INTRODUCTION

Syro-Malabar Church, otherwise known as Church of St. Thomas Christians, is the community of Christian believers who were ever loyal to the Roman Pontiff, who claim their origin from the preaching of St. Thomas in India. A.M. Mundadan finds this group as follows; “There are in the tradition three elements which constitute the community of St. Thomas Christians: the people converted by the Apostle in Malabar, the immigrant Christians from Mylapore, and the Christians of Thomas of Cana, Mar Sapor, and Mar Prot, the preponderance of each element being differently estimated by different versions.”

Hambye identifies the Thomas Christians differently. According to him they include Brahman and other high castes that were baptised by St. Thomas, immigrants from Persia and Syria, proselytes of Latin missionaries who preceded the Portuguese. K.M. Panickar identifies them as “converts from high caste hindus, namboothiris, and nairs, though at a later period a considerable number of lower caste men seem also to have been converted”. A.D. Mattam speaks of Thomas Christians as follows; “By the [term] St. Thomas Christians are meant not only those who claim to be the descendants of the converts of St. Thomas, but also those who have been at different times brought to faith by the same or have become one with the same”. Cardinal Tisserant another eminent historian on St. Thomas Christians identifies, Christians who are members of Syro-Malabar Church as Christians of St. Thomas.
Though the proposed Study covers a period from 1968-2000, since St. Thomas Christians/members of Syro-Malabar Church hold that they had their origin from the preaching of St. Thomas in India in the first century I have to make a short analysis of their history here. The Church of St. Thomas has the alleged first century roots in M.P. This is a historical hypothesis yet to be studied conclusively.

Surely, the length and breadth of the topic makes it limited in many ways. Though the period covered is short the area studied is much wide. But for the completeness I had to launch deeper and wider. I have used written and unwritten sources to complete my study. This study is a pioneering effort to bring out an inclusive study of all Syro-Malabar dioceses in Madhya Pradesh. The present study may act as a guide to any one who wants to study the history of Syro-Malabar Church in general and the same Church in M.P in particular.

Though missionaries from the Syro-Malabar Church reached M.P in 1955, the official beginning took place only in 1968. So, here my effort is to study and collate the history of the present St. Thomas Church/Syro-Malabar Church, which is functioning in Madhya Pradesh, from 1968.
Notes

1 Mundadan, Traditions, p.105.
2 Hambye, Syrian Church in India, p.286.
5 Tisserant, Eastern Christianity, p.1.