INTRODUCTION

20th September 1930 is an important day in the history of the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala. It was on that day that a group of the Malankara Orthodox Church in Kerala entered into full communion with the Universal Catholic Church under the extolled leadership of Archbishop Mar Ivanios. It was the realization of the prolonged reunion efforts of three hundred years of the Puthenkoor community which took shape after the historical event of the Coonan Cross Oath of 1653. The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala had only one faith up to the 16th century, and had no subdivisions among them. Before the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries, they developed an ecclesial style that was very much in concordance with the life style of the native people.

The arrival of the Portuguese missionaries was a turning-point in the history of the Kerala Church. The defective policies of the Portuguese caused the distortion of the identity of the Church of Kerala, that had been fostered through the centuries, and forced the Church to exchange their autonomy with the Padroado Yoke. As a result of this, the Church of Malankara, which had the same faith, split into two Christian groups, i.e., Puthenkoor and Pazhayakoor. Though the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala welcomed the Portuguese as their
powerful Christian brethren, the latter behaved with a domineering and authoritative attitude to the former.

The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala united themselves against the domination of the Portuguese. They came together on 3rd January 1653, at the church in Mattancherry, and after lighting candles in the church, holding the cross and the sacred scripture in their hands, swore that they would never obey the Jesuits and then proclaimed the Archdeacon as their head and administrator. This is known as the Coonan Cross Oath in the history of the Church. Many historians point out that the immediate cause for the Coonan Cross Oath and the subsequent event was the incarceration by the Portuguese, of the Syrian Bishop Ahathulla, who wanted to reach Kerala. But the arrival of Ahathulla served only as the background of the events.

The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala had suffered divisions in the course of time and they exist today as various Church communities. Each group claims itself to be the direct continuation of the original church established by St. Thomas in Kerala, which split into two, namely, the Catholic and non-Catholic churches. The Catholic churches are the Syro-Malabar Church, the Syro-Malankara Church and the Latin Church. The non-Catholic churches are the Chaldean Church of the East, The Orthodox Churches of Kerala, The Thozhiyur Church, The Mar Thoma Church, The St. Thomas Evangelical Church, the C.S.I. Church, The Pentecostal groups, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Yahweh Witnesses. Of these churches, the Syro-Malabar Church, the Syro-Malankara Church, the Chaldean Church, the Orthodox churches,
the Thozhiyur Church, the Marthoma Church and the St. Thomas Evangelical Church claim that they are the true St. Thomas Christians. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed certain remarkable changes in the national movement of India. At that time, the St. Thomas Christians were conscious of the need to build unity in their church. Thousands of dissident Christians returned to the true fold of Christ every year through the door opened by the Reunion movement, which was concerned with the achievement of the essential unity of the whole church. If division had been the mark of the St. Thomas Christians during the past centuries, the 20th century saw the successful beginning of a movement towards reunion. This century was a century of Ecumenism, in which many kinds of attempts for reunion were taking place. In a real sense, reunion was a return of individuals to an ancient church which they believed to be the mother church. The unity required a commonly accepted goal for all St. Thomas Christians. In this state of alienation and division, the churches were getting aware of the need for coming together to understand each other.

Of all these churches, only the Malabar Catholic Church has ever remained within the Universal Communion of the Holy Church. The Malankara community has lost the fullness of the universal church communion, carried out under the leadership of the Fathers of the Malankara Church for about 300 years, that became victorious in the Reunion of 1930 held under the leadership of Archbishop Mar Ivanios.
1 The Sources for the Present Study

This study is largely historical and thus the approach supports the main assumption of the thesis. It is based on both primary and secondary source materials. The topics of the thesis, the Reunion Movement among the St. Thomas Christians 19th and 20th centuries, is very rich in documentation. Various Roman archives have many volumes of documents about the movement. Many historical documents related to the subject are available at the Archives of the St. Joseph Monastery Mannanam; Archives of the Archdioceses of Trivandrum; Archives of the Marygiri Aramana, Thiruvalla; Archives of the Dharmaram College, Bangalore; Archives of the Vadavathoor Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam; Archives of the St. Joseph’s Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye; Archives of the Carmelgiri Seminary, Alwaye; Archives of the Madras University; Tamil Nadu Government. Archives, Egmore; Archives of the Archbishop’s House, Changanacherry; Archives of the Kottayam Bishop’ House, Archives of the Forance Church, Kuravilangad, Bethany Archives Kottayam and Trivandrum.

The present study does rely mostly on materials gathered from various archives. It is but natural that the largest amount of source material for the present work has been found in the Vatican Archives at Rome. The papers and documents found in the Archives of the Archbishop’s House, Thiruvananthapuram, are the most important source for the present study. The exceptional importance of the Archbishop’s Archives at Thiruvananthapuram arises from the fact that they hold not merely those papers and documents which are normally to be
expected in the provincial archives, but also many others which have gone there because of special reasons. The important and voluminous correspondence between Archbishop Mar Ivanios and the Pope, during 1927 to 1932, has also found its way into the archives. During those years, he was undoubtedly the most important Bishop of the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala, and, as such, he was consulted by many orthodox prelates for information on every noteworthy happening. Also, the superiors in Rome sought his opinions and views on important matters pertaining to India, and he himself took the trouble to write to them frequently. The files containing his correspondence are therefore of special importance to the historians of St. Thomas Christians. The records obtained from the archives of the Mannanam Monastery at Kottayam are also important for this study. The most valuable item for the present study is the rich and detailed accounts of Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiry.

Besides the above-mentioned major archives, a number of lesser repositories have also been consulted. Special mention may be made of the Kuravilangad Forane Church museum. In their archives, one will find not only official records and official correspondence, but many petitions and other correspondence of the St. Thomas Christians in Latin, Syrian, Italian and Malayalam. Some manuscripts, mostly in Malayalam and Tamil, in the State Archives of Trivandrum furnished much information on Kerala of the period under study. Special mention may be made of the Bethany House, Kottayam. The Archives of the Bishop’s House at Thiruvalla provided a major source of information,
but since pages were missing from many files, not much could be obtained from there. Recording of events was somewhat hectic in the last century among the St. Thomas Christians. The particular event which helped such activity seems to have been the starting of the Jathyaiqya Samgham in the 19th century. There are many historical writings, both English and Malayalam, supplying many important points regarding the Reunion Movement and the customs and traditions of Malabar. To cite a few travelogues that help our study, mention may be made of the following: Journado do Archbishpo de Goa, Dom Frey Alexis Menezez, written by Gouvea in the year 1607, contains the decrees of the Synod of Diamper written in Portuguese; One of the important sources before the 19th century is Varthamanapusthakam, a travelogue written by Governador Thomman Parammakkal (1736-1799); The Nalagamangal of St. Joseph’s Monastery, Mannanam; the Diary of Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiry; the correspondence of the Holy See from 1926-1930 at the Jacobite Church, and the Diary of Mar Ivanios are very important sources to trace the history of the Reunion movement of the 19th and 20th centuries. We have with us all the official letters written by Mar Ivanios, most of them written by him in the capacity of Bishop of Bethany, especially the letters to the Holy See and Pope Pius XI, as well as his letter to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. They are available at the Archives of the Archdioceses of Trivandrum.

2 The Method Employed in the composition of this work

Extensive research carried out from 1999 to 2006 at all the archives mentioned above, especially the five most important ones (Archives of the Archbishops House, Trivandrum, The Bethany Archives,
Kottayam, The St. Joseph’ Monastery Archives, Mannanam, St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary Archives and library, Vadavathoor, Kottayam and The Dharmaram College Archives, Bangalore) preceded the composition of this work. The task of writing began in the year 2005 and ended in February 2007. A large number of letters and manuscripts were gone through during the course of research to find out what really happened. Practically every important statement in this study has been related in the footnotes to primary and secondary sources. There are not many disputed points in this work. However, I have tried to narrate the facts as found in the sources, comparing all the available accounts in order to exclude errors arising from inadvertence or carelessness on the part of the original writer.

3 A Brief History of the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala in the pre-Portuguese period

Christianity was introduced in Kerala in the first century itself, but after it had been introduced in most European countries. The St. Thomas Christian community, which thrived in Kerala, was not a proselytising community. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, said at St. Thomas Day celebrations in New Delhi on 18 December 1995,

“Remember St. Thomas came to India when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian and so those Indians claim their Christianity to have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European countries and it is really a matter of pride to us that it so happened”

1.
A large number of the Christians are known as Syrian Christians. They were Hindus by race and speak the Malayalam language. The bulk of them are Roman Catholics now, but nevertheless follow their own Syrian Rite. Others adhere to the Catholicos of the East and to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch. The rest approach the Protestant standards of doctrine and rituals, and are usually called the Reformed Syrians. These bodies of Syrian Christians agree on one point in claiming to be the descendants of the converts made by the Apostle, St. Thomas. The sources of knowledge for the first twelve centuries of the history of the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar are exceedingly scanty and widely differ in their historical value. The difficulty of studying the early history of the Syrian Church in South India is increased by the fact that the book-burning zeal of Archbishop Menezes at the Synod of Diamper in 1599 destroyed such sources for the history of Christianity in Malabar.

There are two views among scholars about the origin of Christianity in India. According to one, the foundations of Christianity in India were laid by St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew. The other view would ascribe the arrival of Christianity in India to the enterprise of merchants and missionaries of the East-Syrian or Persian Church. Those who propounded the apostolic origin do not deny the role of the East-Syrian Church in reinforcing Indian Christianity.

As against the western tradition, there is the Indian tradition, handed from generation to generation by word of mouth among the Christians of St. Thomas and to some extent among their non-Christian
neighbours. According to the Indian tradition, St. Thomas came by sea, and first landed at Cranganore about the year A.D. 52, converted high-caste Hindu families in Cranganore, Palayur, Quilon and some other places; visited the Coromandel Coast, making conversions; crossed over to China and preached the Gospel; returned to India and organized the Christians of Malabar under some guides (priests) from among the leading families he had converted and erected a few public places of worship. Then he moved to the Coromandel, and suffered martyrdom on or near the Little Mount. His body was brought to the town of Mylapore and was buried in a holy shrine he had built. As tradition goes, Christians from Malabar, West Asia and even from China used to go on pilgrimage to Mylapore and venerate the tomb. Some details of this combined tradition may be found in a few songs (for example, the Rabban Pattu, the Veeradian Pattu, the Margamkali Pattu and others), and some historical accounts both of which now exist in written records.

Among the chief sources are a few songs of which the Thomas Rabban Pattu (or simply Rabban Pattu) and Margamkali Pattu are the best known. Many other songs associated with important churches and often used at wedding feasts and other ceremonies are still preserved in Kerala and some of them are being rendered by Hindu singers as well, for example, the Veeradian Pattu. In the 16th century, the Portuguese came to know that the Christians of St. Thomas had in their possession not only songs but also written records which commemorated the life, work, and death of St. Thomas. But, most of these records were destroyed after the Synod of Diamper. Some of the Hindu accounts such as the
"Thomas the Apostle coming from Arabia landed in Maliankara in the year 50 A.D. in the month of Dhanu (December / January). After a short stay there, he proceeded to Mailapuram (Mylapore) and from there went on to China. Coming back to Mailapuram port, he sailed to Maliankara (modern Cranganore area) and founded seven churches in Cranganore (where he arrived in A.D. 51 and baptized the king, 3000 pagans and 40 Jews), in Kollam, Chayal, Niranam (to which place the cross was transferred from the infidel village of Truckpaleshwaram) Kokamangalam, Kottakkayal (Parur) and Palayur.”

