CHAPTER 1

SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1.1 The Origin of Syro-Malabar Church

1.1.1 Indian Situation at the Beginning of Syro-Malabar Church

"The history of India, it has been said, is very largely the history of invasions from north-west".\(^1\) The Aryans (2000/1500 B.C), the Persians (6\(^{th}\) century B.C), the Greeks (4\(^{th}\) Century B.C), the Scythians (2\(^{nd}\) – 1\(^{st}\) century B.C), the Parthians (1\(^{st}\) century A.D), Huns (5\(^{th}\) century A.D), the Muslims (12\(^{th}\) – 18\(^{th}\) century A.D), and the Europeans (16\(^{th}\) – 20\(^{th}\) century A.D). The riches of the Punjab must have been the temptation for all these invaders and hence it became the scene of fierce fighting through out the ages.\(^2\)

Here my interest is to concentrate on the possible elements which would have helped St. Thomas to come to India in the first century A.D. The Macedonian empire in the 3\(^{rd}\) century B.C had extended up to the Punjab. Even prior to that we see the Persian influence also in the North West area of India. However I would like to see only the period which is closer to the period of the origin of Christianity in detail.

After the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC) Chandra Gupta Maurya became stronger and tried to expel the Macedonians from the Punjab.
And slowly North West India came under the sway of Mauryas and it remained under them up to 232 BC — till the death of Asoka. After Asoka the empire was broken into small kingdoms. At that situation the Bactrian Greeks invaded India under Menander. And he remained in power for a short period (180-160 BC). Following the Bactrians Sythian Sakas and the Indo-Parthians ruled North-West India. Gondophores was the greatest among the Indo-Parthian Kings. “The period of his reign has been almost definitely fixed with the help of the thakt -i- bahi inscription which is dated in the year 103. Referring to Vikrama era Fleet placed the record in 45 A.D. This date represents the 26th year of [the King’s] … rule”.4 “In Christian tradition he is called “King of India” and is connected with St. Thomas”.5 After Gondophores perhaps Indo-Parthian Kings’ (Phahalava Dynasty) rule came to an end. It was followed by the reign of Kushans from China. They established themselves in Bactria and ruled up to 165 A.D.

From 516 B.C — 220 A.D. India was in close contact with the empires of the west. These contact influenced Indian history to great extend. Many of the invaders got mingled with the Indian races and even adopted the culture and religion of the land as their own (e.g. the Huns and the Gujars). During the first few centuries before and after Christ, India was in friendly terms with Greece and Rome. Indian merchants regularly had trade contacts with the people of these countries.6 Perhaps it was these trade contacts that enabled St. Thomas or others to come to India to preach Christianity in India,7 in the first century itself.
1.1.2 Origin of Syro-Malabar Church: Source Analysis

There are two views among the scholars about the origin of Christianity in India. According to one view, Christianity in India was founded by St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus or even by two of the Apostles, Thomas and Bartholomew. Another version is that east Syrian merchants who came to India under the leadership of Thomas of Cana had brought Christianity to India. However there are differences of opinion regarding the origin of Christianity in India. Most of the arguments are from one or other partisan point of view, whereas a student of history should approach the history from a reality perspective.

We do not have the direct documentary evidence, to prove that the Indian Christianity had its origin from St. Thomas. The materials, which claim to have relevance to Christianity of the early centuries, are traditions, legends, myths, wishful thinking, etc., and they contain elements, which are really difficult to assess, and are confusing too. It is very difficult to harmonise these materials for collecting a comprehensive history of the origin of Syro-Malabar Church or Church of St. Thomas Christians in India.

From 16th century onwards Christianity in India, has documentary evidence for her history. But her early history is shrouded in mystery. This absence of documentary evidence of first few centuries, makes the codification of her history a hazardous one. However the earliest written tradition available does not go beyond 3rd century or the last lap of 2nd century.
The traditional ascription to St. Thomas as the originator of Syro-Malabar Church or Church of St. Thomas in India, comes to us through Gospel evidence, local traditions of the believers of the same Church, references from early liturgical traditions, legends and legendary literature.

1.1.3 St. Thomas & His Followers: In the Tradition and Legends

St. Thomas was a Galilean Jew who became the disciple of Jesus. We do not know much about his early life. Jesus accepted Thomas as one among the twelve of his disciples (Lk, 6: 12-16). He was called Didimus which meant "twin" i.e., one among the twins. Gospels introduce Thomas as one who is courageous enough even to go and die with Jesus (Jn, 11:16). Later he is also shown as one who is a bit stubborn and curious. This curiosity and stubbornness lead Jesus to oblige to Thomas on various occasions especially after Jesus' death (Jn, 20:28-29). Apocryphal gospels speak of Thomas' returning to Jerusalem towards the last moments of Mary. There also, Thomas is pictured as a stubborn man.

As per the legendary information St. Thomas first went to Damascus, from there to Bactria and to North India. From there he went to Ethiopia, and again he came to South India by sea and preached gospel of Jesus through out southern part of India. Here he converted many to Christianity established seven communities of believers. He ordained priests and Bishops to lead Christian community. From there he went to
Mylapore on the Coromandel Cost. He was killed by some people at Mylapore and was buried there.\textsuperscript{13} These are alluded in the Acts of Thomas written towards the close of 2\textsuperscript{nd} century in Syriac.

Though all these information comes to us in the form of legends, and tales we cannot deny coming of St. Thomas to south India that easily, because there is a strong believing community of St. Thomas. This aspect of St. Thomas’ coming to south India is well attested by local non-christians too. The families from which he ordained priests are still existing.\textsuperscript{14}

The believers of this community hold the view that St. Thomas established seven churches or communities in the length and breadth of Kerala; in places like: Cranganore, Palayur, Kottakkavu, Kokkamangalam, Niranam, Kollam, and Nilackal. In all these places there were strong Jewish settlements. Hence William Logans’ observation about first Christians of India can be right. He observes that the first batch of Christians of Kerala were Jews; not any body else who came from Persia or Syria.\textsuperscript{15} First St. Thomas must have preached among Jews who understood his language and culture. Perhaps it was with the help of the localised Jewish community that he undertook the preaching extensively to the local people. This is a mere probability; nothing accurate can be said about this.

Each of the seven places where St. Thomas Christianity took birth from the preaching of St, Thomas has its own local legendary history about St. Thomas’ coming and preaching to them. The tradition about St. Thomas’
preaching and converting local people is very vibrant, in the surroundings of Palayur. Placid Podipara a very eminent orientalist describes, about the belief that is in circulation at Palyur and nearby areas. Palayur was traditionally a trade centre of Jews as well as of high caste Hindus. St. Thomas challenged the locals about their faith and St. Thomas defeated them in performing what he believed. Upon performance of this miracle many of the challenged Hindus cursed the land and went to Vembanatt, the rest received baptism and joined the faith of St. Thomas. That is how the neighbouring area of Palayur got the name Chawghat. Originally from Sapakadu, Chapakadu (its anglicised version was Chawghat) which meant cursed place. Even now the traditional high caste people will not eat or drink anything from the locality which their forefathers cursed.¹⁶

Perhaps the most important written document of the period could be a traditional palm leaf writing preserved at a certain Kulathumana family of Vembanatt in Kerala. In that it is written kalivarsh 3153 a certain foreigner a Thoma sanyasin polluted their village and hence their predecessors left their home village and reached Vemanatt.¹⁷ When Portuguese reached Kerala Palayur was an important Christian centre. And many pilgrims used to visit the church there. But in 18th century Tippu’s army destroyed the church. Later when the English defeated Tippu’s men the Christians who fled from Palayur came back and reconstructed the church. Like this there are very strong traditions regarding each of the seven churches or communities established by St. Thomas.
Even though there are many writers who deny the south Indian apostolate of Thomas, or who are sceptical about the genuineness of the south Indian tradition of St. Thomas, they have not succeeded to underscore the compactness and the persistence of the tradition itself, say Brown, Firth, and others.¹⁸

The following words of Fr. Placid Podipara will tell us how vibrant the oral tradition about St. Thomas is among Christians of St. Thomas or among the members of Syro-Malabar Church is:

Convince, the Nazranis, [members of Syro-Malabar Church], if you can that the Apostle St. Thomas was never in their midst. The educated among them may listen to your arguments with patience but not with out their final protest, the mob will get angry with you or will put you down for a lunatic, if not for a heretic. So strong is their belief in the apostolate of St. Thomas in their midst. To the traveller or historian they will point out with their fingers saying; Here St. Thomas landed; here he preached; here he confounded the Brahmans, this is the tank wherein he performed his miracles, this is the spot where a cross was erected close to or over the ruins of a Hindu temple; these and these families trace their origin to the first converts of the Apostle, and they have retained even now their former surnames; that place over there is still a curse for Brahmans because of its special connections with St. Thomas; there rested his mortal remains.¹⁹

There are very many versions of legends about martyrdom of St. Thomas. Bishop Medlycott speaks of different versions of martyrdom of St. Thomas in his book called India and the Apostle Thomas. Though details of the legends differ from one another the content about martyrdom and burial of St. Thomas was almost the same with out much difference.²⁰ They all agree that St. Thomas died a martyr for faith. He was buried at Mylapore.
There are controversies regarding the place of burial or martyrdom of St. Thomas too. About which Bishop Medlycott emphatically writes;

The writer [Bishop Medlycott] feels bound to lay strong emphasis on this tradition in support of the claim of Mylapore to hold the tomb of the Apostle. He is thoroughly convinced even quite apart from all the evidence adduced in the preceding pages- that if the claim of Mylapore to be the place of the Martyrdom and of the burial of the apostle was not based on undeniable fact, the Christians of Malabar would never have acknowledged their neighbour’s claim to hold the tomb of the Apostle, neither would they ever be induced to frequent it by way of pilgrimage. Had this been a case of a fictitious claim put forth to secure public notoriety and importance, they would as probably have, anyway, set up one for themselves, and would have certainly ignored the claim of the former.  

