, Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Pazhayangadi means old market place. It is at a remote place in Velur village, it exists about one kilometre from new chapel built by Arnos Padiri. During the period of Arnos Padiri, Pazhayangadi was an important trading centre of Velur. Arnos Padiri established a Church first there. It was a small mud Chapel. The place Pazhayangadi is still known in the same name.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{St. Francis Xavier’s Church Records at Velur}. Also see, D. Ferroli, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 326.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, \textit{op. cit.}, P. 47.
\end{itemize}
Arnos Padiri built a residence based on ‘thachusastra’ or in typical Kerala style for the first time. Padiri’s residence was a rectangular two-storied building. It looked like a Pilgrim Hall of Hindu temples. Nine pillars supported the upper storey of the building. The pillars are made of solid rocks and laterite stones. Shortly, Padiri built the Church near the residence and dedicated it to St. Francis Xavier. The residence of Padiri known as Arnos Bhavan is located about 113 feet towards the western side of the church. The old mud chapel at the old market place in Velur was converted into a chapel recently. The place ‘pazhayangadi’ is still known by the same name. The Velur Church used to offer one and a half rupees, three sur rice, and a coconut and some betel leaf as a tribute to the Peruvazhikkattu tharavad till recently.

58 P. Thankappan Nair, ‘Fr. Hanxleden, Pioneer Indologist’, in Dr. J. Pallath, ed., op. cit., p.51. ‘Thachusastra’ (Science of carpentry) is practically the science of building or science of structures. 

Vasthu Sastra involves the alignment of five basic elements according to the law and nature. They are sky, air, fire, earth and water. The effects of these 5 elements have to be studied to appreciate the science of Vasthu in its pure form. Arnos Padiri built his residence in ancient Kerala style according to the prescriptions of ‘Thachusastra’ of the time. It exists 113 feet towards the west of the Church. On the walls of the south–western corner, a couch is fixed. This couch was used by Padiri for sleeping. Now parts of the Church and the residence are demolished. A number of manuscripts and many other articles which were used by Fr. Hanxleden have been discovered from the building. Among his personal belongings, two boxes, one made of steel and the other of cane were found out from the Secret Chamber in the wall. Most of the manuscripts had been destroyed. The copper plates too were destroyed and they are beyond decipherment. And even in the 21st century these historical monuments are in threat and a part of the wall (Anapalla mathil—Elephant’s belly wall) around the church has crashed.

59 Velur Church records. Velur Church records give the information that it was in 1724 that Padiri established the Church of St. Francis Xavier near his residence.

60 Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, op. cit., P.47. The Copper Plate written in Vattezhuthu, kept at Velur Church, says that, Kunnath Kizhadu Raman Kumaran and Thambimar contributed 10 are (10 para) land
For over thirty years Arnos Padiri worked untiringly for the spread of gospel in Kerala. He spent 20 years at Velur for his missionary works along with his literary pursuits. Oral sources reveal that many local people were attracted to his fold. Arnos Padiri was blessed with an astonishing memory and outstanding intellectual acumen; but he was incoherent in speech. However, when Arnos Padiri became well versed in Sanskrit and Malayalam he began to attract many admirers irrespective of caste and religion. Fr. Paulinus writes:

Fr. Hanxleden’s fame spread everywhere, even in the huts of peasants, and reached also the Hindus who could never believe that a European, in the eyes of Brahmins a vile animal, could write such correct language, and possess such knowledge of things divine. Therefore, all Hindus and Christians paid their respects to him, and counted it an honour to be able to meet him.