In A.D. 59, in the month of Kanni (September / October), he was called back to Mailapuram by King Choran -who imprisoned the Apostle because he had given away to the poor the money the king had entrusted to him for building a palace for him. After a stay of two and a half years in Mailapuram, the Apostle returned to Malabar via Malayattur and visited the old places: Cranganore, Kottakayal, Kokamangalam, Kollam, Niranam and Chayal, staying in each places for a year and conferring on the faithful the sacrament of confirmation. Back in Mailapuram in the year A.D. 72, on the 3rd day of the month of Karkadakam (July), the Apostle met on his way to the Little Mount
some Chennambranmar Brahmins going for a sacrifice to the temple of Kali. They wanted him to take part in their worship. However, with the sign of the cross, he destroyed the temple and the Brahmins in their fury pierced him with a lance. This tradition is clearly influenced by the account of the Acts of Thomas and also by the East-Syrian tradition.

Quite a few families claim to have been converted from the Namboothiri Brahmins of Kerala. In course of time, they emigrated from their original locations. They are said to remember many details about their origins and can still point out their original compounds and localities in one of the places visited by St. Thomas, and some of them still use Namboothiri names.

Before we can come to any definite conclusion based on these traditions and archaeological findings, much work needs to be done in order to judge them correctly. At present, such a scientific investigation seems to be only in its initial stage. The written accounts and literary compositions in their present form cannot be traced further back than the 17th and 18th centuries. Nevertheless, the people of Kerala undoubtedly possessed a rich and oral tradition, which was reflected fully or partially in their folk songs and even in written records.

3.1 Ancient Sea-ports of Malabar

The Port of Muziris, where St. Thomas landed, was the main port of the Chera kingdom. It is also identified as the “Muchiri” of the Tamil Literature. The port area is known as Kodungalloor, situated at
the mouth of the river Periyar. Muchiri was the port of trade between the East and the West. An international trading community had grown around the port. It was a cosmopolitan port and merchants of all nations, including Egyptians, Syrians and Persians were found there. Kodungallur was the gateway through which the Greeks, the Romans, the Portuguese and other Europeans entered India for trade in the ancient time.

3.2 Jewish Colony in Muziris

The existence of a well-organized Jewish colony in Muziris is considered to be the main factor that attracted St. Thomas to the southwest coast of India, which had been drawn closer to the Mediterranean world after the discovery of the trade wind by Hippalus. Although the documents now in the possession of the Jews do not go back to a remote antiquity, there is reason for considering them as having migrated to India along with the Yavanas, if not earlier. Under these circumstances, the arrival of St. Thomas in Muziris in 52 A.D was more than a possibility. The port of Muziris at its mouth had an island called “Maliankara”. In the course of centuries ‘Maliankara’ was shortened to Malankara”. St. Thomas might have landed on the island also and evangelized the people and formed a Christian community, which later acquired the name “Malankara Church”, a term related to the island of Malankara. Traders of all important nations had their settlements and factories at Muziris, as shipping was not regular and cargo had to be stored till the arrival of trading fleets. The ubiquitous Jews were already there. No one could say when and from where
they came but they had extensive trade connections and a high standing in the Perumal’s court. It was in fact the Jewish settlements in Muziris that attracted St. Thomas to the port. The Romans had a temple there, and two cohorts were stationed in Muziris.  

3.3 Ancient Christians and Their Commercial Relations with Other Countries

From a very ancient time, India had continually been in close contact with the great empires of the west. This contact definitely influenced not only the course of events in India’s history but also her culture and life pattern. In ancient times, trade involved a long and tedious voyage fraught with many dangers and interminable delays, but still the profits were good and the risks worth taking. The Egyptian mariner Hippalus revolutionised maritime trade, with his discovery of the regularity of the monsoon. By patient observation and study, he found that the wind blew in a westerly direction in the Indian Ocean for half the year and in an easterly direction during the other half. After the discovery of a sea route to Kodungallur by Hippalus, merchants from Greece, Rome and Phoenicia reached Muziris and they took pepper and spices from Kodungalloor and Purakkattu to Mios Horms and thence to Alexandria. Many Egyptian merchants became engaged in trade with Malabar. In the Alexandrian port during that time, many Indians lived. The fact that the Apostle St. Thomas preached the gospel in South India and died there a martyr cannot be convincingly proved, but there is much to say in favour of its historical value. It is well known that there were commercial relations between South India and the Graeco-Roman world as early as the first century of the Christian era. Graeco-Roman ships sailed along the coast of Kerala and the
Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu). Herodotus has recorded that the trade in cinnamon and cashew in his days was the monopoly of the Egyptians and the Phoenicians. In the closing centuries of the era before Christ, Kerala’s trade in spices like ginger, turmeric and pepper assumed great importance. The Greeks and the Romans of those days carried on extensive trade with Kerala. The discovery of Roman coins in many parts of Kerala testifies to the wide dispersion of the Roman trade. Historically, it was a possibility that St. Thomas arrived on the Malabar Coast. It is believed that St. Thomas landed in Muziris, which was a flourishing port of trade, in a trading vessel.

3.4 Roman Trade

Roman trade with India increased in volume after Hippalus’s discovery of the monsoons. Towards the end of the 2nd century, the direct trade between the Egyptian, Greeks of the Roman Empire and India declined, the traffic passing into the hands of the Arabians, and even more, the Auxumites of East Africa. When Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire in A.D 330, that unity developed into a centre of trade in oriental spices. Sri Lanka was becoming important in the trade of the Indian Ocean at that time. The early Sangam works contain references to the voyage of the people of Kerala to foreign countries.

3.5 Growth of Christianity in Kerala

The origin of Christianity in Kerala can be traced to the missionary enterprises of St. Thomas. This tradition, strongly cherished by the vast majority of Christians in Kerala, is strongly supported by the tradition of the Universal Church. But, according to K.C Khanna,
The story of the introduction of Christianity in India, which goes back to the first century A.D., is connected with the name of St. Thomas the Apostle. It is stated that he came to the court of Gondapharous, the Pahlava ruler in the North West India and converted him to Christianity. Then he travelled by sea to Malabar in A.D. 52 and preached Christianity to the Jews first and the Hindus of Muziris and converted the Brahmins of Palayur and many natives of the land of the Perumal.

In the opinion of P.V. Mathew,

“after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the disciples assembled and sent Jacob to Jerusalem, Palestine and Philistia, Markose to Alexandria, Egypt, Thomas to India and Peter to Antioch, Syria, Silicia, Rome, Italy, Spain, England, etc.”

One of the oldest churches in Christendom and the most ancient in India, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, owes its origin to St. Thomas. During his mission in Kerala, he established seven Churches and ordained priests. St. Thomas also founded churches outside Kerala. But, in due course, the churches disappeared and the Kerala community continued. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his satisfaction, thus:

“Christianity came to India in the first century of the Christian Era; it is a matter of pride for all Indians that this religion came to this distant land so soon after its foundation.”
3.6 Missionary Activities of St. Thomas in Kerala

On his arrival, St. Thomas is presumed to have preached the Gospel not only to the scattered Jews but also to the local population. The first converts to Christianity are believed to be Jews. But in the opinion of Neil, the Jews reached Kerala after the destruction of the year A.D. 70. It is also believed that St. Thomas died in A.D. 72\textsuperscript{24}. Many among the other converts were high-caste Brahmins and Nairs. But, in the opinion of Elamkulm Kunjan Pillai, no Brahmin community existed in Malabar in the first century A.D. The Brahmin migration happened very slowly and gradually in later years\textsuperscript{25}. Although different versions of his activities exist, all historians are in accord in supporting the traditional claim of seven churches having been established by the Apostle in the coastal regions of Kerala, extending from Malankara, Kodungalloor, to Palur, Paravur, Gockamangalam, Chayal, Niranam and Quilon. St. Thomas also set up a church at Thiruvithamcode, where he spent a fairly long time in meditation and prayer. Information on the circumstances leading to the conversion of the local population and the consequent establishment of churches is based on the local traditions passed on from generation to generation, and no contemporary written records are available. It is believed that St. Thomas performed miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, by which many Brahmins and other Hindus came to believe in him.

3.6.1 Kodungallur

At Kodungallur, the Apostle is said to have made converts from Jews who were living there as well from natives of the place. The local
kings also became Christians; one was given the name of Andrew and another, his nephew, by name Keppa, was ordained priest. 

3.6.2 Palur (Palayur)

In the case of Palur, the conversion of Brahmins was achieved by a spectacular miracle. Palur was a busy centre of inland trade and an important stronghold of Brahmins and the blue-blooded Namboothiries. Here existed a trading group of Jews who had a Synagogue there. One day, the Brahmins were having their morning ablutions, in the temple tank, called “Thalaikulam”, when the Apostle passed that way. As is customary in ritual bathing, the Brahmins were repeating Vedic incantations and sprinkling water upwards in the cup of the palm. On enquiry, he was told that the water was thrown upwards as an offering to the gods. The Apostle accosted them and said that the offering was not accepted by the gods; otherwise the water would not have fallen back. To the Brahmins, the Apostle further clarified that he could keep the water remain in mid air provided they accepted Jesus Christ as their God. The Brahmins agreed to it. Thereupon, St. Thomas got into the tank and sprinkled water upwards and made the drops remain suspended in mid-air. Besides, an upsize depression was also seen in the water level. The story was that most of the Brahmins kept their promise and accepted Christ as their Saviour.

Palayur must have also been a Jewish centre because one of the nearby places is still called “Juda Kunnu”. By tradition the Palayur parish used to celebrate the Thalaikulam incident of St. Thomas on July 15 every year. The nearby parishes of Arthat, Pazhanji, Thozhiyur,
Chatukulangara and Chalisery also used to join the celebrations\textsuperscript{28}. Placid J. Podipara also gives the following comment regarding Palayur:

“Both the Christian and Hindu traditions say that when St. Thomas converted some Brahmins of the place, the rest ran away to a nearby locality called Vemmnat saying “Iniyathekuli Vemmnattu” which expression has become a proverb in Malabar. In Palayur there is a compound called Kalath which according to tradition, is one of the Brahmin families that ran away from Palayur to Vemmnattu” \textsuperscript{29}.

The upper classes of Malabar Christians of the present day trace their descent from Palur Brahmins converted by the Apostle. Four families namely Kalli, Kaliankal, Sankarapuri and Pakalomatam were the most important among the Palur community. It was to the Pakalomattam family that Malabar Christians turned for bishops after the historic Coonan Cross Revolt of 1653 against Portuguese domination \textsuperscript{30}.