1.1.3.1 In Other Documentary Sources

There are many literary and liturgical sayings that have come down to us from different sources which speak in favour of St. Thomas’ Indian apostolate. Many of them speak in favour of south Indian apostolate and some do not specify any thing about the place India.

One Strabo, who lived during the time of Augustus makes reference to the existence of trade between the Roman Empire and India. A.C Perumalil devotes five chapters about this Roman contact with India in his book called *Apostles in India*. Strabo says, “I was with Gallus at the time he was prefect of Egypt, and accompanied him as far as Syene and
the frontiers of Ethiopia and I found that about one hundred and twenty ships sail from Myosttoomos to India.”

Pliny the elder also speaks of voyages from Roman Empire to India. It is seen in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (p.232)\(^3\). *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* is a travel account of 1\(^{\text{st}}\) half of 1\(^{\text{st}}\) century A.D. And the author is unknown.

*Acts of Thomas* written towards last lap of 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) century or beginning of 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) century is a work written in Syriac. It contains thirteen acts including accounts of St. Thomas’ journey from Jerusalem to India. And it speaks of his preaching mission and conversion of the royal couple and the establishment of the primitive Church of India, his martyrdom and a remote expression about the removal of his relics from India to the west.

In the *Church History* written by Eusebius (one of the Church Fathers of the East), he quotes Origen another Church Father from the east and says, “India and Parthia, according to tradition was allotted to Thomas as his mission field”\(^4\). This was written between 185-254 A.D. Ephraim was a famous poet of Eastern Church who lived between 306-373 A.D. He was there in Edessa to where St. Thomas’ relics were carried from India. His hymns on St.Thomas also have reference to India.

The one Begotten his Apostles chose,  
Among them Thomas, whom he sent  
To baptise peoples perverse, in darkness steeped  
A dark night then India’s land enveloped,  
Like the sun’s ray Thomas did dart forth;  
There he dawned, and her illumined.
The client of Thomas needs not men his praises to sing
Great is the crowd of his martyred followers.
Lo his Bones, his passion, his work proclaim;
His miracles, him yet alive assert;
His deeds the rough Indian convinced
Who dares doubt the truth of his Relics?\(^{25}\)

St. Gregory of Nazianzen as well as St. Ambrose who lived about 329-390 A.D and 333-397 A.D. respectively refers to Indian apostolate of St.Thomas. There are still more said and written references by many of the early centuries. But I think reference to the earliest authors will be enough to make clear the apostolic origin of the Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians or of Syro-Malabar Church in India.

1.1.3.2 In Numismatical Sources

The availability of written or unwritten evidences regarding the history of any community is very much helpful in collating her history. The absence of which makes the work more tough and troublesome. Regarding the early centuries of St. Thomas Christians practically there was nothing to fill this need till the middle of 19\(^{th}\) century. By the middle of the 19\(^{th}\) century some coins were discovered from North West India with the name Gondophares whose kingdom was destroyed around 50 A.D. by Kushans.\(^{26}\) Fleet suggests his ascension year as 19 A.D. and the inscription was given in the 26\(^{th}\) year of his reign. That means he was still a king, in 45 A.D.\(^{27}\)

From the time of this discovery, writers and historians try to associate the Gondophares of the coins as well as of the Thakti-i-bahi inscription
(presently it is kept in the Lahore museum in Pakistan) as the one who is mentioned in the Acts of Judas Thomas, from where we get the details of the missionary itinerary of St. Thomas. A.C. Perumalil does not accept the veracity of the association of St. Thomas to North West India because there is an inscription and a few coins in the name of King Gondophores. The reason put forward by him is the absence of the tomb in North West India. But I would like to go with the opinion of Benedict Vadakekara. He observes, “from these coins and inscription alone it is possible to establish the historicity of Gondophores and that the Acts of Judas Thomas is written with some historical nucleus in it?” And many others accept St. Thomas’ preaching in North West India as a true possibility. Perhaps St. Thomas must have gone back to his homeland after preaching in the North West India for a considerable period of time some time before 50 A.D. Daniel D’Souza narrates the instance of St. Thomas going back to Jerusalem, to be there for the last moments of Mary, mother of Jesus, that is considered to be some time before 50 A.D. He must have undertaken a second missionary journey to India which was possibly by sea and landed in Muziris in the South and established the churches or the Christian communities in the south. I hold to this position very much because as per the traditional belief St. Thomas came to south in the year 52 A.D. We have to fill the gap of so many years till 52 A.D. After the death of Jesus, what did Thomas do till that time? Did he not preach Christianity as other disciples did?

The existence of a caravan route from the Middle East to the central India and beyond or the sea route from Alexandria to different ports of India from very early times speak in favour of the strong possibility of
St. Thomas’ coming to north and central India, or to south India via some eminent port like Broach or Barygaza, or Muziris or via land possibly with any of such trading groups who already knew the people and the land.

1.1.3.3 In Local Literary Sources

Some of the evidences for the South Indian apostolate of St. Thomas can be seen in the local literary sources too. Folklores which contain the history of St. Thomas are Ramban pāttu, Vēeradiyan pāttu, and Kēralōlpathi.

The Ramban pattu/the Ramban song was originally written by one of the disciples of St. Thomas. The present text that has come down to us in a redacted form by one Thomas Ramban, 48th priest of Malieckal family. The text of redaction is kept at Mannanam monastery in Kerala. The Rambān pāttu and Mārgam kali pāttu are used by people of a few important churches on special occasions like marriage and other ceremonies.

Veeradiyan pattu is song sung by Hindu singers for Christian festivities. In all these, there are details of St. Thomas’ activities in Kerala. Many Syrian manuscripts are destroyed by the Portuguese. And thereby Church of St. Thomas’ or the Syro-Malabar Church is deprived of the treasure of written documents they were having from early days to a situation of not having it. And they are at the mercy of a few foreign records which are not accepted by historians with certitude.
Charles B. Waite has put forward a very interesting theory to hold that Thomas had come to India in the first century itself. He analyses the infant narratives of Krishna and Christ. It is said that Thomas wrote the infancy gospel. He argued that if Thomas was not aware of the puranic story of Krishna it would have been very difficult for him to write the infancy gospel, exactly as it is there in the Krishna story of the puranas.33

According to P.V. Mathew, Manimekhalai, a third century tamil epic also speaks of Christians as issānis.34 Perhaps his observations about the essene connection of St. Thomas’ Christians and their life style would solve the problem about the first converts whether they were Brahmins/Nambuthiris or not.

1.1.4 Comments on Indian Apostolate of St. Thomas

According to Koodapuzha, Perumalil, and Hambye the main evidence to the missionary journey of St. Thomas to India is not based on Acts of Thomas written outside India, but it is an oral and living tradition of Thomas Christians handed down from generation to generation.35

Portuguese historian Barbosa speaks about the cause of the death of St. Thomas from an unintentional arrow of a hunter. This was narrated to him by the people who migrated to Kollam from Mylapore due to some persecution. The hunter was shooting only the peacock. The pea-cock
flew up and took the form of a human being and died there. It was St. Thomas who died.  

According to Ferdinand Diego another Portuguese historian, it was inside the cave of the small mountain that St. Thomas was killed by his enemies. However different traditions converge on one thing; St. Thomas died a martyr and he was buried at Mylapore.

Paulinos, A Sancto Barthelmew OCD in his book called India Orientalis Christiana (translation by John Pallath OCD), speaks almost doubtfully of the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas in India. At the same time he accepts the fact that Christianity was preached to Indians before 280 A.D in the North. Perhaps he, a Portuguese missionary wanted to water down the historical existence of St. Thomas Christians as a whole and especially in the South where the Latin Christians who were the followers of the Portuguese missionaries were in good number. Here in this book he is giving an extra weightage as a bonus to the historical existence of Christianity from 5th century onwards. He refers to Cosmos Indico Pleistus in the work called Christiana Indica which speaks of existence of Churches and Christians in South India. Perhaps the author did not take pains to analyse critically the unwritten aspects of history or he wanted to see the history of St. Thomas Christians of India with some calculated interests.