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Fr. George Mapranam or Barid Kathanar as he was known was a prominent follower of Arnos Padiri\(^62\). As a religious person, evangelisation was a part of his missionary activities in Kerala, but he carried it out in a restrained way. Evangelisation works of Arnos Padiri came to be termed a very subtle and unorthodox affair, as he never resorted to any fiery speech or revolutionary fervours. His words as well as his writings served to bring about a genuine love for Christianity and this resulted in delicate conversions. This was very unlike the revolutionary zeal and frenzy of some of the conversions of Portuguese period. It is evident that Keralites were influenced by Arnos Padiri’s teachings and ways of life. That is why a non-Christian boy became a devotee of Arnos and joined the Seminary dedicated to Francis Xavier and he became a parish priest in a Church at Arakuzha near Muvattupuzha\(^63\). All these were very different from the colonial agenda of hegemony that was being practiced by the colonial powers in India at that time.

But, the last years of his life at Velur were not pleasant. Oral history unveils that some Brahmins and their Christian tenants had some disgust against Arnos Padiri. There are two versions about the last days of Arnos

\(^62\) Mathias Mundadan, ‘John Ernest Hanxleden (Arnos Pathiri) His Contribution to the Sanskrit and Malayalam Languages and Literatures,’ in Anand Amaldas ed., Jesuit Presence in Indian History, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 189. Fr. George Mapranam or Barid Kathanar had left behind some writings on Arnos. It was from these writings Fr. Paulinus knew about the missionary poet. Paulinus spoke about Padiri with the other surviving followers and also drew a portrait of this luminary.

\(^63\) A. Adappur, \textit{op. cit.}, p.48.
Padiri. One is that some Namboodiris turned against Padiri and the other is that it was Padiri’s own people, the Christians\textsuperscript{64}. There is a fact in the traditional belief that the last days of Arnos Padiri at Velur were not pleasing and so he moved to Pazhur\textsuperscript{65}. It was at Pazhur that this missionary poet died in 1732\textsuperscript{66}?). When Archbishop Pimentel heard about

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\textsuperscript{64} Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 59-64. Oral history proves that the rivals of Hanxleden decided to kill him and met at a family in Velur named as ‘Aruvathottil’. It was nonconformist family who were mainly toddy sellers. After getting intoxicated the drunkards began to discuss their plan to murder Arnos Padiri. When Konya, a lady of Aruvthottil family at Velur overheard the conversation, she ran to the Church and informed Arnos Padiri about the conspiracy. The church was half a mile south of Aruvathottil house. Arnos Padiri understood the seriousness of this threat and made preparations to escape. Banana plants were cut and laid on his bed and covered with the bed sheet, to give the appearance of an unsuspecting Arnos asleep on his cot. Then Padiri left Velur in the night itself. After moving away six miles from Velur, he reached Choorakkattukara. He was very tired, and sought rest at a family named as ‘Chemmanagattuvalappil’ at Choorakkattukara. It was an Ezhuthachan family. They gave all facilities to Arnos Padiri to say mass at their home. After completion of the mass, Padiri went to Pazhur, where he spent the rest of his life.

\textsuperscript{65} Prof. P.V. Ulahannan Mappila, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 59-64.

\textsuperscript{66} Joseph Hausegger writes “Having fulfilled his mission Arnos Padiri died in Pazhur Church on 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1732. But it was Fr. Paulinus who presented the date at first. He says; “Broken by studies and apostolic labours, Hanxleden died on 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1732 and was buried in the Church of Pazhur”. The 1733 Goan Catalogue says that Fr. Hanxleden died at Palur (Pazhur) on 20\textsuperscript{th} May 1732. The Cataloguers prove that he went to Pazhur in his last days. P.J. Thomas gives 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1732 as the date of his demise. Contrary to the above views on the date, Sommerringel and Mackenzie also fix 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1732 as the date of Arnos Padiri’s demise. Von Schelegal presents another version on the death of Hanxleden. He Says that the Jesuit Hanxleden, visited India in the year1699, and for more than thirty years laboured in Malabar mission gained great renown in that department, he produced many works in prose and verse in the old Indian (Granthon) and the common language, besides, compiling Dictionaries and Grammar books and his death happened in 1733. For details see, Fra. Paulino a San Bartholomaeo, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.191-192 . Fr. John Pallath, O.C.D, trans, \textit{Pawrasthya Bharathathile Chirjhumatham}, Jyothir Bhavan Publications, Kalamassery, 1988, p.202. P.J. Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, p.98. G.T Mackenzie, \textit{Christianity in Travancore}, Trivandrum, Government Press, 1901, p. 79. Paul Manavalan, \textit{op. cit.}, p.274. Dr. J.J. Pallath S.J., ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p.13. D. Ferroli, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.329-330.
Arnos Padiri’s death, he was shocked and moved to tears. Fr. Bernard Bischopinck wrote from Ambazhakkad to his brethren in Rome that the splendid example of Arnos Padiri, the great Apostle of Malabar, was an epitome to all the missionaries, and his life inspired all to follow in his footsteps.