\textbf{3.6.3 Paravur}

As regards Paravur, the traditional story is that St. Thomas reached Paravur on a festival day of the local temple and began preaching the Gospel of Christ. This provoked the Hindus who surrounded him with criminal intentions. The Apostle miraculously raised a storm which struck them down. Many fell unconscious. The people were surprised and overstricken. The Apostle then calmed the storm and sprinkled water over the unconscious and awakened them. This miracle caused
many to turn to Christ. This temple also was converted to a church. But the temple was destroyed during the invasion of Tippu Sultan. According to the Ramban song, the Apostle succeeded in receiving into the Christian fold one thousand seven hundred and seventy persons at this centre, i.e., Paravur. The compound wall of the ancient temple

3.6.4 Niranam

Niranam was an ancient centre of Brahmins. It is near the ancient trading port Neakynda on the river Pampa and the seaport, Purakkad. The Greek navigator who wrote “Peripuls” in A.D.60 had visited the river port Neakynda, where he saw pepper being traded and long boats plying in the present Naakida. It is said that the four chief Nambuthiri families of Niranam converted by St. Thomas are those of Thayyil, Pottamukil, Manki, and Madathilen. St. Thomas could have come to Niranam because of the accessibility to the river port. Most of the Nambuthiries of Niranam having been made Christians by St. Thomas, the rest left the place after giving the boxes containing the documents relating to their landed properties to a Kaymel or Nair chief there who has since been known as Niranam petty Kaymel, the Box chief of Niranam. St Thomas performed various miracles in Niranam. The most famous one was that he gave life to the child of a barber, who was killed by somebody who wanted to throw the responsibility for the crime on the Apostle.

3.6.5 Nilakkal

Nilakkal or Chayal, 57 km east of the present day Ranni, was the last of the seven Christian centres of missionary activity of St. Thomas
in Kerala. From here the Apostle crossed the Western Ghats to Tamil Nadu, finally reaching Madras. According to the Ramban songs, the Apostle worked here for one year and during that period 1100 persons were converted to Christianity. Till about seven or eight centuries, it was a thickly populated area and a flourishing commercial centre. It is said that the place in course of time was deserted due to the prevalence of epidemics, attacks of wild animals, invasions from neighbouring rulers, and all other calamities and consequently turned to a dense forest area. In these unfavourable circumstances, the Christians too had moved to other places of safety like Kanjirapally. According to tradition, St. Thomas founded a church and cross at Nilakkal. The remains of the church building and the cross were discovered in the time of Pulikkottil Mar Joseph Dionyasis, and by Fr. Thomas, O.I.C., in 1957. Daniel Mar Philexinose raised temporary structures and celebrated Holy Qurbana on March 3, 1957, at the site. Since then, efforts were made in 1972, 1976, and 1979 by the Christian community of different denominations with the government for the grant of land and permission to build a church at the site. Although a four hectare plot was promised by the Government in 1976 and two hectares in 1979, the land did not come into possession of the community for various reasons. The situation turned dramatically critical when a cross was unearthed on March 23, 1983, while digging was in process in the farm land of the State Farming Corporation at Nilakkal. The plot lay adjacent to the Hindu Mahadeva Temple. Efforts have been made to raise a church on the spot. However, due to some reasons of communal discord in the area, the project was dropped. Thirty two Bishops of different denominations
gathered together at Vadavathoor seminary, Kottayam, on July 21, 1983 and formed an action committee to negotiate with the government and the Hindu community leaders. Following the negotiations, the government agreed to allot a stretch of land and permitted the construction of a church. Later an ecumenical church was consecrated at Nilakkal.

3.6.6 Thiruvithamcode

The church of Thiruvithamcode founded by St. Thomas was known as a “half church”. According to tradition, when Christian converts over the east coast were persecuted by their ruler, St. Thomas took 64 families of these converts consisting mostly of Chettiyars to Nagercoil, crossing the Ghats through the AlWarmuzhi pass. The ruler of Venad, who resided at Thiruvithamcode near Nagercoil, was sympathetic towards the immigrants. He offered them house sites and land for cultivation. The belief is that St. Thomas himself built a church for these families on the land given by the ruler, at Thiruvithamcode. According to tradition, they refused to accept Vibhuthi. The kings asked them whether they were Vibbuthi Dharia Chettikal, meaning Chetties who would not use sacred ash. Thus the Christians at Thiruvithamcode came to be called “Dharia Chettiar.”

3.6.7 Quilon

From very ancient times, Quilon had been a great centre of trade and commerce. The majority of the people of Quilon belonged to the Chettiyar caste, the recognised trading caste of the time and
many of them accepted Christianity. After erecting a cross for the converts who numbered about 1400, the Apostle left Quilon. In the year 1503, when the Portuguese chief visited Quilon, he found nearly 6000 St. Thomas Christians there. When the Portuguese tried to impose Latin tradition, they left Quilon for Chathanur and Adoor. 

3.7 The First Christian Community

3.7.1 Source of Information

From the discussion on the Indian Apostolate of St. Thomas, it is obvious that to assess the origins of Christianity in India, there is no alternative but to take tradition into account. A few records do exist both in the West and in the East, which refer to the existence of Christians in India in the ancient and medieval times. The western records contain very many references to occasional visitors from Europe who came to India and saw scattered communities of Christians. Almost all of them testify to the existence of the church and community of Mylapore. As far as the first six centuries are concerned, we have first a reference to a certain Theophilus, apparently a native of the Maldives, who was sent in 354 to his island and to ‘India’ by Emperor Constantius. Again, in the 6th century, we hear of a monk named Theodore, who visited India and reported to Gregory of Tours about the house or monastery of St. Thomas in India. Fr. Bernard’s Malayalm history of the Thomas Christians has largely succeeded in doing this; the works of L.W. Brown and E. Tisserant are also good attempts in the same direction.
3.7.2  Tradition about the Earliest Community

About the origins of the Thomas Christians as a community, a variety of versions of the tradition were available to the Portuguese in the 16th century. According to one version, which definitely represented the purely Malabar tradition, the origin was entirely the fruit of the apostolate of St. Thomas on the Malabar Coast. The other version, in all likelihood, influenced by East-Syrian sources, maintained that the community originated from those people who were converted to the Christian faith by the Apostle on the Coromandel Coast and who migrated into Malabar and stayed at various places. Almost all the Portuguese reports on the tradition agree that there had been once a flourishing community of Christians on the Coromandel Coast and that they at one time or other had migrated to Malabar. As to the cause of the migration, there are different views: some speak of natural disasters like floods and earthquakes; others would like to think of man-made disasters like war, persecution and so on.

3.8  Immigrant Christians to India

3.8.1  Thomas Cana or Cana Thomas - A.D. 345

Controversy continues regarding the arrival of Thomas of Cana. He was known by different titles such as merchant, traveller and pilgrim. He was known as Knaye Thoma, Thomas of Cana, Thomas the Canaanite, Thomas Cannaneo, or Thomas of Jerusalem. There was persecution of Christians in Persia and many Christians fled to India to escape that. During that time, Sapher II was the ruler of Persia and he ruled from A.D 309 - 379. He was very eager to restore the religion
of his forefathers. According to Percy Sykes, “The persecution thus initiated was continued by massacres and the destruction of churches for 40 years; monks and nuns, especially, were subjected to pitiless persecution because they conspicuously violated the same tenets of Zoroastrianism.” It strengthened Christianity in Kerala due to the immigration of Syrians from Mesopotamia to the port of Muziris in A.D 345. It was an epoch-making event. According to the Kerala tradition, Mar Joseph had a dream in which he saw the church of India as a flock of sheep without a shepherd. The Bishop informed the Catholicos, Mar Simeon Bar Sleeba, of his dream, who sent for Thomas of Cana. Consequently, a crowd from Jerusalem, Bagdad and Nineveh (Mosul) set out for Malabar, and landed in the port of Muziris. A reference to this story is found in a letter attributed to Mar Thoma IV, written in 1721. This is available in A. Mingana’s “The Early spread of Christianity in Asia and the FarEast,” which runs like this. During the reign of Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of his empire. He helped in organising the Synod of Nicaea and so, the state of the Malabar Church and the steps to be taken to receive the church must have been considered at the synod.

In the opinion of E.M Philip, in A.D. 345, within twenty years from the date of the Council of Nicaea, or rather of the investiture of the See of Antioch with power of supervision over the whole East, extending as far as India and China, we have a historical fact in the assumption of this supremacy through a colony of Syrians, headed by Thomas of Cana. The company consisted of one Bishop Joseph,
of Orfa, two priests and two deacons, besides laymen, including men, women and children; to the number of four hundred souls, representing seventy - two families from seven tribes or clans. They landed at Cranganore and were cordially welcomed by Cheraman Perumal\textsuperscript{56}, in the hope that they would add a further impetus to the cause of trade. Thomas secured high privileges for the Christian community from Cherman Perumal.

The tradition maintained by the Syrian community about the reign of Cheraman Perumal is definite in fixing it to A.D. 345. They have very old songs to commemorate the event in detail. Francis Day made investigation in the old Sanskrit College of Trichur (Cochin State) and conclusively proved that Cheraman Perumal reigned from A.D.341 to 378\textsuperscript{57}. The Copper Plates by which Thomas of Cana got the privileges, together with other plates, were entrusted to the Portuguese at Cochin for safe custody, and were lost\textsuperscript{58}. Since the annexation of Cochin by the British Government, Col. Macaulay discovered some of them, which he returned to the Syrian Metropolitan; but the one in the name of Thomas of Cana is still missing. A manuscript volume dated 1604, in the British Museum, containing reports of the Jesuits on the Malabar Coast, has a Portuguese version of grant on Cheraman Perumal’s Copper plate, and the manuscript goes on to say that it was “a thousand two hundred and fifty years since Perumal died on the 1st of March\textsuperscript{59} Patriarch Asthathius of Antioch blessed them and gave Knai Thoma the Edessa flag. From Edessa they reached Baghdad. There the Catholicos of Baghdad gave Knai Thoma a hand- written Bible and several crosses
which were engraved in the Persian language. Some of these crosses can be seen in Knanaya Churches.

3.8.2 Cana Thoma and the Perumal

Cana Thomas and the immigrants are thought to have “arrived in a ship at a place called Carnellur on the 7th day of March.” The port of Muziris is identified with Carnellur or Kodungallur. The ruling Perumal of the land welcomed Cana Thoma and was impressed by the latter’s remarkable bearing and wealthy followers. No doubt, Thomas gained the confidence of the Perumal. In the words of P. Thomas,

“The standing of Cana Thoma with the Perumal was very high. His vast resources and personal ability won for him many honours from the Perumal. He was a trusted advisor of the Perumal. In all commercial matters, his counsel was supreme and he was the virtual director of the commercial policy of the monarch. He was given the title of Perum Chetty or Great merchant; because of the splendour of his princely household. Thoma and his heirs were also known as Ravi Kartan (Lord Sun) or in common parlance Iravi Kortan.”