There are still other scholars like Tillamont, Toleo, and La Cross who argue that it was not St. Thomas who preached Christianity in India; but a certain Thomas, one of the disciples of Manes, the founder of
Manichaenism. Manes was born on 14th April 216 in North Babylonia. He was put to death in 277 A.D under Bahram I. He started his work only after 240 A.D the year in which he received the revelation about his mission. According to Tillamont emperor Alexander of Rome requested the Indian kings to allow the removal of the relics of St. Thomas to Edessa. He opines that this removal of the relics happened in the year 233. If we go by this year Tillamont is contradicting his own view on St. Thomas and his followers. In the year 233 A.D Manes had not started his mission. According to Fr. Paulinos OCD the intervention of emperor Alexander is a reliable event. That means much before Manes and his disciples Christianity had come to India. Moreover, "the story of the sending of Thomas the disciple of Manes to India rests on the authority of a passage in Theodoret who died in A.D. 457 or 458. Keays in his book called, History of the Syrian Church.

There are differences in the opinion of the scholars regarding the mission of Thomas the Manichaen to India. Benedict Vadakekara has the following observation in his book; "but Acta Diputationis and Epiphanius, both older authorities, in speaking of the disciples of Manes, agree that Addai was destined to the east, Thomas [Mane’s disciple], went to the land of Syria and Hermes to the east. According to Epiphanius the mission of Thomas was to Judea. It has been suggested that Theodoret misread ‘Loudain’ as India. Therefore there is no reason to believe [that] the Thomas the Manichaen, visited India." 

From all these we can justifiably believe that Christianity has come to India much before manichaenism or Thomas of Cana. If it was not
St. Thomas the disciple of Jesus about whom there is an oral tradition from very early centuries; then who introduced Christianity to the people of India? The question finds no satisfactory answer. Therefore, the given situation and the complementary reasons compel the students of history to believe that it was most probably Thomas one of the disciples of Jesus who preached Christianity in India for the first time.

Another version told by those who reject St. Thomas’ preaching in India is that the India referred by ancient writers is not present India. It is some portion of Arabia. But there is no tradition of St. Thomas’ preaching anywhere else as it is available in India. And nowhere else there is a tomb of St. Thomas available in the world. Hindus and Moslems as well of this country do hold this tradition as their Christian brethren. If it was a cooked up story of tomb and martyrdom of St. Thomas at Mylapore it would have been available only to the community members alone. But it is not the case with St. Thomas’ martyrdom and burial. Not only that, the Christians of St. Thomas would have made it under their possession as it is of paramount importance to the community to hold the tomb of their originator under their control.

If we give due weightage to the grain of historical truth that may be hidden in the legendary works, perhaps our problem of incoherent anomalies about the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas will be solved. It seems that King Gondaphores of Parthia and India and the connection of St. Thomas to Gondaphores was a historical reality. Thomas was engaged in preaching in North West India and perhaps he took a break to go back to Jerusalem to be there for the last moments of Mary mother of Jesus. If
this had really happened, the second missionary journey was a very strong possibility and that he undertook it after 48 A.D. It was by sea and he landed at Muziris (Cranganore) and carried out the missionary work along the costal regions of south and South East India.

From the details in the Acts of Judas Thomas we understand that the missionary itinerary of St. Thomas did not stop with his preaching in the kingdom of Gondophores; from there he went to the country of a certain King Mazdai. Many authors like A.C Perumalil tries to locate Mazdai as one of the south Indian kings. Perhaps Mazdai could be the king of the area which included Mylapore. But no written record about the king Mazdai is available to us. I believe that the whole effort to locate Mazdai as a south Indian king also must have its root in the thinking that St. Thomas had preached only in south India and the nearby areas.

Many historians try to locate Gondophores as a south Indian king. This also must be coming from the preoccupation with the predominance given to the idea of St. Thomas’ preaching in south India. But the acceptance of preaching itinerary of St. Thomas in north India will solve many of the problems and may compel the historians to recast the history of the community too.

"Those who deny the Indian apostolate of St. Thomas in any part of India attribute no value to the Acts of Judas Thomas or to the references in other works of early centuries to India"
The coins and the inscription that are excavated from the Punjab region speak of the existence of a King named Gondaphares and his reigning period is ascribed to be around first half of the first century A.D. In the light of these findings we cannot ignore the details in the Acts of Judas Thomas very lightly.

By the middle of the first century the discovery of monsoon winds gave impetus to sea born trade with south India\textsuperscript{45} and other countries. St. Thomas who was back in Jerusalem took this as an opportunity to be back in India faster and landed in Muziris in 52 A.D\textsuperscript{46} and continued his preaching itinerary in the south. And in the legendary literature available to us perhaps the events narrated by St.Thomas to his close associates about his north Indian missionary life, also got mixed with.

A. Sreedharamenon in his book \textit{History of Kerala} makes a critical examination of the possibility of St. Thomas Christians to mistake the Apostle Bartholomew or Thomas the Manichaen or Thomas of Cana for the Apostle Thomas and rules out emphatically such a possibility.\textsuperscript{47} “Diogo Gonsalves, Historiado Malavarai, says that the St.Thomas Christians knew the exact identity of their Apostle”,\textsuperscript{48}

1.1.5 St.Bartholomew and the Indian Christians

There are some who believe that St.Bartholomew came to India and preached Christianity here. But there is no community remnant as we get in the case of St.Thomas Christians. The argument given by those who hold to this is an ancient testimony of Eusebius the Church historian of
4th century about Pantaenus' coming to India in 2nd century at the invitation of the local Christians to refute the non-believers. There he is supposed to have seen the copy of the gospel of Matthew which was written in Hebrew with them and the believers told Pantaenus that they received faith from Bartholomew.49

It seems to me that it must have had its origin from a misunderstanding/mishearing of the word "Barthomai" as Barthelomew. The group with whom Pantaenus came into contact must have been some groups like the Barthomais/the sons of Thomas, a community that claims their descent from St. Thomas, whom the protestant historian Trotter, had encountered in Thatta in Sind50. The existence of primitive Christian communities in other parts of India also would suggest that the original Thomas' Christians of north India were a scattered lot with out proper leadership.51 This understanding again will speak more emphatically for the North Indian Apostolate of St.Thomas and will change the misreading of the Christian history of India.

1.2 Growth of the Syro-Malabar Church

1.2.1 From 52 A.D-345 A.D

The first Christians did not think of the Church primarily as an organised society; to them it was the faithful remnant consisting of the heirs to the divine promises; It was the new Israel and its members were therefore the elect or chosen of God; It was the temple of the divine presence indwelt by the spirit; it was the body of Christ, a new creation transcending distinctions of race, class, or sex.... Nevertheless from the second century the Church poised an
ordained ministry, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons; the origins of which must be sought in the period under review. Unfortunately the evidence at the disposal of the historian is fragmentary and ambiguous.\textsuperscript{52}

This was the case with the Church in the apostolic times. And it cannot be something different here in India. Perhaps Christians who did not have the historical mind have not left any document on this aspect also. Whatever would have been there was burned at the Synod of Diamper. We do not have any documentary evidence to prove what was the condition of the Church of St. Thomas when he left India. What was the condition of their beliefs and practices? What was the state of their internal government? Who held the power in the society? What was the structure of the community of believers when St. Thomas was martyred?

As per biblical accounts the early Christians had the "breaking of the bread" a rudimentary form of Holy Eucharist to them (Acts 2:42). This was done in all enthusiasm and fervour. Here in India also the picture would have been the same. But there aren't written documents to conclude there were ordained priests and Bishops in the first century. But as it was the custom in the early Church the elders who had greater knowledge about the Lord or experience of St. Thomas and his close associates would have been in the picture. There would have been certain laws and customs (like the Law of Thomas) which the members of the community were following.\textsuperscript{53} Other than this, "there is no evidence of an independent Indian ecclesiastical structure" in the fourth century.\textsuperscript{54} Koodapuzha also speaks about the absence of any ecclesiastical structure in the early Church of Thomas Christians.\textsuperscript{55}
As such nothing is documented about the life of St. Thomas Christians before the coming of Thomas of Cana. Monseratte, a certain historian gives the following account;

When Thomas of Cana came to India, he found Christians in Cranganore and Quilon, who were descended from the disciples of Apostle St. Thomas. These Christians were only nominal Christians and they married promiscuously with Nairs. The only distinguishing sign was that they had crosses on their doors and walls and were in the habit of giving their children Christian names. Thomas of Cana made them a united community, took care to preserve their superiority of caste which means much in India. He had them and their wives baptised and soon he became their chief.\textsuperscript{56}

However there is division among the Thomas Christians as northists and southists. Different causes are cited for this division by different authors.\textsuperscript{57}

Monserate who gives only the account of Thomas of Cana, agrees with Dionysio when he says that it was consequent on the arrival of Thomas of Cana that Christians of Malabar accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian church, because Thomas saw to it that Syrian bishops came to Malabar, for whom the Christians had great respect since they came from among their progenitors.\textsuperscript{58}

Certain Fr. Mathew has a different story to say, says A.M Mundadan in the \textit{Church History of India}.\textsuperscript{59} According to him metropolitan of Edessa had a vision in which he saw the sad plight of Thomas Christians. He explained the dream to his faithful and priests and entrusted Thomas
of Cana to find out the reality and Thomas of Cana accordingly arrived Maliankara with bishop and priests; deacons, men and women from Jerusalem and Nineveh. They landed at Maliankara in 345 A.D. And they built a town and a church in Kodungaloor and it was from there fathers governed the dioceses of Malabar and India. There is no agreement among the historians on Thomas of Cana tradition also. Different historians ascribe different dates and in the details too they differ from one another.