In his own words:

This missionary, who worked unwearied for over thirty years in the vineyard of Malabar, had won the highest reputation and universal praise for his outstanding virtue, scholarship and service mindedness. His knowledge of Malayalam and Sanskrit, in both of which he wrote many genial works in prose and verse, and in fact composed two complete grammar books was amazing. The mastery he had of these languages far outstripped even his Hindu teachers. As the blessed demise of this venerable man reached the ears of the heathen rulers, he exclaimed to those standing by: the Pauliest Fathers [they call the missionaries of our society so] have lost a pillar of their faith in these parts. They grieved over his death, which was bitterly lamented also by the Most Reverend Lord Archbishop. …. Our Father Rector at Ambazhakkad, with his community, but especially the sheep thus abandoned was inconsolable. To me and other missionaries, the most touching example to virtue of his

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68 Ibid. Fr. John Andenus says on 7th June 1736; thus: John Hanxleden, untiringly and sincerely worked about 30 years to lead people to the faith rites through fully eight days.
great apostle will serve as a powerful stimulus to strive to the utmost to follow in his footsteps.69

In Kerala for more than thirty years, he worked earnestly for the spread of the Gospel and he became one of the brightest stars among the missionaries on account of his conscience and virtue.70 The Pazhur Church where Arnos Padiri lived in his last days was demolished and a new one was built in its place. The building where Padiri lived at Pazhur was behind the Church. On the southern wall of Pazhur church a memory stone was erected for Arnos Padiri on 13 June 1931.71 The well in Pazhur Church is also famous. There was a mud open varandha close to the well where Arnos Padiri used to read and write. The Church and the residence established by Padiri at Velur are protected as historical monuments.

Many scholars have paid rich tributes to this Apostle of Malabar72. One such tribute reads thus:

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70 D. Ferroli, op. cit., p.329.
71 The name of Arnos Padiri is recorded as Rev. Father John Ernestes, S.J., on the memory stone at Pazhur Church.
72 Mathias Mundadan, ‘John Ernest Hanxleden (Arnos Pathiri): His Contribution to the Sanskrit and Malayalam Languages and Literatures’, in Anand Amaldas ed., op. cit., p. 202. Also see, Mathias Mundadan, in Dr. J.J Pallath, S.J., op. cit., pp. 80-82. Ulloor. S. Paramewara Ayyar, Kerala Sahithya Charitram, vol. 111, Department of Publications, Trivandrum, 1955, pp. 228-30. A highly appreciative tribute was given by Ulloor. S. Prameswara Ayyar. He says that among the foreign Christians, Hanxleden deserves the first place. The proficiency he acquired, with great pains, in Sanskrit and Malayalam was profitably used by him to provide the Christians with a Christian devotional literature similar to the Ramayana and other poems of the Hindus. We owe great debt of gratitude to this missionary who came
I have given you a brief note on the immortal Hanxleden. Though brief, you can see from it that he was a true apostle and a literary genius, extremely pious, second to none in the knowledge and practice of Indian languages; his capacity for application was unbeatable to be overcome by death alone. Would that I could redeem his name from oblivion! Would that I could erect a monument to the memory of this great soul! Even though he is no more among the living, I look up to him as my master, because I learn from his books. If Plutarch considered the honourable deeds of women worth celebrating with praises, who could withhold public acclaim from this man who announced the Gospel of Jesus Christ with such noble dignity, who adorned the realm of literature with so many volumes, who conquered himself, and as an exile for Christ who died in the Lord after such meritorious services?73