In appreciation, the Perumal allotted a suburb of Muziris which came to be called Mahadevar Pattanam. The colonization of Malabar by Thomas of Cana and his followers was not a myth, as proved by a living witness. Socially speaking, the Syrian Christians of the present day are made up of two distinct sects known as Thekkumbhagars and
Vadakumbhagars, so called because their ancestors once lived separately in the southern and the northern streets of Mahadeva Pattanam. To this day there is among the Syrian Christians a social distinction which is said to have originated in this settlement between those who intermarried with Indians and those who did not.

### 3.8.3 Canai Thomman Chepped

The privileges which Cana Thoma and the Christians gained were confirmed in the Royal Charter in three copper plates, known as Chepped. They were in the possession of the Christians till the sixteenth century and were handed over by the ruling Metropolitan, Mar Jacob, to the Portuguese Rector at Cochin for safe custody. The Malabar Christians of Thevelakara in 1599 complained to Archbishop Alexis De Menezez about the loss of the Cranganore plates, which, it is believed, meant those given to Thomas, the merchant. Francis Roz, writing in 1604, says, “The last emperor of Malabar called Cheraman Perumal was the one who gave land for a church and a settlement to the St. Thomas Christians and great privileges, as is seen from their Ollas, of which was taken to the order of St. Francis, a copy of them remaining there” “This Perumal” he adds, “died on 1st March 1258 years ago.” (This would be in 346 A.D). The Jesuit Father, Hosten, believed that the Plates, having been taken to Portugal by the Franciscan, are now either in the Tome de Tombo of Lisbon or in some old Franciscans monastery in Portugal. At all events, they and any copy of them, have quite disappeared. Even though the Copper plates-sasnams were lost, their fragments are kept in some ancient houses even now. Moraes, however, gives a translation of the same as found in the British Museum.
According to this,

“The Perumal, having heard of the arrival of Cana Thoma, himself came and saw and called him and he disembarked and came before the king, who spoke graciously to him, and to honour him he gave him a surname, calling him Conquarangon Cananeo and he received this honour from the king and and went to rest in his place”.

The king gave him the city of Magoderpatanam for ever. Thomas Cana founded his settlement in the delta of the Periyar and called it Mahadevar Pattanam of the Malabar Christian tradition.

The newcomers merged with the old Christians and both taking to trade, what with the port of Muziris in their hands and their connections with the Middle Eastern countries, they rose to great prosperity.

In the absence of the Vaishya or trader class in the Hindu caste hierarchy of Kerala, the Christians found it easy to step into the breach and they were welcomed by every ruling family. The good relations that existed between the Perumal and Canai Thoma continued among their descendants. There were also fresh immigrants from Syria but none proved so powerful as Thomas and his men. That Thomas Cana was held in esteem by the Chera King is evident from the fact that according to tradition the king enforced on him and his companions the title of Mappila, while the Chera ruler called his own indigenous subjects Pillais. On turning the pages of history, one comes across a descendant of Cana Thoma who was conferred titles and perquisites by the ruling Perumal. In A.D 774, Vira Raghava Perumal executed a
Chepped in favour of Iravi Kortan of Mahadevar Pattanam. It was from the settlement of Thomas Cana that the Malabar Christians were called Syrians.

3.8.4 Second Batch of Christian Immigrants - A.D 823

Sapore and Prot, whose names also vary slightly, are presented by tradition as brothers and saints, and the date regarding their arrival is a matter of great controversy. They are considered responsible for the welfare of the church and community of Quilon. The majority of historians take A.D 825 to be the actual date of the arrival. The Kolla varsham was started in 825 in recognition of their arrival. But, according to David Daniel, the arrival was in A.D 823. In his opinion in A.D. 823, from Syria, Mar Sabrisho and Mar Aphroath arrived at Quilon. Quilon was also known as Kurakeni Kollam. Controversy continues regarding the native place of the Bishops who sent the saints. Some persons regard these Bishops as Nestorians, but there is no evidence to support the view.

History is silent on the strength of the immigrants and their further movement in the country. One important document, however, brings out the arrival of the immigrants and their acceptance in the society. According to this evidence in the the form of a Chepped King Sthanu Ravi granted to Mar Sabrisho of Kurakkeni Kollam many privileges of honour. An account of the arrival of the immigrants is given in Syriac. A translation of the same is available in A.Mingana’s “Early Spread of Christianity in India” often quoted by historians. It says, “In those
days and in the days that followed, Syrian fathers used to come to that town by order of the Catholicos of the East and govern the diocese of India and Malabar to go to other parts until they were dispersed. Then in the year A.D 823, the Syrian Fathers, Mar Sapor and Mar Parut, with the illustrious came to India and reached Kollam. They went to the King Shakirbirti and asked from him a piece of land in which they could build a Church for themselves and erect a town. He gave the amount of land they desired and they built a church and erected a town in the district of Kollam, to which Syrian bishops and Metropolitans used to come by order of the Catholicos who sent them. The bodies of the two brothers lay buried in the Church they had built, in which there were inscriptions on stone. Having settled, the descendants of the immigrants spread over to Kundara, Chathannur, Kayamkulam, etc.

### 3.8.5 Quilon Cheppeds

In the 9th century A.D, two sets of Copper Plates were granted to the Quilon Church, following the arrival of Mar Sabrisho and Mar Aphroth. Known as the Tharissa Palli or Quilon Cheppeds, these are available even today. Ayyan, who reigned at Cranganore, is said to have extended this Royal Charter. The first Venad ruler about whose reign we have any authentic information is Ayyan Atikal Thiruvatikal. He has immortalised himself in the famous Tharisappalli Copper Plate Grant issued by him in A.D. 849; the 5th Regnal year of Sthanu Ravi Varma Kulasekhara, in the presence of important officers of the State and representatives of the Anchuvannam and Manigramam. The inscription records that one Maruvan Sapiriso also had built a church named
Terisapalli and a Nagaram, at Kurakkerni Kollam and that the Venad Chief made the gift of a plot of land to the church and the Nagaram along with several families of the labourers and the proprietary rights\textsuperscript{90}.

The first set consists of three plates. Of these one is kept by the Orthodox Church Catholicate palace at Kottayam, and another by the Mar Thoma Church at Thiruvalla. The third plate is considered to have been lost. The plate of the second set at Kottayam Old Orthodox Theological Seminary tells about the Christian community at Cranganore and records a grant made by a king called Vira Raghava Chakravarthy to a certain Iravi Kortan of Mahadevar Pattanam.\textsuperscript{91} They are mostly written in Tamil and Malayalam, but two pages are in Pahalvi and Arabic and four signatures have been noted in characters that look like Hebrew, evidently Jewish\textsuperscript{92}. According to these Cheppeds,

“the king gave some low-caste people to be servants of the Church, exempted them from paying certain specified rates and taxes, gave them the right of entry into the market, denied before because they were low caste-Hindus; any crime committed by the people was to be tried by the Christians, the Church was given also the administration of customs in Quilon, that is, the steelyard and weights and Kappam”\textsuperscript{93}.

3.9 The Christian Kingdom of Villiarvattom

A Christian kingdom called Villiarvattom, with Mahadevar Pattanam as capital, is believed to have been in existence\textsuperscript{94}. According to the Portuguese historians, this kingdom was known as Beliarte. It was in
the 10th century that the Syrian Christians of Villiarvattom gained political power in Kerala. Records relating to the dynasty were given to Gama by Malankara Nazranis. The historical tradition of the kingdom is well described in a song “Villiarvattom Pana”. The kingdom extended from the coastal islands of Chendmangalam, Maliankara and others to the regions north, and south of them up to Udayamperur. The capital of Mahadevar Pattanam was originally in the island of Chendmangalam and was later shifted to Udayamperur, following a battle with the Arabs who killed their princes and ran sacked and destroyed their city. The Udayamperur Church is reputed to have been built in A.D 510 by a Raja of Villiarvattom. One of the inscriptions found in the church refers to Raja Thoma. L.W. Brown depicts the story about Villiarvattam in this way, “During the reign of Raja Thoma, the fame of the Christian dynasty in India reached Europe and prompted Eugene IV to send emissaries with a letter to him in 1439”. According to tradition, preserved in popular songs like “Villiarvattom Pana”, Raja Thoma was survived by his niece, Princess Mariam, also known as Kripavathi. She married Prince Rama Varma of the Cochin Royal family. He became a Christian in order to marry her, assuming the title of Prince Emmanuel. The Cochin Raja was not happy with the alliance and consequently Prince Emmanuel was either exiled or he had to flee to Ceylon. Stricken with grief, Mariam died shortly afterwards. With her death, the ancient Kingdom of Villiarvattom ceased to exist. “The local king of Diamper took over the jurisdiction and properties and then, when these Rajas ceased, the king of Cochin claimed to have more jurisdiction and right on the Christians of St. Thomas than the other kings in whose lands they
The sceptre of Villiarvattom rulers was presented by the Christians of Cochin to Vasco da Gama in 1502, in the hope of Portuguese assistance against the Arabs who were their rivals in sea trade.

### 3.10 The Persian Church

The history of the Malankara Church from the early centuries right up to the 16th century reveals that the Church in Persia played a very vital role in nurturing its growth. It used to send Metropolitans, train and strengthen its clergy, edify and sustain its faith, and provide ecclesiastical leadership to the Christian community. Undoubtedly, the Persian Church stood by the Malankara Church in her vicissitudes and greatly helped her in independent and indigenous growth. The Malankara Church is greatly indebted to her. Aramaic was the language of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic and it became the language of the mother church of Persia and so it was the sacred language of the daughter Church of Kerala. But, basically, the members of the church of Kerala are called Syrians not because they claim Syrian blood in their veins, but mainly because they have a Syrian liturgy. The Persian church claims St. Thomas as the founder of their church.

The history of the spread of Christianity in Persia and towards the East in the early centuries is available in the church histories of Euebsbius Pamphilius and Gregorios Bar Hebraeus. Other equally important works are the Doctrine of Addai, a Syriac document written about A.D. 250 in Edessa, and The Chronicle of Arbil, written by
Massiha Zacha between A.D. 550 and 569, which gives an account of the growth of the Church in the Parthian Kingdom of Adiabene which had its capital at Arbil. The outstanding figures among the early Christians in the Persian kingdom of Osrochene were Toctain and Bardassian. They lived in Edessa and their historical works also throw light on the Persian Church’s history. It was from Edessa that Christianity spread to Persia.

3.11 St. Thomas, the Founder of the Persian Church

The significant fact which emerges from all the preceding historical events is that the Church in Persia was established at the initiative of St. Thomas, the Apostle, and further strengthened at the hands of his disciples Thaddeus, Aggai and Mari. The Church in Persia, it may confidently be said, had an apostolic origin and an indigenous growth in the tradition of St. Thomas, reckoned as the founder of the Persian Church. The chronology of the heads of the church begins from him.