Barbosa has different story to tell about the Chaldean connection of Thomas Christians. According to him it is because of the initiative of the local Christians that they got Chaldean bishops to instruct them.

From the analysis of Rambān pāṭṭu Fr. Bernard Thoma derives some other conclusions which will speak of unbroken lineage of priests, and bishops for the Syro-Malabar Church. But some unknown reasons brought an end to the lineage of bishops in the Church of Thomas Christians. If St. Thomas had instituted bishops and priests here in the Church established by him how it came to an end? Did the powerful migrant community, usurp it from the hands of the natives? Up to what time there were local bishops? When did the community loose the lineage of Bishops? Can we take the institution of the bishops spoken of in the Rambān pāṭṭu as a historical reality or is it a simple poetic imagination coming from their experience of their later life? If this had happened was there a chance for St. Thomas Christians requesting for bishops even before Portuguese’ coming to Kerala?
From early centuries there was some kind of relationship with the Christians of Malabar and the Church of Persia. However we do not have any records of the reason for this Persian relationship of Church of Thomas Christians. Apostle Thomas is also connected to the Persian Church though not directly. It was his own disciples Addai and Mari who were the originators of Persian Church. There are a few records of 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 4\textsuperscript{th}, and of even later centuries about Persians coming to India for evangelisation work. In the list of bishops who attended Nicean Council in 325 A.D., one John the Persian has signed as the bishop of all Persia and Great India.\textsuperscript{65} Persian Church had relationship with Chaldean Church. Church of Selucia got an upper hand over Persian Church. Slowly the centre of Chaldean Church was shifted to Ctesiphon. Naturally India was also under Church of Selucia Ctesiphon.\textsuperscript{66} According to Monseratte a Jesuit priest, it is with the arrival of Thomas of Cana that the Christians of Kerala accepted the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian Church, because he managed to get Syrian bishops for Kerala whom the people held in high esteem.\textsuperscript{67}

1.2.2 From 346 A.D – 1500 A.D

Third and fourth centuries were marked for the liturgical and hierarchical development in the Church all over the world. But however we do not see a developed Indian liturgy and hierarchy here; perhaps because of the special combination of the members of the Indian church. That is to say the Persian and Jewish immigrants must have had a better say on the day to day affairs of the church. Malayalam as a language hadn’t yet developed. We can say one thing for sure from the analysis of the
Thomas Traditions. In no point of time in history Thomas is addressed as Judas Thomas in South India. If the Persian or Chaldean connection was there from the beginning the term Judas Thomas would have crept into South Indian Tradition on St. Thomas. But it is not so. That means Church of Thomas’ Christians in India had an independent origin and a tradition apart from east Syrian Church. Whatever would have been the reality we can arrive at hypothetical conclusions only. Only one thing we can say, due to various reasons Indian Church became a dependant Church on Persian/Chaldean Church on liturgical and hierarchical matters.

What was the shape of the original Christian community of Kerala? Were they included immigrant Christians of Mylapore and North India? Did they include the Jewish settlers and local inhabitants who were Christians? What change did the east Syrian colonisers bring in the Church of St. Thomas in India? As per the available sources from the time of Thomas of Cana to the days of Portuguese, Syrian Fathers governed the Church of India. Though chronological list of East Syrian bishops who governed St. Thomas Christians of India is not available, some names are given by A.M. Mundadan in his work called Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy. They are as follows; David of Basrah (3rd century), John the Persian (4th century), Mana (5th century), Patriarch Sabrisho I (6/7th century), Mar Isayah (7th century), Mar Thimothy (8th and 9th century), Bishop Thomas (8th century), Sapor and Prot (9/10th century), Mar Jacob (14th century).
Now the question is how the people accepted the foreigners so easily? How did they conduct the administration? What happened to the Indian prelates who were believed to be there, at the coming of the Persians?

"There is no evidence to show that the Indian Christians in any way resented [their] dependence. This was perhaps because, except for the presence of Bishops as nominal superiors, they had been free to manage their affairs under the arch deacon who was a local man," says A.M. Mundadan. There are differences of opinion among scholars about the fact, that whether this foreign rule was for good or bad for the community? Why this was perpetuated for so many centuries?

Perhaps in the administrative set up that was established by the Persians, Arch Deacon had enjoyed a great position in the society. He was called the Arch Deacon of All India. In the society too he had a very high role to play. "The Arch Deacon, the first among the seventy two princes of Perumpadapil Cochin, was a man to crown the king in order that the king may be recognised as king".

One opinion is that these prelates and the immigrants helped the nation in everything related to religious discipline and sciences. Therefore the nation always considered the Babylonians (east Syrian Christians) as their benefactors. So the rulers generously helped them. And this perhaps made the local Christians move in a subdued way. But Fr. Bernard another historian is of another view. According to him, their rule did more harm to the Indian Church than good. The growth of an
indigenous hierarchy or administrative set up could not be materialised because of their presence.

Social life of the Christians during this period was a glorious one. Under the leadership of Thomas of Cana and Sabrisho the community grew to glorious state. We already saw that the converts to Christianity in Kerala were high caste Hindus, Jewish settlers and the migrants from Persian countries. And they continued to enjoy the privileges of high castes. And the kings and rulers were generous to them in giving many privileges and grants. Tarisappalli copper plates, Iravi Korthan plates etc., are examples of privileges given to Christians by rulers.\textsuperscript{73}

1.2.3 From 1500 A.D-1599 A.D.

The negative impact of foreign rule in the Church of St. Thomas began to show forth only after the coming of the Portuguese. The members of the Church of St. Thomas had experienced the Latin Church even before their coming. From 13\textsuperscript{th} century onwards groups like Dominicans and Franciscans who were from the Latin Church were already active in India.\textsuperscript{74} At the dawn of missionary activities India was placed under the diocese of Khan baliq (Peking) in 1307 A.D. In April 1318 A.D. Pope John XXII divided the diocese of Khan Bailq and erected a new archdiocese called Sultanieh of Persia. Thereafter India was under it. Archdiocese of Sultanieh was itself divided into a number of dioceses and one of them was Quilon in South India; the first diocese in India.\textsuperscript{75}
Missions started by Franciscans and Dominicans in India must have ceased to exist by the beginning of 15th century. In other parts of the world the rise of Ottoman Turks brought in a spell of doom to the Church. But the same happened here in India too under the Moslem rulers. Perhaps the Christians of Malabar were the only ones who did not suffer much from Islam, in the beginning of conversion of Persian Mongols to Islam. But later in south India under Tippu Sultan Moslems harassed Hindus and Christians alike and the Church of St. Thomas lost many churches and the believers. On 21 May 1498 Vasco de Gama visited Calicut; and in the following year he went back and in 1500 Cabral with many priests and bishop and many others reached Kerala. These expeditions were done purely with commercial intentions. Slowly religious expansion also came into the picture.

When Portuguese came to India, north was completely dominated by Muslim rulers; but in the south still many Hindu dynasties held their sway.

The purpose of Gama’s arrival was to make alliance with the Christian King to expel the Moslems from the land. The Hindus whom he met, he misunderstood as Christians. When Cabral came in 1500 A.D; he had eight Franciscan friars with him.

As far as the Christians of St. Thomas is concerned this visit of Cabral had far reaching effect on their life; just before the arrival of Portuguese as A.M. Mundadan observes, there was crunch in the personnel to dispose the spiritual duties to the Thomas’ Christians due to some
unknown reason. Once these problems or differences whatever be, got over, bishops were ordained and sent to India to administer the needs of the Church. Joseph the Indian a traveller who has visited Portugal and Rome gives a good narrative of Christians of Cranganore of the early 16th century. However when Portuguese came to India Church of St. Thomas was on a revival mode because of the new life infused by the new bishops.

By the time Portuguese came to Malabar coast, Christians were harassed by the infidels and the Christians of Malabar met the Portuguese with the hope of getting protection from them. The association between the Portuguese and the local Christians differed from place to place. In Quilon they were very closely associated. But not in Cranganore. In Quilon they were living close by. That is why perhaps this difference occurred, says A.M.Mundadan.

Portuguese converted many non christians to the Catholic faith in the latin rite. Cochin and Goa became the ecclesiastical and political centres of the Portuguese in India. Thus the Church grew significantly. In 1534 Goa was made the diocese under the Archdiocese of Funchal on the Island of Maderia. In 1557 Goa was raised as Archdiocese and diocese of Cochin was its suffragan. And the Portuguese claimed themselves as the legitimate prelates of the whole of Malabar including the Thomas' Christians.