Writers and scholars in Malayalam also have paid rich tributes to this missionary poet. Sooranad Kunjan Pillai, a reputed writer in Malayalam, estimates the proficiency of Arnos Padiri:

Malayalam literature should ever remember with immense gratitude the service of Hanxleden. It is a matter of regret that Malayalees do not yet sufficiently know this great soul. No other foreigner ever loved our language as Hanxleden did. Never can we adequately praise his efforts. There is a confluence of various gifts and skills in his works which are of

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three kinds: those of poetry, grammar and vocabulary. His effort was aimed at creating a Christian lore in Malayalam. Unfortunately we have not succeeded in making a fair use of his compositions. Had we succeeded, it would have made his works much more popular and better known; it would have stimulated our scholars to take such daring steps as his.74

Prof. Mathew Ulakamthara also gives comments on the rich contribution of Arnos Padiri to Kerala culture and literature:

What the bhakthi poet Ezhuthachan did for the Hindus of his time, Hanxleden did for the Christians, that is, gave them beautiful, devotion-inspiring Christian poems to be sung daily at home; demonstrating the link between religion and literature, he initiated a process of acculturation, opened up a new chapter in the history of Malayalam literature by bringing Christian vision to inspire it; he blazed a new path in evangelization. Thus Hanxleden turned out to be a golden link that brought together various ages and peoples.75

Contemporaries, friends, admirers and scholars have paid glorious tributes to Hanxleden on his death in 1732. Their words of praises prove that Hanxleden was a man of high spirituality, intellectual calibre and his teachers and friends impressed him. Hanxleden’s aspiration in Kerala was to spread the Gospel as his favourite leader and role model St. Francis

74 Mathias Mundadan, op. cit., pp.81-82.
75 Prof. Mathew Ulakamthara, op. cit., p. 115.
Xavier. Though there were political, social and religious barriers, Arnos Padiri made an effort to study the languages of the land. He maintained good relations with his Brahmin friends and he appropriately used this healthy friendship to study the language and clear his doubts in Sanskrit. It was his conversations with these Brahmins that fostered his learning and helped him to talk freely with the local people. Very soon, the literary genius mastered Sanskrit and Malayalam languages. He even studied the colloquial languages of the land.

Even though Arnos Padiri lived at Velur for a short period he has left his imprints there. He started his literary endeavours at Velur and there he produced a number of literary works which aimed at a cultural awakening in the society. A surfeit of traditions lights the proficiency of Hanxleden in languages, his kindness towards Keralites and his subtle and unorthodox style of evangelism. Keralites loved this missionary poet and they called him Arnos Padiri lovingly. Even now the people of Velur cherish the memory of Padiri those memories are inherited from their forefathers.

Arnos Padiri lived and worked for his beloved flock in Kerala for over 30 years. The missionary scholar has contributed a lot in different spheres such as literature and culture in Kerala. Arnos Padiri is known among the Indians as a poet, scholar in Sanskrit and Malayalam, a
grammarian, lexicographer and an Indologist. The unique personality of Arnos Padiri helped him to become a friend of all and popular figure of the land. His contributions in literature and other areas had influenced the society so much that it paved the way for a cultural regeneration in Kerala.

Today Arnos Padiri’s contribution opens a new horizon of culture and the researchers in history and languages enjoy the fruits of his talent and extraordinary knowledge. His contribution to the formation and consolidation of the identity of Kerala culture cannot be disassociated from history. ‘Arnos is dead; the language has changed but the written words live forever - *litera scriptamanet*’.76 The people of Velur consider and convey the ‘Arnos stories’ as a treasure to the younger generations even today.