Another equally important aspect of the Persian Church to be conceded is that in the initial growth of the Church, no other Church either at Jerusalem or at Antioch or elsewhere sustained it by any ecclesiastical authority other than its own. The history of the Church in its first two centuries shows that it owed allegiance neither to any extra-territorial Church nor to any Church outside Persia, especially its neighbour, the Church of Syria had laid any claim either juridical or jurisdictional, although a tendency is discernible from several later
instances that Antioch would have liked the Persian Church to be within its sphere of authority\textsuperscript{105}. In this context, the statement of W.A Wingram is relevant. He writes, “The Church of Easterns was the daughter not of Antioch but of Edessa and was never included in the Patriarchate of the former city\textsuperscript{106}.

The efforts of the Roman Pope to establish supremacy over the Church of Persia, forced them to create a new Catholicate. It ended in the establishment of the Selucian Catholicate\textsuperscript{107}. The Jerusalem fathers did more than raising a Metropolitan when Ahod Ahuei approached them for consecration. They showed a concern for the stability and juridical independence of the church in the East, as may be conjectured from the history of Bar Hebracus who has made the following record of the event.

“Consequent to the consecration, the western fathers allowed the Eastern fathers to consecrate the candidate of their choice when their leader passes away and also directed that they, therefore, need not go again to Anotich for that purpose. They issued a stathicon which specified that the Great Metropolitan of East shall be proclaimed Catholicos Patriarch. This act did not please the Patriarch of Antioch”\textsuperscript{108}.

\textbf{3.12 Rise of Nestorian Schism}

In the third decade of the fourth century, Christendom was seething with a heretical thought on the personality of Christ and consequently
on the position of St. Mary, the God-bearer. Nestorius was the author of the new thought.

The theory of Nestorius was contradicted by many learned fathers of the Church but mainly by St. Cyril. He stoutly defended the orthodox doctrine on the personality of Christ and the status of St. Mary as Theotokos as enshrined in the Nicene Creed, in his famous doctrinal second letter of Nestorius. To quote V.C. Samuel, “Cyril argues that the Nicene Creed, the inviolable norm of orthodoxy, affirms that God the Son himself came down, was incarnated, lived as man, suffered, rose the third day and ascended into heaven.” God the Son was, therefore, the subject of Christ’s incarnate life. This does not mean, however, that God the Son changed into man, but it affirms that having united to himself in his own flesh animated with a rational soul, God the Son became man, and was called the Son. By this union, the natures of Godhead and manhood, which are different as indivisible unity. Since God the Son, who is eternal united to himself hypostatically at the first moment of his conception, in the womb of the Virgin, she brought forth God, the Son, incarnate. She was, therefore, Theotokos and the title is central to a sound christology.

To settle the controversy in Christendom, Emperor Theodosius II convened an ecumenical synod at Ephesus. The synod met at the Cathedral at Ephesus on 22 June 431, with Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, presiding. Nestorius was invited but he declined to appear. The council found that Nestorius “held and published impious doctrines” and hence issued a sentence that “Nestorius be excluded from the episcopal
dignity and from all priestly communion.” In pursuance of the sentence on 23 June 431, which repudiated his impious doctrines and his disobedience to the canons, he had been, on 22nd June in accordance with the eclesiastical role deposed by the Holy Synod expelled from the body of the clergy.

3.13 Nestorians in Persia

Following the Ephesian sentence, Nestorius and his supporters were persecuted in the Roman Empire. They fled to and found refuge in the neighbouring Persian Empire. “When the supporters of Nestorius entered the Persian Empire, Piroz was told that these Christians from Roman Empire were the foes of the Christian Roman Emperor. In order to obtain the fidelity of his own Christian subjects, Piroz granted asylum to the victims persecuted by the Roman Emperor and supported the established churches in that Empire who supported the Emperor.

Among the Nestorians, Bar Saumo and Narsai contributed greatly to the advancement of Nestorianism and the downfall of orthodoxy. Bar Saumo played his cards well and courted the patronage of the Emperor Piroz. He became one of the Advisors of the Emperor. Nestorians thus came to have a period of protection while those of Non-Nestorian persuasion suffered at the hands of Piroz and his son Kavad. Babooyah was put to death on charges of treason that in a letter which he wrote to the Roman Emperor, there was a derogatory remark on the Persian Emperor. Following the death of Babooyah, Metropolitan Bar Saumo called the Synod of Beth Lapat in A.D.484, which declared the Persian Church to be Nestorian. Acasius succeeded Babooyah. He was a
product of the Nestorian school at Nisibus. In A.D, 486, he convened a Synod at Beth Aderi, which acknowledged Nestorius as church father and adopted a confession of Nestorian faith. “This synod is generally held to mark the final break of the church in Persia with the west.”

3.14 Division of the Persian Church

From the time of Catholicos Acasius, it may be reckoned, the Persian Church came to have two factions, viz., the Non-Nestorians and the Nestorians. In A.D.498, the Nestorians adopted the name ‘Chaldean Church and raised the head of the Church to the status of Patriarch’. The Chaldean church thus came to be the main church in Persia. Later, during the time of Hanne Yeshus II, the Patriarchate was shifted to Baghdad about 15 miles up the river Tigris from Selucia Ctesiphon. From a very ancient time, Persian Bishops used to visit Kerala.

3.15 Indo-Persian Church Relations

The Indian Church, as developed in Malabar in the early centuries, had enjoyed ecclesiastical sustenance from the Church in Persia. Priests from this land used to go to Persia for ecclesiastical training and ordination. Priests, Metropolitan and Catholicoses from Persia had visited the Malabar Church from the early centuries to the 18th century. Christians from Persia had immigrated and settled in Malabar. Travellers from abroad found Christian communities in Kerala having relationship with the Persian Church. Moreover, archaeological evidence of Persian crosses and the use of Syriac liturgy substantiate the Indo-Persian church relationship. Writings of church fathers, historical
records, and travelogues are extant to throw light on this relationship. Because of the contact with the Persian Church, as is the general opinion of modern writers, the Church of Malabar was entirely Nestorian till the close of the 16th century\textsuperscript{119}. But Xavier Koodapuzha opposes it. In his opinion, “Malabar people were not Nestorians”\textsuperscript{120}. It was the Nestorian Patriarch Denha who sent Mar Abraham to Malabar. Till the formation of the Catholic line in the 16th century, Nestorian Bishops must have ruled the Christians of Kerala\textsuperscript{121}. The fundamental and vital link between the Indian and Persian churches is St. Thomas, the Apostle. He preached in the present-day state of Kerala and also in parts of Persia before coming to Kerala\textsuperscript{122}. His relics were transported from Mylapore to Edessa in Persia at that time. Given this background, St. Thomas is claimed as the founder father of both the churches.

3.16 Persian Presence in Malankara

3.16.1 Mar David (A.D.295 - 300)

Ecclesial leaders from Persia and other travellers had visited Malankara Church at different periods. The earliest visitor from Persia, recorded in history, is Metropolitan David of Basra\textsuperscript{123}. He is said to have come “during the Patriarchate of Shahalupa about A.D.295 - 300”. He left his See and went to India, where he evangelised many people. Papa was Catholics from A.D .267 to 336. The Chronicle of the See, an important East Syrian document of the 7th or 8th century, makes references to a bishop named David, who allegedly evangelized the Indian people between A.D.250 and 300\textsuperscript{124}. 

3.16.2 Cana Thoma and Mar Joseph

In 345, Cana Thoma and Mar Joseph, Bishop of Edessa, accompanied by priests, deacons and others, immigrated to India. They landed at Kodungallor on the north-west shore of Kerala.

3.16.3 Mar Yonan (A.D 390)

Mar Yonan from Anbar (Baghdad) came to India, as recorded in a Syrian book called “Life of Hermit Yonan”, written about A.D 390 by Sadoe, who called himself priest, monk and Archmandrite of the monastery of St. Thomas in India. These three bishops, it may be observed, belonged to a period before the onset of Nestorianism in Persia.

3.16.4 Theophilus (A.D 354)

In 354, Emperor Constantine sent a mission with Theophilus, a native of the Maldive Islands (off the west coast of India) to South Arabia, Abyssinia and Ceylon. He visited the Christian community in Malabar. Commenting on the proceeding of Theophilus, Moraes says: “In 354, Malabar was visited by Theophilus, a native of the Maldives Islands of the west coast of India”\textsuperscript{125}. He had been sent by the islanders, when quite young, as a hostage to the Romans during the reign of Constantine the Great, (A.D 306-37). Baptised at Constantinople, Theophilus became a monk and was ordained a deacon by Eusebius of Nicomedia and was consecrated as Arian bishop about A.D 350. He was sent out by Constantius for the express purpose of spreading Arian doctrines in the Himyar, and in the country of Adon, in his own land and in India.
3.16.5 Daniel - the Priest

A priest from India, named Daniel, actually helped Ishodad to translate from the Greek original into Syriac a commentary on the Epistle to Romans by Mar Koman. Moraes states:

“The Indian Church was not connected with other centres and had possibly traditions of its own in the matter of observances in the Church and surely it also had its own ministers. But this Church maintained friendly relations with Edessa and with Seleucia Ctesiphon on account of their almost common origin. It is, therefore, not surprising that Indian priests should be sent to Persia for ecclesiastical training”\textsuperscript{126}.

3.16.6 Cosmas (A.D 522)

Cosmas, a merchant of Alexandria, known as Indicopleustus, had visited India in 522 and given an account of the Christians, in his work “Christian Topography”, as follows:

“In the country called Male (Malabar) where the pepper grows, there is also a Church and at another place called Kalyana (Kalyan, Bombay), there is moreover a bishop who is appointed from Persia. Taprobane is an oceanic island ..........it lies on the other side of the pepper country. This island
has also a church of Persian Christians and a
presbyter who is appointed from Persia and a deacon
and all the apparatus of public worship.”

3.16.7 Mar Maruta (A.D 600)

Further, the Nestorian Chronicle of Se’ert refers to the Christian community and “records that Marutha of Tagrit, who later became the west Syrian Maphrianan of the East, received gifts from India and China”.

3.16.8 Persian Crosses

The relationship between the Malankara and Persian Churches has also been strengthened from the evidences of the four Crosses which are believed to be of Persian architecture and erected in Malankara in the 7th or 8th century. These four crosses stand at Mylapore, Kottayam, Kadamattam and Muttuchira. The crosses have inscriptions on them in Pahlavi language which was in use during the reign of the Sassanid Kings in Persia in the 7th century. These crosses are still preserved in the Knanaya Jacobite Church at Kottayam and the Jacobite Church at Kadamattam (found in 1924). The inscription on the cross at the Jacobite Church at Kottayam has been translated as “My Lord Christ, have mercy upon Afras, son of Chahar bukt, the Syrian, who preserved this”. As regards the Cross at Kadamattom Church, the inscription reads as follows: “I, a beautiful bird from Nineveh (have come) to this country, written Mar Shapur. I whom holy Messia, the forgiver, freed from thorn (affliction).” “Mar Shapur is identified with Maruvan Sapir Iso. Historians have different views regarding
the writings on the crosses. Another Cross of the type in the Knanaya Church is also seen in the Roman Catholic Church at St. Thomas Mount, Madras. These Monumental Crosses go to prove the strong identity of the Churches on the Malabar Coast and the Coromandel Coast.