In the beginning the relationship between both communities were cordial. But slowly they turned to hostilities. The immediate reason for the
hostilities between these two Christian groups was the denial of the Syrian Christians to get married to the Parankees (the name by which the Portuguese were called by the locals) which they had found out as a way to convert the St.Thomas Christians to their form of Christianity. St.Thomas Christians considered the marriage with the Parankees as equal to dishonouring their nobility. So many of the St.Thomas' Christian families changed their residence from the vicinity of the Portuguese. This infuriated the Portuguese who were already planning to bring them under their sway.  

With the establishment of Cochin diocese and Goa as the Archdiocese this selfish desire of the Portuguese reached new heights. Since diocese of Goa was the Arch diocese, the Bishop of Goa was given the title of primate of India which was the title of the Archbishop of St.Thomas' Christians. The Chaldean Patriarch Abdisho objected this usurping in 1562. But Portuguese missionaries asserted that all the Christians in India were under the Archbishop of Goa.

St.Thomas Christians in India had totally different rites and rituals. Portuguese saw all of them as unchristian and pagan. In the words of Lequin.M. o.p; it was because they had no idea of oriental ways. Even when they respected the Portuguese missionaries they did not allow them to enter into their internal matters. This reluctance of St.Thomas Christians was misunderstood and was misinterpreted by the interested parties. Penteado a Portuguese missionary priest, wrote to the king of Portugal between 1516-1518; "these Thomas' Christians do not like to come into contact with us. They claim that they have a different law."
Law of Thomas for them." And whenever the missionaries got the opportunities they tried to instruct the Thomas, Christians in the Latin ways.

Portuguese directed all their exclusive attention not to evangelisation of the masses of the non-Christian population in the country; but to the conversion of the St. Thomas Christians/Syrian Christians in particular, on whom they alleged the Nestorianism in their beliefs and practices.

Portuguese missionaries alleged that the priests of Thomas' Christians do not know how to perform the sacraments. In order to usurp the leadership of Thomas' Christians they played many a trick like, offering subsidy to the bishops, visits to St. Thomas Christian parishes by missionaries, western style of seminary formation, disciplinary actions against the bishops and priests of St. Thomas Christian community if they stood against the plans of the missionaries, were some of the means they employed to wrest the leadership of the Church of St. Thomas in India. Allegation of Nestorianism on the Church of St. Thomas was the most powerful resort to Latinise it.

Mar Jacob who was a virtual prisoner of the Portuguese died in 1550/52 A.D and there was no bishop for Thomas’ Christians for a few years. In 1556 A.D patriarch Abdiso sent one Mar Joseph as the bishop of Malabar. But he was arrested by Portuguese and was detained in Goa for 18 months. After 18 months he was released but could not exercise his authority without the permission of Goa bishop. He was taught Latin rituals and they asked him to perform in the Latin rite for the Christians
of St. Thomas. The people welcomed him. But the Portuguese deported him to Portugal on charge of heresy in 1562 A.D. 96 He came back in 1564 A.D but without charge of Thomas’ Christians. During his absence the Cochin bishop persuaded the St. Thomas Christians to receive him as their bishop. In 1567 A.D Mar Abraham reached India and Patriarch Abdisho assigned the see of Angamali to him. 97 When Mar Abraham reached Goa with letters from Rome he was detained by the Portuguese. But he escaped from the captivity and reached his see by night. He ruled his subjects till 1597 A.D, till his death.

Meanwhile in 1575 A.D the council of Goa was convened. Mar Abraham did not participate in that because of fear. 98 In the council of Goa it was decreed, that “Thomas Christians were to be ruled by bishops presented by the Portuguese King [and] that Mar Abraham should attend the future councils of Goa”. 99 Ma Abraham tried to reform i.e., Latinise the Thomas’ Christians at the insistence of Portuguese/Goan bishop. In the second council of Goa (1585 A.D) the Angamalee see was also brought under Goan inquisition. Already during mar Abraham’s time Portuguese had alleged Nestorianism on Thomas’ Christians. Now in 1597 A.D Mar Abraham died and Roz S.J was nominated as his successor.

There was tussle for power between the missionaries and the Thomas Christians. Dom Menezis a visitor appointed by the Holy See/Pope thought it was the powers of the Patriarch of Syria through which all the heresy came to the Thomas’ Christians and he was resolved to put an end to the same. “The Thomas’ Christians with the arch deacon were also
said to have resolved to keep the "law of Thomas" which for them ... was the Syrian rite". Dom Menezes with his prejudice began to deal with anything and everything related to Thomas' Christians. He ordered them not to mention the name of Syrian patriarch in their prayers which was the custom earlier. Dom Menezes made the archdeacon to sign the following:

(1) To condemn Nestorianism and to acknowledge Nestorius, Theodore, and Diodore to be in hell fire. (2) To confess the Law of Thomas to be the same as the Law of Peter; (3) To make profession of faith according to the formula prescribed by him. (4) To hand over all books to be corrected or burned; (5) To accept the Pope's supremacy; (6) To condemn the patriarch as a heretic, and schismatic (7) And to swear not to receive any bishop other than sent by rome and approved at Goa. (8) To obey Dom Menezes as his superior by an oath until the arrival of the new bishop. (9) To promise to convolve a synod in the place appointed by Dom Menezes, to accept everything that would be settled there and to convolve to it priests and representative laymen and (10) Not to go about accompanied by soldiers, to travel always in the company of Dom Menezes and in the same conveyance. Refusal to accept any of these was refusal to accept all.

Dom Menezes convened the said synod at Diamper in 1599 A.D which was illegal and discriminatory towards St. Thomas Christians, says Jonas Thaliath. In the synod St. Thomas Christians were prevailed upon to condemn the Patriarch as a heretic and schismatic and made to swear that they would not accept any bishop if they are not nominated by Rome. The patriarch thus condemned was none other than Denha Simon who was in explicit communion with Rome, who had been actually honoured by Rome with pallium.
The synod of Diamper was conducted in an illegal way without proper formalities. It was done only to bring the Thomas’ Christians under Portuguese. The latinisation process which started sometimes earlier found its climax in the synod of Diamper. To the faithful it was derogatory; even then in order to have peace in the Church those who participated in it obliged to the prescriptions of Ros, Menezes and companions. The decrees which were read out in the synod was not in the language which was familiar to them and so they (the participants) just mechanically or technically participated in it.\textsuperscript{105} And thereby the synod paved the way for future dissentions among them.

As J. Thaliath Points out,

The synod of Diamper was a turning point in the history of the church of Malabar. It gave a definite form and a set up to the tendency of latinisation that slowly prevailed in the church of Malabar from the time the first Portuguese missionaries set foot there. It effectively removed some of the abuses arising out of ignorance of the people, and clarified the catholic doctrine leaving no room for ambiguity. It severed in one coup the age long relation that the church of Malabar fostered with that of Babylon.\textsuperscript{106} And brought in the king of Portugal on the scene with the right of nomination to the see of Malabar.\textsuperscript{107}

1.2.4 From 1599 A.D-1887A.D

Ros S.J was appointed as the successor to Mar Abraham in1599 A.D as the head of metropolitan see of Angamali. It was brought under Goa in
1600 A.D and with this the diocese of Angamali was brought under Padruado patronage.\textsuperscript{108}

This in effect was the fruit of synod of Diamper. The sway of Chaldean Patriarch over the Syro-Malabarians came to an end and they were placed under total Latin jurisdiction. The news about the reduction of the status of Angamali to that of a suffragan diocese caused much unrest among Thomas’ Christians. However bishop Roz took up their cause and pleaded with Rome for the restoration of the title of Angamali. On December 22\textsuperscript{nd} 1608 A.D the archiepiscopal title was restored to Angamali\textsuperscript{109} as if it had not been suppressed at all. But the administrative centre of the see of Angamali was shifted to Cranganore because already bishop Roz had started staying there. But the territory of Cranganore Archdiocese was very much limited whereas Angamali See was extended to all India. This was one of the exclusive rights of Thomas’ Christians which came to be suppressed in reality. Bishop Roz went with vigorous latinisation in all aspects of the life of the people. In the beginning he consulted the archdeacon in all matters of importance but slowly they began to distance themselves and started writing complaints about the other. Though archdeacon wrote letters of complaint he got no reply instead he was excommunicated in 1609\textsuperscript{110} A.D for his actions. Many of bishop Roz’ actions were derogatory to the Thomas’ Christians and they were seething with discontentment within them.\textsuperscript{111}

In 1615 A.D the excommunication of the archdeacon was revoked. From 1615 A.D – 1618 A.D, there was peace between the archdeacon and the Archbishop. But, by the end of 1618A.D, it was disturbed again because
bishop Roz did not make the Archdeacon administrator when he went to Goa for a period. Bishop Roz was adamant and it went on till his death. However before his death he rectified the relationship with archdeacon.

Bishop Roz died in 1624 A.D February, and Bishop Stephen Britto succeeded him in September 1624 A.D. The new archbishop and archdeacon had a peaceful time. During his time a religious congregation for men was also started. But due to the differences of goal of the same among the founders it could not survive long.