3.16.9 The Portuguese and the St. Thomas Christians

At the time of the opening of the Portuguese front in Malankara, the Christian community had been so long established that there was nothing foreign in them. They were essentially indigenous Christians, the people of the land. The Portuguese were at first surprised to see numerous Christians and over a hundred Churches. “These Churches belong to the Pope” they said. “Who is the Pope? We never heard of him,” answered the Syrians. In the opinion of T.K. Velupillai, there were many Jacobites in Malabar at the time of the coming of the Portuguese. India is a cosmopolitan, multicultural, pluralistic and tolerant country, which respects all religions. In spite of the fact that there are rival traditions regarding the origin of Christianity in Kerala and in India, the available evidences supported by the majority of historians indicate that St. Thomas was the founder of Christianity in India and the Apostle of the East.

In this chapter the arrival of St. Thomas in India and his successful efforts for spreading Christianity in India and the details regarding the establishment of church in the country have been dealt with. It has observed that St. Thomas established 7 churches in Kerala. He was the founder of the churches in Persia and India. This led to the
collaboration and co-operation between the Persian Church and the Church of India. The arrival of Cana Thoma also influenced considerably the growth and development of the Indian Church. The history of the development of the Church in India reached a turning-point in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese in India.

4 The Life of St. Thomas Christians of India in the Middle Ages

The St. Thomas Christians, though they had hierarchical dependence on the Seleucian Church till the end of the 16th century, developed an individuality of their own in the socio-political environment of the country, adapting themselves to, or rather Christianizing, their ancient culture in almost all aspects. Malabar was the home of numerous castes and sub-castes, each with a culture of its own, each contributing its share to the body politic of the country.

4.1 Indian Christians- ‘Sons of this Soil’

The St. Thomas Christians are also ‘sons of this soil’ like any other community of the country. They were spread almost all over Kerala, which was divided into more than seventeen little kingdoms. The most important kingdoms were Cranganore, Calicut, Travancore and Cochin and the three minor ones having relation to Christians were Cranganore, Mangat and Quilon. The name ‘Kerala’ practically never appears in ecclesiastical documents. The name that is more often used by the European writers is that of ‘Malabar’. Also, this name has created controversy among scholars. The most probable opinion could be that the word ‘Malabar’ corresponds to the vernacular
Malayalam, the land of hills and valleys as could be seen by any one who visits this land\textsuperscript{138}.

In the beginning of the Christian era, Malabar was divided into a number of politically independent and socially exogamous and exclusive ‘nads’ (a number of families living together in a particular locality). It gradually assumed a unity with the Nambudiris who became the final authority in all matters, religious, social and political\textsuperscript{139}. Under their authority, the society itself was completely transformed. The society was mainly classified into four groups or castes and many sub-castes. The sacerdotal class occupied the highest position, the Kings and chiefs bowing before them. Each class had its own functions, set of duties and obligations definitely prescribed for the sake of solidarity and the progress of society as a whole; each class or social unit was expected to act according to these norms\textsuperscript{140}. The 16th century documents that are definite sources of information about the St. Thomas Christians show that they had accepted the social structure which was built on the network of castes and sub-castes and in so doing, they contributed their share to the common good of the society.

They had carved for themselves an important place in the Hindu hierarchy of castes, being regarded as even superior to the Nairs, who constituted the second estate of the realm. In fact, the Nairs held the St.Thomas Christians in such high esteem that they deemed it an honour when the latter condescended to address them as brothers, and the Christians in order to preserve their title of nobility, would not touch people of interior castes- including the Nairs themselves, and would, whilst going along the road, shout to the people from afar to
make way for them. If any person of the lower castes crossed their paths they had the right to kill him.

The St. Thomas Christians have been seen as part of the Hindu caste system in many anthropological studies. According to Fuller, St. Thomas Christian groupings form part of the total segmentary caste structure and are ranked equal to each other and to the Hindu caste. In fact, this community defines itself as a ‘jati’ or sub-caste.

In the sense that the Syrian Christians claimed to be apostasies from the Nambudiri Brahmins, they could, in certain contexts, claim a higher status than the Nairs, who were next only to the Brahmins. For instance, rich land-owning Syrian Christians with political power could claim a higher status than the Nairs, where they were dominant in number. The Syrian Christians were traditionally traders and landowners. Land-owning is a function common to many dominant castes but trading was typically a Syrian Christian profession. The Hindu Kings, pleased with the hardworking and prosperous Syrian Christians, gave them privileges and honours that distinguished them as a ‘high caste’.

The relationship between the Nairs and the Syrian Christians is marked by ambiguity. While hierarchical relations between the Syrian Christians and the Brahmins are clear-cut, the relation between castes of approximately the same status is problematic. The relations between the Nairs and the Christians in each locality depend upon the prevalent demographic, political and economic variables; status-shifts depend upon each situation; the differences are often not large enough to warrant that either community is categorically higher or lower.
The caste feeling of the Thomas Christians made them uninterested in proselytisation. They took up the conversion of the lower castes only after the Synod of Diamper. When Roz became the bishop of the St. Thomas Christians, conversions from the lower castes started. Special arrangements were made for them with churches either by erecting separate buildings or by reserving a particular part of the church for them. On the public roads those of the inferior castes had to give way to them, and they had the right to kill anyone who would deny them this mark of distinction. For those of the high castes, the touch of a Thomas Christian was sufficient to purify articles considered defiled by the contact of low-caste people. The kings and petty chieftains of Malabar invited the Thomas Christians to live near their residences in order to profit by this service of touching the defiled articles. The Thomas Christians had the rare privilege to sit before kings, to ride elephants, etc.

Though the rigid caste feelings stood in the way of receiving into their community people of the low castes, as regards the higher castes, they must have had no objection to making them converts. There were instances of intermarriages with the higher castes, especially the Nairs. The Christian community received many non-Christians among them and had them baptized. But conversion of the lower castes seems to have been taken up by the Thomas Christians only after the arrival of the Portuguese.

L. W. Brown is of the view that as a result of the honourable place the Christians came to occupy and their assimilation of the
social customs of their Hindu neighbours, they came to be accepted as just another caste. In consequence of this position, the St. Thomas Christians, as far as our evidence goes, never attempted to bring their non-Christian neighbour to a knowledge of Christ, and so unto the Christian church. E. R. Hambye remarks that the Christians of St. Thomas had been accused of clinging too much to the caste system and thereby preventing conversions from their castes. They had no missionary spirit, it is said, being a minority in a closed milieu, and not always well-trained and instructed; it is remarkable that they kept the faith together with their social status. Had they started early to mix with low castes, they would have lost their social influence and, perhaps, have disappeared together, as happened to the Christian communities in other parts of India and in China.

4.2 The Status of the St. Thomas Christians

The St. Thomas Christians were numbered among the noble races of Malabar. They were preferred to the Nairs and enjoyed the privilege of being called by no other name than that of the ‘sons of kings’. The Syrian Christians were called ‘Nazaranee mapillas’. The term ‘mapilla’ is a compound Malayalam word: ‘maha’ means ‘great’ and ‘pilla’ means ‘son’, signifying ‘prince’, royal sons, are honorary title granted to the St. Thomas Christians. They were permitted to wear gold tresses in the hair locks at marriage feasts, to ride an elephant and to decorate the floor with carpets. They were entrusted with the protection of the artisan classes. These servants had the charge of coconut plantations. A Hindu doing violence to a Christian
had his crime pardoned only in the case of his offering to the church, a handful either of gold or silver according to the seriousness of the offence, as otherwise the crime was expiated by his own blood. They never saluted anyone below their own rank, because it was dishonourable to their status. While they walked along the road, they saluted others at a distance, and if anybody refused to reciprocate it, he was put to death and the Nairs who were of the military class regarded them as brethren and loved them exceedingly. The St. Thomas Christians were preferred to the Nairs and enjoyed the privilege of being called by no other name than that of the ‘sons of kings’ (Rajanandana). The St. Thomas Christians were directly under the kings and were not subject to the local chiefs. They were very strong and powerful and their bishops were respected like kings. They were given seats by the side of the kings and their chief officers. Sitting on carpets in the royal presence, a privilege enjoyed by the ambassadors, was also conceded to them. In the 16th century, when the Rajah of Parur wished to concede the privileges to the Nairs in his dominions, the Syrian Christians resented it and immediately declared war against him if he persisted. Conscious of his inability to enforce his will in opposition to them, he was obliged to leave the matters as such. The St. Thomas Christians were treated as almost on a par with their sovereigns. They were allowed to have a military force of their own. In former times, they seldom went out without being well-armed. They were trained in the use of these weapons (kalaripayattu) from the age of eight and continued to exercise themselves till twenty-five, which accounted for their using them with much dexterity. They were always esteemed and patronized by their rulers as much for their general fidelity and
regard to truth as for their skill and military powers. Notwithstanding their war-like appearance, their disposition was very peaceable. They will cherish the tradition of having attained the dignity of possessing a king of their own at Villiarvattom near Udayamperoor; at the death of the last king without issue, the kingdom lapsed to the Cochin royal family.

With the disruption of the Chera Empire, the Perumpadappu Swaroopam (Cochin royal family) had acted as the protector of the rights and privileges of the Syrian Christians. Significantly enough, their Archdeacon was ranked the first among the seventy-two princes and he was the person to crown the king. Before becoming king, for five days, the heir-apparent wore a golden cross, a rather surprising practice in a Hindu King’s coronation ritual.

Most of the writers speak in glorious terms about the ancient position of the St. Thomas Christians. Edgar Thurston says, “They not only occupied a very high position in the social scale but also held at different times the rare distinctions of forming a section of the bodyguards of the king and the militia of the country.” K.M. Paniker says, “The Christians of Malabar form an important community with special privileges and rights of their own; as their tradition declares, they were converts from high caste Hindus, Nambudiris and Nairs.”

4.3 Privileges

The St. Thomas or Syrian Christians of Malabar, who form a very remarkable community with a history going back to the time of
Apostle St. Thomas, have had at least four sets of copper-plates on which were recorded the privileges enjoyed by them. They are:

1. The Thomas Cana Plates  
   (Two plates, both missing since AD 1544)

2. The Quilon Tarisa Church Plates, fascicle 1  
   (Three plates, last plate missing)

3. The Quilon Tarisa Church Plates Fascicle 2  
   (Four plates, first plate missing)

4. The plate of Iravi Kortan  
   (Still extant)\(^{156}\)

According to tradition, the date of the St. Thomas Cana plates is A.D. 345. The donor is Cheraman Perumal, according to Malabar tradition, and Cocurangon according to a Portuguese version in a manuscripts volume in the British Museum, dated 1604. But Cheraman Perumal and Cocurangon are very often wrongly taken as proper names. They are nothing more than Malayalam common nouns meaning a Chera king. Cocurangon is Portuguese corruption of Ko Cherakon, meaning, as it were, His Majesty the Chera Emperor\(^{157}\). The privilege was granted to Thomas of Cana. He was given the city of Cranganore and a jungle close by, which he converted into a town with a church and sixty- two houses. He is granted the privilege of using seven kinds of musical instruments, a palanquin or an elephant as a vehicle. Also, the title of ‘Mapilla’, son- in- law to the king, was conferred upon him. Besides, he and his posterity, associates and relations as well
as followers of his faith, i.e., all Malabar Christians, were granted five kinds of taxes.

The date of the Quilon Church Plates Fascicle 1 is 880 AD, the 5th year of Sthanu Ravi, as per the document. The donor is Ayyan, the King of Venad, and it was granted to the Tarisa (orthodox or straight faith) Church at Quilon, which was built by Sabrisho, a merchant who founded the city of Quilon in 825 A.D. By this, four women of the Ilava (Ilava means people from Ceylon) immigrants to Malabar, who are known as Tiyas in Malabar, and Chekons or Chovens (servants) among the Malabar Christians\textsuperscript{158} caste, together with their eight children and one family of the washerman caste were given to the church for menial service. Also, these low caste people were exempted from paying certain specified rates and taxes. Further, the church was made the custodian of the steelyard and weights and the Kappan, all which previously belonged to the King of Venad. Maringoli, (1348 A.D.) says that the Quilon Christians were in his days “the masters of the public weighing office”.\textsuperscript{159} By the time of Alfonso D’ Alboquereque (1504), they had lost the privilege of ‘keeping the seal and the standard weight of the city’ of Quilon\textsuperscript{160}. ‘Kappan’ may perhaps be the seal mentioned above. The Ilavas and the people of the washerman caste given to the church were allowed to go into the Quilon fort and the Christian streets in spite of their being members of two polluting castes, and the right of trying the cases of these people was reserved for the Quilon Church. Quilon Church Plates Fascicle 2 was given to the Quilon Church and the Quilon Jews and the Manigramam (authorized leaders of the indigenous Christians of Quilon). By this, one family of
carpenters, four of Vellalas and two of another caste, in addition to extensive lands, were granted to the Church. The Church was also granted the right of trying the cases of the people living in the above area and also the protection of the Church and its lands by the Venad militia and the Jewish and Manigramam leaders along with the fee for weighing with the steelyard and weights. The Jewish and Manigramam leaders were granted the following privileges.

- Remission of certain dues as well as collection of certain others.
- The right of co-operating with the government officials in fixing the prices of goods and in all other business of the king.
- Seventy-two privileges, already mentioned above.
- The privilege of keeping in custody the daily collection of customs duty.
- The right of withholding the above money and the weighing fee already referred to, until wrongs done to them were redressed.
- The right of trying their own cases.
- The privilege of occupying the town of Quilon, as tenants.

Many writers have mistaken the provisions of this document and confused the grants to the Church with the above-mentioned remuneration to the protectors—the Jewish and indigenous leaders. K.N. Daniel has tried to establish the date of this plate as 1230 A.D. Kelhorn gives the date as 1320 A.D. and Vira Raghava Chakravarti as the donor of this plate. Iravi Kortan of Carnganore was the donee. This gives Iravi Kortan the office of Manigramam, very probably the
headship of the Cranganore merchants. Several social privileges, which were mentioned in the previous plates, were also granted. Further, Iravi Kortan was given the monopoly of the overland and sea-borne trade. All other merchants and five artisan classes were made subservient to him. He was allowed brokerage on all sorts of goods and also customs duty or toll. His children and grandchildren and their descendants could enjoy these as a hereditable possession. It has to be borne in mind that of all the various Christian communities, old and new, now in Kerala, the ancient St. Thomas Syrian Christians alone had the high privilege of using silk umbrellas (Kottakkuda), day-lamps (pakalvilakku), walking cloth (pandal), carpets, slaves, the title of Mappila, gate-house (padipura), ornaments, etc. Cheraman Perumal, Emperor of Kerala, and Ayyan Adigal, King of Venad, granted these 72 privileges to them (Quilon, about 880 A.D.), as recorded in their copper plate charters\textsuperscript{162}.

The privileges engraved on the copper plates are often described as the Magna Carta of the St. Thomas Christians. But J. Monteiro D’Aguiar, in his article published by the Gazetteers Dept. of the Government of Kerala, says that these copper plates had not the paramount importance that the pompous expression Magna Carta seems to give them. He dares to call Thomas of Cana a Manichean, from whom the Manichean heresy penetrated the Christian community of Malabar\textsuperscript{163}.

4.4 Community Organization

From the documents of the 16th century, it is not clear whether there was some kind of secular organization for the community, apart
form the ecclesiastical one. There is general agreement that the Archdeacon played a significant role in the life of the Thomas Christians in the pre-Portuguese era. We know from the privilege granted by the local kings to both the Cranganore community and the Quilon community that there was some provision for the administration of justice as far as it concerned the Christians. This provision authorized the Christians to take it as their responsibility but it seems that, for some time before the arrival of the Portuguese, the privilege itself was not in force owing to the negligence of the Christians or the aggressiveness of others. A.M. Mundadan has concluded that Christians in both Cranganore and Quilon enjoyed the same kind of autonomy under the local kings. The ecclesiastical head was also the civil head of the community, as far as this autonomy was concerned. Now the bishop, the ecclesiastical head, being a foreigner, and quite inexperienced in local affairs, was not in a position to exercise this temporal authority in an efficient way. Hence, it may be presumed that there were national leaders, one or more at any given time, who helped the prelates in the matter and practically attended to the whole administration of temporal and civil affairs. And this national head or heads might have been probably the archdeacon or archdeacons. For the discharge of the other duties, the community seems to have been organized on the same basis as other communities of Malabar belonging to the higher castes.

The tradition of the Syrian Christians of Malabar is that during some part of the time between the ninth century and the sixteenth, this community enjoyed a certain independence of the Hindu rajahs in that part of India. According to E.M. Philip, they are said to have
had a king or ruler of their own in the tenth century called Belliarte at 
Udayamperoor (Diamper) who ruled over the Christian community 
dispersed among the neighbouring Hindu states\(^\text{168}\). It is said that this 
ruling family continued for a long time until, as it was becoming extinct, 
its powers passed to the Rajah of Cochin. Pope John XXII, in a letter 
written in 1330 to the Christians of Malabar, alludes to their ‘lord’ 
(Latin ‘dominus’), and in 1502 an embassy sent by them to the Portuguese 
produced a red rod with silver tips and three silver bells at one end, 
assumed to be the sceptre of their former kings.

Belliarte is a Portuguese corruption for Villiarvattom. There are 
two opinions regarding the alleged Christian dynasty or the king of 
the Christians of St. Thomas. According to one view, the rod that the 
Christians presented to Vasco da Gama was the sceptre of this royal 
family. T.K. Joseph accepts the theory that the rod of justice presented 
to Vasco da Gama was the sceptre of the extinct Christian Royal 
Family. The other opinion seems to be more probable; the Villiarvattom 
kings were the special protectors of the Christians but not themselves 
Christians. When that family became extinct, this patronage passed 
on to the king of Cochin who inherited the Villiarvattom principality\(^\text{169}\).

Gouvea says that the people called the Christians of St. Thomas, 
‘sons of the kings’ in the kingdom of the Pandyan king. Roz alludes 
to this title of the Christians when he says; “It is to be noted that the 
‘olla’ (the Quilon grant plates) calls the Christians of St. Thomas ‘Tarijanel’ 
meaning ‘kings’ or ‘first kings’. So were they formerly called because 
they were, as it appears, the descendants of the kings whom St. Thomas 
converted”\(^\text{170}\).
Mundadan opines that this must have given an opportunity to Gouvea to conceive the idea of the institution of a royal dynasty by the Christians of Quilon, consequent on the prosperity of the Christians after the arrival of the two saintly brothers, Sapor and Prot. The dynasty was called Belliarte, and when the dynasty came to an end, the kings of Diamper assumed the charge of their jurisdiction and property. When these Rajas too ceased to exist, the Rajas of Cochin began to claim wider jurisdiction and right over the Christians of St. Thomas than the other kings in whose land they dwelt 171.

Thus the tradition does not weigh in favour of a Christian dynasty that ruled over the Christians at some time. But all the writers do agree that the Christians had as their special protector at first the Villiarvattom royal family and then the king of Cochin who appropriated the kingdom of Diamper. C. Achuthamenon, in the Cochin State Manual gives another picture of the Villiarvattom family. “The Achen of Paliat was originally a petty vassal of the Raja of Villiarvattom, who was himself a Kshatriya feudatory of Cochin. What the extent of this principality was is not known, but it certainly comprised Chennamangalam and some territory to the north and south of it. The family of Villiarvattom was about to be extinct towards the end of the 16th century when the last chief, instead of making an adoption from a Kshatriya family, made his son, the Palliat Achen his heir…” 172. This is in agreement with Roz who has said that there never was a Christian dynasty or a Christian kingdom at Villiarvattom.
4.5 Military life

The Syrian Christians were excellent warriors. Soldiers always escorted the prelates \(^{173}\). Mar Jacob wrote to the king of Portugal in 1523, “I have won all these Christians of this country for thy services so that when thou shall be in need of them, thou shall find in it over 25000 soldiers” (Schurhammer George S. J. *The Malabar Church and Rome during the Early Portuguese Period and Before*) \(^{174}\). In the letter of four Chaldean Bishops who arrived in India in 1504, it is stated that in the beginning of the 16\(^{th}\) century, there were in Malabar 30,000 families if Christians \(^{175}\). Hence, it may be concluded that all the able-bodied adults were soldiers and all males were trained for military service. Nicholas Pimenta, S. J. says:

“This race from the days of St. Thomas alone in India held the faith and can place an array of 30000 armed men” \(^{176}\).

According to Barretto (1648),

“these Christians are highly esteemed by the gentile kings in whose territories they live and they engage themselves in respectable occupations such as commerce and military service” \(^{177}\).

The greater the number of them a native prince had in his dominions, the more he was feared by his neighbours. They were said to be very faithful and trustworthy. “The men always went about armed and were well trained in the use of weapons, their education bearing on these sciences from their eighth to the twentieth year”\(^{178}\). Duarte Barbosa (1500-1517) gives the description of the training.
“They were sent to kalari at the age of 7 to learn the use of weapons. They made physical exercise twice a day as children, to build their body strong. They learned the use of weapons; some with bows and arrows; some with spears; but most of them with swords and buckles. Thus they practised for a long time. Their masters are called Panikalas (Panikars). They went always in the winter to the Panikal to take their fencing lessons until they die”.  

4.6 Livelihood

From the Portuguese reports and accounts of the 16th century and other references found here and there, we infer that the main occupations of the St. Thomas Christians were agriculture, trade and military service. They were predominantly agriculturists; pepper growing was almost their monopoly. In 1524, Mar Jacob wrote a letter to the King of Portugal, which reveals that the St. Thomas Christians were excellent pepper growers. Later, Carcere confirmed that all the pepper was in the hands of the St. Thomas Christians and that most of the pepper was exported to Portugal. Gouvea remarks:

“This (coconut) is, therefore, the best property in which some of these Christians are very rich, but very few of them. The others live on local trade, and many of the most substantial on trade with pepper, which they handle. They are men of great cleverness, honesty and credit and deal with all the Malabar pepper by weight from Quilon to Cohn”. 
The involvement of Christians in money lending is also to be mentioned, as it was one of the main causes of their steady economic advancement. There are many references to St. Thomas Christians living in far away places called ‘kutikal heaths’. But many of them were living in ‘annaati’ market. The Synod of Diamper advised the St. Thomas Christians to flock together in villages instead of living in isolated houses. But the agrarian interests might have prevented these Christians from flocking together in villages. Those who lived in annaati were engaged in trade 181.