Bishop Britto too had differences with the archdeacon for a period of time. It was ruptured, mended, ruptured and mended. This situation was going on for some time in 1640. Archdeacon George died and his nephew was appointed archdeacon by Bishop Britto. In 1641 A.D bishop Britto died and bishop Francis Garcia was also friendly in the beginning. But he also did the same mistake as bishop Britto. Bishop Garcia appointed a Latin Priest as the vicar general, which infuriated the archdeacon. Now Thomas’ Christians were thinking, till they get some eastern prelates this trouble will not be solved. It was at this juncture one Ahatallah came to Mylapore claiming to be the Patriarch of all India and China, who claimed that he was sent by Pope. On receiving this news Thomas’ Christians were very happy. The Portuguese without any delay deported him to Goa via Cochin under the pretext that he has come with out proper orders. Now Archdeacon and his companions reached Cochin and demanded to see the “Patriarch” to examine his credentials. But they did not permit them instead deported him to Goa and the rumour spread
that he was drowned and killed off the coast of Cochin.\footnote{116} Now since their pleadings went unheard, people under the leadership of archdeacon Thomas took a solemn oath at Mattancherry denouncing their allegiance to archbishop Garcia and the Jesuits and they recognised archdeacon Thomas as the governor of their Church.\footnote{117}

"The Coonan Cross Oath"\footnote{118} as it is known in history was not a mere ritual it was the expression of strong discontentment of the people against Garcia and the Jesuits. However things did not end with that. "The malcontents held a meeting at Edapally and then at Alangat on May 22, 1653, swore on the Gospel that they would not obey Garcia S.J."\footnote{119} and also they (12 priests) held an imposition of hands on archdeacon and declared him archbishop illicitly and illegally. By this they did not mean to discard their allegiance to Pope but they were ready to accept anybody who knew Syriac except Jesuits as their prelate.\footnote{120}

Many did not approve the second step, namely, ordaining Archdeacon as bishop and declaring him as the one to govern the diocese. So many deserted the newly ordained bishop by the imposition of a few priests.\footnote{121}

Now, Pope sent two groups of Carmelites under Propaganda to reconcile with the new dispensation in 1655 A.D.\footnote{122} Sebastini succeeded in bringing back many to the mother Church. Even archdeacon made archbishop, was also ready to give up his position. But the newly appointed archdeacon would not give up. Then the former went back to his old stand. Bishop Garcia died in 1659. Sebastini came back in 1661 A.D as a titular bishop with special charge of Cranganore. The following
year (1662) Dutch defeated Portuguese and this forced all Europeans to leave Malabar. In such a situation Bishop Stabilini ordained one Alexander (Chandy) Parambil as bishop and appointed him vicar apostolic of archdiocese of Angamaly. Mar Alexander excommunicated pseudo archbishop and brought back many others to the mother Church.\textsuperscript{123}

Now the pseudo archbishop Thomas, finding his position rather awkward invited one foreign Jacobite archbishop Mar Gregory. He taught Jacobitism to the malcontended group and it gave birth to a new division/sect called puthenkuttukar in the Church and the old group was called pazhayakuttukar.\textsuperscript{124}

Initial years of bishop Chandy (Alexander) were successful. Many those who followed Mar Thoma I the pseudo archbishop came back to mother Church. Even Mar Thoma I was trying to come back; it was at this time he got the news of the arrival of Mar Gregory who had been sent by the Antiochian Patriarch up on the invitation of the pseudo archbishop. Since he came at the invitation of mar Thoma I he somehow he managed to convince the people wrongly that Mar Gregory had been sent by the Pope to them and he was persuaded Mar Gregory to use the abolished old Syrian customs to win the people to his side and people naturally felt he was trying to restore their old customs\textsuperscript{125} and had sympathy towards them. And it was this new dispensation with Antiochian or west syriac came to be called the puthenkuttukar or Jacobites.\textsuperscript{126} Further divisions and their growth is not our immediate concern. So here I am not entering into that topic.
Bishop Chandy was getting old and propaganda ordered the Carmelites to elect a suitable native as co-adjutor to succeed bishop Chandy. They (the new comers who came to Malabar) elected a certain Fr. Raphael de Figueredo who was born to Portuguese parents in Cochin. This caused much disappointment among Thomas’ Christians. At this juncture bishop Chandy decided to appoint Fr. Mathew Pallil as archdeacon.127

The co-adjutor Figueredo was not ready to comply with bishop Chandy’s requests to take over the governance of the diocese; so he was allowed to stay in the church of palai. The administration was carried on by Fr. Mathew the archdeacon. Mar Chandy (Alexander) died in 1687 A.D and bishop Figueredo succeeded him as the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. There were many complaints against Figueredo even before and after assuming office. So Rome deposed him in 1694 A.D and he died in 1695 A.D. After his death there was no bishop in serra until 1701 A.D.128

We had already seen the Dutch victory over Portuguese in Cochin and because of that the sees of Cochin and Cranganore were vacant, though not suppressed. Under these circumstances Pope Innocent XII asked the Dutch to allow some others other than Portuguese to be allowed to take over the activities in India. With an agreement made with the Dutch authorities in 1698 A.D, Holy See appointed a Carmelite missionary, one Fr. Angelo as the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar in 1700A.D.129

Meanwhile the see of Kodungalloor which was vacant for the last two years got a new prelate in the person of John Riberio in the same year
(1700 A.D.). Among Thomas’ Christians many did not want themselves to be under him. Now there was a Padruado Vicar Apostolic as well as a Carmelite Vicar Apostolic; whom to obey was a problem for the faithful. This confusion worsened due to the intervention of a Carmelite called Innocent of S. Onufrio. He did all that he can to bring Thomas’ Christians under Kodungalloor Vicar Apostolic’s authority. Verapoly prelate was given this right over Thomas’ Christians at a time when Dutch did not allow the Portuguese missionaries to be there. Now with the coming of a new vicar Apostolic at Cranganore (under whose authority St.Thomas Christians were) Angelo Francis Vicar Apostolic from Verapoly told the Syrians that he does not have any right over them. But people unanimously rejected bishop Ribero’s authority.

After two months the Archdeacon Mathew Pallil joined Ribero. But again he shifted his allegiance and loyalty back to bishop Angelo Francis. The tensions increased in the Church and finally Rome confirmed the Authority of Angelo Francis within the area of his Jurisdiction in 1709 A.D. In 1712 A.D archbishop Angel Francis died. Four years later bishop Riberio also died. The see of Varapuzha got a new bishop only in 1718 A.D and the see of Kodungalloor see was filled only in 1722 A.D. In 1759 A.D the Jesuits were suppressed by the government of Portugal and thereby all the Jesuits in India were asked to go back.

The suppression of Jesuits had a positive result on St.Thomas’ Christians. It helped both the clergy and the faithful to become more self-reliant.
Bishop Florence died on 26\textsuperscript{th} July 1773. The leading diocesan priests of Thomas’ Christians wanted to carry the bier, but the Carmelites did not allow that. This further led to increase in the tensions with the Carmelites. Consequently the priests of St. Thomas Christians held an assembly at Angamali in the church of St. Hormisdas on 20\textsuperscript{th} August 1773.\textsuperscript{133}

New Vicar Apostolic came to Varapuzha on 13\textsuperscript{th} October 1775. The Thomas’ Christians did not keep any grudge against him. Many wanted to unite the Puthenkuru people back to mother Church. For this purpose two eminent priests were elected by the people and sent to Rome and Lisbon. They were Joseph Kariyattil and Thomas Paremakkal. They landed in Lisbon on 18\textsuperscript{th} July 1779. The Carmelites were against this mission. So they tried to delay their endeavour maximum through intermediaries. In 1780 A.D they reached Rome but only after six months of waiting they were received by the propaganda authorities; that too in a very cold way.\textsuperscript{134}

Inspite of all the negative propaganda their journey had some good results. To everybody’s surprise on 16\textsuperscript{th} July 1782, Kariyattil was nominated as archbishop of Kodungalloor under Padrudio regime.\textsuperscript{135} Such a nomination was a trap in actuality. He had to be in Latin rite. However they stood firm for the welfare of Thomas’ Christians. Unfortunately it was only after two and half years that they could leave for India.
On the way back Kariatti died of gastric fever while he was in Goa on 19th September 1786. Paremakkal was nominated administrator of Kodungalloor by archbishop of Goa on 21st September 1786. Although Paremakkal was only an administrator of Kodungalloor with the ordination of a bishop his influence was great. When he reached home he was received well by people and under his guidance the assembly at Angamali published a padiyola in 1787 on February 1st, declaring that thereafter Thomas' Christians will not accept foreign and Latin prelates any more. Tension between Carmelites and Thomas' Christians continued though in a lesser way. And in 1798 A.D one Paul Pandari one among the sons of St.Thomas was ordained a bishop. Under Pandari, in 1799 after the death of Paremakkal, the broke away group was united to the Roman Catholic fold. However everything was not well with Pandari. Due to some reason he left Malabar and is said to have died in Constantinople. After him Sankoorickal George was made administrator of Cranganore. He died in 1801 A.D.

Padruado Jurisdiction was suppressed in 1838 A.D and all the Christians in India came under propaganda rule. Under propaganda rule all those who took charge as Vicar Apostolics/ Administrators for St.Thomas’ Christians were Carmelites. Among the Vicar Apostolics the name of Stabilini Maurelius (1831) is important. It was during his tenure the first indigenous congregation for men (CMI) had it’s starting. During all these years Thomas’ Christians were trying to get their own people as prelates. After the suppression of Padruado the vast territory was divided into vicariates of Verapoly, Quilon, and Mangalore. Vicariate of Verapoly had maximum number of Thomas’ Christians. Its territory was
between river Pampa in the south and river Ponnani in the north. Both of them presently are in the small state of Kerala. Those who had all India jurisdiction was thus limited to a small territory.\textsuperscript{138} Msgr. Bernardine Vicar Apostolic appointed Fr. Kuriakose Chavara, one of the eminent sons of Thomas' Christians and one among the founding fathers of TOCD (presently known as the CMI) the First indigenous religious congregation as the vicar general of the Church of the Thomas' Christians. Many missionaries opposed his ordination as the bishop. So it did not take place. He was powerful instrument in fighting the Rocos Schism.\textsuperscript{139}

Padruado concordat was renewed again in 1857 A.D. and it came into execution only in 1864 A.D. with the appointment of administrators. Verapoly came under Propaganda and Cochin and Cranganore came under Padruado. It continued till 1887 A.D. Msgr Marcelline OCD was appointed at Verapoly exclusively for looking after the affairs of Thomas' Christians.\textsuperscript{140}

1.2.5 From 1887 A.D – 1923 A.D

In 1887 A.D propaganda declared two vicariates exclusively for Thomas' Christians; Vicariates of Kottayam and Trichur with Adolf Medlycott and Charles Lavigne respectively as their Vicar Apostolics. Prior to this Padruado jurisdiction over Cranganore was suppressed in 1886 A.D and Thomas Christians were brought under Propaganda jurisdiction of Verapoly.\textsuperscript{141}
The Latin Carmelites were not happy with the separate arrangement for Thomas Christians. They wanted to create some confusion in Rome. For that they caught hold of some priests of southist community and they requested for a separate vicariate for them. But Rome was not in favour of this request. Still, to a certain extend they succeeded in their policy of divide and rule.

In 1896 A.D as an immediate step for the restoration of the hierarchy of Thomas’ Christians Holy See distributed them into three vicariates under the propaganda; namely, Trichur, Ernakulam, and Changanacherry, under Mar John Menacherry, Mar Louis Pazheparambil, and Mar Mathew Makkil respectively. Thereafter slowly these vicariates developed and flourished.

Charles Lavigne the vicar Apostolic of Kottayam desired to shift from Kottayam to Changanacherry; and requested permission for the same from Pope. But he was given permission to do so only on a temporary basis and made it clear that the title the Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam he has to retain and in future Kottayam will continue to be the ordinary residence of vicar Apostolics. The desire to get bishops from within the community of Thomas Christians was very intense. And the leaders of the community with the people continued their efforts in this line.

The Chaldeans as well as a few believers from the Thomas Christians wanted the Thomas Christians to be under Chaldean Patriarchate. Soon all such desires were given up because of the tactfulness of the prelates. Perhaps the establishment of the separate vicariate for the
southists (in 1911 A.D with Kottayam as its head quarters) was a move to pacify the pro-Chaldean group.

1.2.6 From 1923 A.D-2000 A.D

In 1923 December 21\textsuperscript{st} one more feather was attached to the ardent life of Thomas Christians. Hierarchy of administration was inaugurated for the Church of St. Thomas Christians with Ernakulam as its head quarters and Mar Augustine Kandathil of Ernakulam see the archbishop. By this Trichur, Kottayam and Changanacherry Vicariates were made suffragans of Ernakulam Archdiocese.\textsuperscript{146} From that time on wards she is known as Syro-Malabar Church. All other Christian groups present at that time in Kerala were related to St.Thomas and were broken away from the mother Church of Thomas Christians, at different times after the Synod of Diamper. Though believers of the Church of St.Thomas would like to be called as Thomas Christians itself they are named as Syro-Malabarians by Rome. Efforts are on to change it.

From that time onwards the growth of these dioceses were in rapid speed and establishment of many new congregations, schools, colleges, hospitals, moreover growth in virtuous life of the believers were unprecedented. In 1950 A.D Changanacherry was divided and the diocese of Palai was erected. In 1953 A.D diocese of Tellicherry was erected for Thomas Christians who were under Latin diocese of Calicut. In 1955 A.D the ecclesiastical boundaries of Syro-Malabar Church was re-defined and extended beyond Pampa and Ponnani rivers.\textsuperscript{147} Bishop of
Kottayam was given jurisdiction over southists of the extended territories. The diocese of Ernakulam was bifurcated in 1956 and the diocese of Kothamangalam was erected. In 1956 A.D itself Changanacherry was made archbishopric with Kottayam and Palai as the suffragan dioceses. Dioceses of Trichur, Tellicherry, and Kothamangalam were the suffragan dioceses of Ernakulam.148

In 1962 Syro-Malabar Church was called to do the mission work outside its proper territory under Latin prelates. Thus Chanda was entrusted to CMI congregation in 1962 by Nagpur Archbishop Eugene D’Souza. It was successful under bishop Januarius who brought the diocese to a good stature with his hard work and initiatives.149

Seeing the success of Chanda mission and again under the initiative of archbishop Eugene D’Souza, Sagar, Satna, and Ujjain were entrusted to the Syro-Malabar religious congregations to develop them into dioceses.150 Later dioceses of Rajkot, Jagdalpur, Bijnor, Gorakhpur, Kalyan, and Adilabad dioceses were erected in the Latin territories.

“At present Syro-Malabar Church has 22 dioceses in India including four Archdioceses. It has more than 30 lakh (faithful) members in 1988”151 In 1992 A.D Syro-Malabar Church came one more step Closer towards autonomy. On January 29th She was raised to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church, with Mar Antony Padiyara as its first Major Archbishop. The installation of the Major Archbishop took place only on 20th may 1993. Till then, archbishop Abraham Kattumana the administrator. In 1997 Fr.Varkey Vithayathil CSSR was made the
administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church and later he was made the Major Archbishop. Though she is raised to the rank of Major Archiepiscopal Church, still she has not got all the powers that she ought to.

A Church that enjoyed jurisdiction on all India and beyond is chained to a limited territory. A Church that had a lot of cultural elements of the land, in their faith expressions though presently made barren of many of such elements (fruit of the misdeeds of the Synod of Diamper) is challenged to grow and nourish according to the shape she wants.

1.3 Social Life of St. Thomas Christians

History even if it is of religion, is not complete without analysing the social life of its members. History of Syro-Malabar Church also will not be complete if we fail to see the social life of its members. We have already seen how Thomas Christians had to struggle with the Chaldeans as well as Portuguese in matters of governing of the Church. In one way both colonisers had their private ends in keeping the Church of Thomas Christians under them. The main problem that marred the relationship of Thomas Christians with the Portuguese was the gross misunderstanding of the Portuguese about the social life of the Thomas Christians. The Portuguese misunderstood the spontaneous culturally adapted growth of Thomas Christians as unchristian and heretical. They had no idea of Christian faith other than what they had practised. Indian Christians also felt that everything was ok with them. The Church in India was obedient to Rome always. The alleged heresy, in the Church of St. Thomas was
not a wilful inclusion or omission from the side of its leaders or members. From the letter of Francis Xavier we can understand the standard of education of the ordinary people weren’t much in those days, so they did not know if any heresy was there or not in their beliefs.¹⁵³

Let us examine how members of the Church went on with their daily life. There aren’t any direct descriptions about occupation or life style of the members of the community. From here and there we get some scanty information about them.

John de Maringnoli who visited Quilon in 1349 A.D writes, “when arrived at a city called Columbun (quilon) where the whole world’s pepper is produced”¹⁵⁴ and he continues to say that Christians of St.Thomas were the proprietors of this cultivation. Here we understand that St.Thomas Christians were engaged in pepper trade also. Naturally other branches of agriculture must have been taken care of by them. Though no documentary evidence can be seen, trade in general, was controlled by Muslims at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. At least in a minor way Thomas Christians would have engaged themselves in trade.¹⁵⁵ K.M.Panikkar also suggests that “they followed all professions, commercial, and agricultural, and were also recruited into separate companies for warfare by some chieftains”.¹⁵⁶

“Just like the Nayars, their peers in the Malabar society, St.Thomas Christians were excellent soldiers”.¹⁵⁷ Speaking about St.Thomas Christians of Malabar Gouvea a Portuguese writer comments, “even though the Christians of St.Thomas ate meat very rarely they [the
Christian soldiers] were very robust, fat and strong men and the best soldiers on the battle field in all Malabar, ... the main strength of their army rested on them.\textsuperscript{158}

Here, I wish to drive my attention to the social status of the Christians. About St.Thomas Christians famous oriental historian Placid Podipara has to say the following: they were, “Hindu in culture, Christian in religion, oriental in worship”.\textsuperscript{159} In the daily life, the Christians differed very little from the Hindu noble castes. They resided around the churches. There were some estate holders who had their houses or villas in the midst of the estates in the forests. Usually houses had wooden walls and roofing with palm leaves.

They had tried to keep up the higher caste birth nobility which was attributed to them. For Example: abstaining from meat eating. The Christian women however were more modestly dressed than the women of the Nayar caste. According to Monserratte their dress at home was not very modest but when they went to the church they had an addition white sheet to cover themselves and it made them look modest. All, both men and women went barefoot to the church except the priests.\textsuperscript{160}

The Christians all men and women applied oil, took bath in the river or pond twice a week. According to Monserrate they did it on Wednesdays and Saturdays. They ate rice and curry. They used different calendars probably local ones; Christian era was adopted after the coming of the Portuguese.
About community organisation however there aren’t many written sources. Many of the rights and privileges that were given to the community by the rulers came to be extinct due to non-performance of the same. For Example: earlier like the high castes Thomas Christian men used to grow their hair and plait it into a tuft; and on the tuft a cross made of gold would be inserted. But now that custom is not in practise. No body grows the hair long as it was customary in olden times. Their houses in general were facing east. But now this too, is not practiced. Earlier the position of the house etc., decided by those who knew a bit of geo-astronomical aspects. They were the ones who fixed the position of the house for everybody whether Hindu or Christian. Today this also is fast disappearing with the latest engineering technological advancement.

Thomas Christians also had followed the unsociability like high caste Hindus. The general belief and practice was that if a high caste Brahmin was polluted by the touch of a low caste and after that if a Thomas Christian touches the Brahmin, he becomes purified by that. The title attributed to Thomas Christians was mapilas which means noble. They were addressed as Nazrani mapilas.

They were, as far as civil law was concerned was under the ruling king of the area. Usually in practise the civil cases were settled by the intervention of bishop or archdeacon. Only criminal cases reached the kings. The office of the archdeacon was very important for the Church of Thomas Christians. It was hereditary to Pakalomattom family. He
was also known as Jāthikku Karthavian. Neil has the following to say about the office of Archdeacons in Syro-Malabar Church:

These references to the archdeacon require some elucidation. The administration of the church of the Serra was different from that of the majority of the [western] Christian churches. Since the bishop was always a foreigner, with no more than somewhat rudimentary knowledge of the local language, it was essential that he should have the services of a competent administrator familiar with malayalm and with all the customs of Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christians. This person was the archdeacon... The archdeacon was the one with whom the Christians had to do in all matters of practical relevance, and in all their relationships with the many non-Christian powers by which their lives were so largely conditioned.

The archdeacon was the head of the community and was regarded so by the civil authorities too. His duties were far stretched in both civil and ecclesiastical matters. He had an armed escort with him. Many foreign missionaries failed to understand the customs and practises of Thomas Christians which made them to brand them as heretics and schismatics.

In doing so they had their malicious motivation too.

Palliyōgam, was the body which guided and took care of the administration of the local church. They proposed candidates for priesthood, managed the finances and other aspects related to the day today running of the church. Training of the priests was done under a few malpans (learned priests). It was a kind of gurukula system of training. Each palli (church) was self-supporting and self determining. Ordinary people had great say in the running of the church.
For matters concerning liturgical and ecclesiastical they accepted the authority of east Syrian church or Chaldean church. But most of the customs were local and Hindu. For Thomas Christians there was a ceremony called “initiation ceremony”. For a boy it was conducted in the following manner: there will be Kurava (making a kind of shrill whistling noise by the members of the community who are gathered), and the priest/a male relative will whisper some Syriac words into the ears of the child (usually Syriac words which means “Jesus Christ is Lord”). Honey in which gold particles are mixed will be given to the babe (this is to ensure prosperity) and the elders who are proficient in reading of the horoscope will do it.  
Perhaps this rite substituted rite of baptism among Thomas Christians. That is why when the Portuguese came they saw many Christians without baptism and other sacraments.

When we read the history of Thomas Christians what we understand is that this community of oriental Christians was well attuned to the culture of the land accepting what could be re-interpreted into their faith and allowing the growth in the cultural way of the land. The Syrian colonisers too were keen enough to keep this spirit of cultural adaptation. But only after the coming of the Portuguese (western Christianity) that the Thomas Christians lost many of their cultural character. Many of her present structures are also gifted to them through the strictures of the synod of Diamper.

The coming of the Portuguese and other Europeans had its positive and negative impacts on the Church of St. Thomas. A new vigour and vitality was infused into its structures. Till the coming of the Portuguese the
Indian Church of St. Thomas had married clergy. Perhaps that added to its demerits. Naturally the care given by the unmarried clergy concerning the growth and development of the Church has got a positive qualitative thrust. Whether it was positive or negative, it was one of the most outstanding difference brought by the synod of Diamper in the Church of Thomas Christians. The groups which dissented the Portuguese over lordship and broke away from the mother Church of St. Thomas do not show signs of growth as the Church of St. Thomas or Syro-Malabar Church has. These have the married clergy leading them. But the sad thing is that the Portuguese' arrogance destroyed many of the cultural imprints that were present in the life of the community.

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Notes

1 Mundadan, History of Christianity in India, vol I, p.9.
3 Tripathi, History of Ancient India, p.178.
4 Tripathi, History of Ancient India, p.220.
5 Tripathi, History of Ancient India, p.220.
7 Koodapuzha, Bharata Sabha Charithram (mal), p.122.
8 Holy Bible, RSV.
9 Holy Bible, RSV.
10 Holy Bible, RSV.
11 cited in, Chedilath, Marthomasahadayude Indian Sabha (mal) p.3.
12 Koodapuzha, Bharata Sabha Charithram (mal), p.58.
13 There are some people who question this position. A. Mingana, P.V. Mathew and a few others doubt the possibility of St. Thomas’ Matrydom in Mylapore. To them it could be in ‘Calamina’ which could be the Bahrain island (P.V Mathew, Acta Indica, pp.104-114).
14 P.V. Mathew, Acta Indica, p.60.
16 cited in Mundadan, p.33.
18 cited in Vadakekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, p.61.
26 cited in Vadakekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, p.165.
27 cited in Tripathi, History of Ancient India, p.220.
29 Davies J.G, Early Christian Church, p.125
30 D’Souza Daniel, History of Catholic Church in North India, p.41.
31 Details can be seen in Mundadan, Traditions of St. Thomas Christians p.29 ff. (hereafter as Traditions)
32 Mundadan, Traditions, p.30.
34 P.V. Mathew, Acta Indica, p.21.
36 Koodapuzha, Bharata Sabha Charithram (mal), pp.63-67.
40 cited in Keny F.E, A History of the Syrian Church in India, p.17.
41 cited in footnote of Vadakekara, Origins of India’s St. Thomas Christians, p.280.
43 A.C. Perumal, Apostles in India, pp.55-81.
44 cited in Mundadan, Traditions, p.21.
45 Mundadan, Traditions, p.21.
46 P.V. Mathew, Acta Indica, suggests that St. Thomas landed in Muziris in 68-69 A.D (p.56). His arguments are not convincing. Moreover there is a gap of 20 years between his Jerusalem journey and his landing at Muziris.
47 A. Sreedharanmon, History of Kerala, pp.546-552; also in Vadakekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, footnotes p.276.
48 A. Sreedharanmon, History of Kerala, pp.546-552; also in Vadakekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, footnotes p.276.
Thkekgedath, History of Christianity in India, vol. II, p.75.
Thkekgedath, History of Christianity in India, vol. II, p.75.
Podipara, The Thomas Christians, p.149.
Thkekgedath, History of Christianity in India, vol. II, p.79.
Vadakekara, Origin of India's Thomas Christians, p.315.
Thkekgedath, History of Christianity in India vol. II, pp.92-94.
Thkekgedath, History of Christianity in India, vol. II, p.94.
Chediath, Marthoma Sahadyude Indian Sabha (mal), pp.53-55.
Thkekgedath, History of Christianity in India vol. II, pp.105-106.
Perumthottam, Period of Decline, p.32.
Hambye, Christianity in India, p.23.
Hambye, Christianity in India, p.24.
Perumthottam, Period of Decline, p.32.
Hambye, Christianity in India, pp.24-28. (summarised)
Hambye, Christianity in India, pp.29-32.
Hambye, Christianity in India, pp.29-32.
Hambye, Christianity in India, pp.34-37.
Koodapuzha, Christianity in India, p.105.
Koodapuzha, Christianity in India, pp.106-107.
Koodapuzha, Christianity in India, p.107.
Podipara, The Thomas Christians, pp.201-207.
Koodapuzha, Christianity in India, p.110.
Kuriakose M.K., History of Christianity in India: Source Materials, p.27.
164 Vadakkekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, p. 357.
165 Podipara, The Thomas Christians, p. 95.
167 Vadakkekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, p. 360.
168 Vadakkekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, pp. 367-68, and 379.
169 Vadakkekara, Origin of India’s St. Thomas Christians, p. 379.
171 Koodapuzha, Christianity in India, pp. 90-94.