For funerals and memorials of the dead, the Malabar Christians used the East-Syrian prayers. Aside from that, the many death-related rituals and customs they observed were similar to those of the high caste Hindus, such as the considering of the close relatives of a deceased as defiled, bath and feast at the end of the defilement period, feasts on memorial days and anniversaries of death, etc. In fasting and doing penance, the Malabar Church generally followed the Chaldean usages. In addition, their women observed a special one-week fast in preparation for the Feast of the Holy Mary’s Nativity 182.

In the matter of hygiene and cleanliness, the Christians were as good as the Hindus. Monserrate observed that all men and women smeared themselves with oil and went to the river to wash them. Thus they did twice a week, Wednesdays and Saturdays. On such occasions they were very scantily dressed.

The Kerala Christians of the pre-Diamper period were not concerned much about the obligatory monogamy. Marriage of one man with several
women was common among them. From the Decree XI of Session VII of the Synod of Diamper, it is inferred that some Christians used to keep concubines and they didn't maintain the sanctity of marriage. The Decree XI of Session IX states: ‘There are great numbers of Christians who for want of having the fear of God and the Church before their eyes do cohabit publicly with concubines, to the great scandal of Christianity. Decree XIII of Session VII prohibits the Christians from practising polygamy and imposes obligatory monogamy. The Synod also prohibited child marriage and fixed the age of fourteen for the marriage of boys twelve years of age for girls. The Synod also banned many social practices connected with marriage through Decrees XIV and XVI of Session VII.

The dowry system existed among the Syrian Christians, as it is clear from the Decree XVI of Session IX. This is one of the rare things on which the Synod congratulates the St. Thomas Christians. The Synod doth approve the laudable custom of this diocese of men’s giving the tenth part of their wives’ portion when they are married, to the church, as also that of making a repartition of the said alms between the fabric of the church and the priest thereof. The Synod further commanded all people to conform to the same Syrian system wherever this custom did not prevail.

The existence of slavery system among the Syrian Christians during the pre-Diamper period is proved by Decree XII of Session IV, which commanded all masters and parents to take greater care of slaves, especially black women. Decree XIII of the same Session
further forbade the Christian ‘buying and selling of the children and the keeping of them as slaves’. The system of inheritance of the Thomas Christians invited criticism at the Synod of Diamper. Decreee XX of the Session makes clear reference to the system. Gouvea (1606) explains:

“Among the Christians no daughter can inherit and it often happened that father died leaving many daughters, but the inheritance passed to a male relative in third or fourth or remote degree, even of collateral line, while other daughters perished of hunger, as therefore took to bad life. Some of them, as though they had sons, used to adopt others who were not others; whom they lived and after this death shared the inheritance with the legitimate sons and as a rule they did so with the children of their women slaves whom they reared up”.

Zachariah Skariah\textsuperscript{183} records a peculiar type of adoption,

“They do commonly adopt the children of their slaves born in their houses, or of other people, disinherit their lawfully begotten children, sometimes on account of some differences they have had with them, and sometimes only for the affection they have to strangers”.
4.7 Ecclesiastical Administrative Set-up of the St. Thomas Christians

As in the secular life, so too in the ecclesiastical, they had a sort of individuality and autonomy. True, the Church of India had been counted as one of the provinces of the Chaldean Church. Yet, as far as the Indian Church was concerned, the Chaldean Patriarch was only a figurehead functioning as a convenient intermediary in her communion with the other apostolic churches.\textsuperscript{184} From time to time, when Episcopal succession happened to be broken in their church, the Malabarians used to send delegations to the Chaldean Patriarch with requests for bishops and the Patriarch sent bishops to cater to the spiritual needs of the Thomas Christians. The competence of the Chaldean Metropolitan and the bishop in India was practically limited to the exercise of the powers of the Episcopal order and to general vigilance in matters canonical and liturgical.

The Ecclesial set up of the St. Thomas Christians had three levels, namely:

- Palliyogam (At the local level)
- Archdeaconate (At the Community level)
- Metropolitan and Patriarch (At the higher Hierarchical level)

These three levels of their Ecclesiastical system manifested their indigenous identity and ecclesiastical communion.
4.7.1 Palliyogam

Local communities were practically independent of each other. Normally, a married clergyman was in charge of their ecclesiastical system. Priests and other clerics were subscribed to and sustained by the local communities. The existence of a good number of local clergy, generally attached to each church is attested to by the Portuguese documents. These priests were known as ‘cathanars’ or ‘casanars’ which was the Malabarization of the Syriac word ‘kaseeso’ (elder or presbyter) and the clerics below the rank of priests were known as ‘chamaz’ (deacon), another Malabarization of the Syriac word ‘samsono’.

In the pre-Portuguese period, there was no system of parish vicariate; instead, all the priests shared in the church services as arranged by the most senior. The Palliyogam or the local assembly, including all the clergy and all adult laymen of the community, set policies and made decisions on all matters pertaining to their parish, such as administration of the temporalities, infliction of ecclesiastical punishment, etc. Matters of regional interest had to be decided in these yogams. This assembly seems to owe its origin to the traditional village assembly of the Dravidians, ‘manram’, which was the responsible and authoritative body at the village level consisting of the heads of the families. All were bound to obey the decisions of the assembly in matters connected with the life and activities of the parish, including the selection and approval of the candidates to priesthood, financial administration, punishment for public sinners, reconciliation in times of conflicts, etc. In matters of common concern and importance the
yogams of different parishes met together and took necessary decisions. This set up of Palliyogam was an effective means to maintain ecclesial communion and solidarity at the local level. The local church administration was similar to the social and religious customs of Malabar. ‘Yogam’ or assembly of local people administered the Hindu temples. The St. Thomas Christians might have adopted the same system in their parishes also. The complete management of the parish churches was done by this yogams that consisted of all adult members and local priests. The yogam looked after the day-to-day affairs of the parish and carried out the administration. It settled cases among the members and it even enjoyed the power of excommunication. The local yogams had priests and lay people as members. The eldest priest of the locality presided over it and all other priests of the parish attended it. With regard to lay members, some records say that the local yogam consisted of the ‘respected members of the parish’. Some others remark about the ‘seniors of the bazaar’ as members. Still some other documents say that all male members of the parish attended the yogam. There is no conclusive evidence of women being given membership in the yogam.

The minimum age for the members of the yogam was not fixed. It was a body of senior male members. Families in those days remained undivided; naturally the heads of the families were quite advanced in age. Heads of the families were the members of the yogam. In the social context of Kerala, it can rightly be inferred that the yogam was a body of the aristocratic families that enjoyed all the powers in connection with the church life, including the selection of candidates for priesthood.
In the General Yogam, which consisted of representative of all parishes of the region, the Archdeacon had a decisive role. There were such gatherings before and after the Koonan Cross Oath of 1653. The General meetings of Athirampuzha and Angamali decided to send Fr. Cariattil and others to Rome for achieving recognition of Mar Dionysius I. The necessary amount needed for sending the delegation was raised by the Palliyogams. Fr. Paulinus of Bartholomew, who was a Carmelite missionary in India, calls it a republican system of government. “The palliyogam which is a unique ecclesial institution of the Thomas Christians of India with its adequate representation of the clergy and laity at the various levels of their ecclesial life, enabled them to maintain their faith in harmonious unity with a profound sense of common responsibility and solidarity, but such an institution well rooted in venerable antiquity and which effectively expressed their ecclesial life for sixteen centuries came into constant conflict with the Latin jurisdictional structure imposed on them from 1599 up to 1896. In 1653 they made a public protest and a section of the Thomas Christians separated from the Latin jurisdiction”\textsuperscript{188}. The members of the Assembly enjoyed equality and it was an effective means for maintaining communion and solidarity in the community. The idea of the Church as a community or fellowship was kept alive through the yogam. The bishop does neither confer sacred orders nor absolve from ecclesiastical censures without the official request of the community which submits the formal petition to the bishop after assembling in the church and hearing the request of the candidate to sacred orders. In matters of major importance, people of the neighbouring parishes assembled.
For very important cases, all the parishes of the kingdom were invited, and at other times all the parishes of the whole diocese. Fr. Paulinus of Bartholomew, who was a Carmelite missionary in India, calls it a ‘republican system of government. He wrote: “These Christians constitute a kind of Christian Civil Republic”. When the rights of a particular parish were threatened, other parishes come together to defend it. The parish priests and elders judged and settled all cases. Thomas Paremakkel (1787 – 99) challenged the colonial and autocratic attitude of the Western missionaries by pointing out the decisive role of the Palliyogam in the church. “What is the reason for uttering these words that you had never uttered before……….If our church assembly wants to accept you, it will. If it does not, you cannot make it do so by force. This inability to make us accept you should stop from uttering any more proud words to anyone”. All these documents reveal to us the time-honoured tradition of the collective responsibility of the Thomas Christians.

4.7.2 The Archdeaconate

In the ecclesiastical system of the Thomas Christians, the position of the Archdeacon was of unique importance. The Bishop was the centre of authority in the early church. The Malabar Church also preserved the same tradition. But the Persian bishops, who came here, attended more to liturgical and spiritual matters, as they didn’t have direct access to the culture and language of the Thomas Christians. The administration of the Malabar Church was effectively organized under the direction of the princely Archdeacon of All India. A document
of the 17th century, recorded by the Italian Carmelite priest Giuseppe Sebestiani, an Apostolic Commissary, points out the unique position of the Archdeacon among the St. Thomas Christians. “Among the Christians of St. Thomas, the position of the Archdeacon is next to the Archbishop. It is a very ancient privileged position, which comes down in succession from the same family. It is a great dignity as it is according to the Greek Church. There is no other indigenous dignity, secular or religious, greater than the Archdeacon who is considered to be the Prince and Head of the Thomas Christians.” The specific role of the indigenous ecclesiastical leader was very helpful for maintaining their unity and ecclesial communion. In the context of the various parishes, which belonged to the different kingdoms, this indigenous leadership of the Archdeacon was of unique importance in the ecclesiastical as well as secular set up of India. The Archdeacon was the indigenous head of the Christian community known as ‘Jathikkukarthavian’. The Seleucian Patriarch, Timothy (780-826), addressed the Archdeacon of the Thomas Christians as the “Head of the faithful in India”. This letter of Timothy the Great confirms that the Archdeacon was generally, honoured as the national head of the community. But, how far and in what sense, this title had to be accepted is difficult to determine from any of the Portuguese documents. In 1518, the Portuguese priest, Penteado, wrote to the king of Portugal that one of the two sons of Thomas of Cana was put in charge of the administration of property and income, and the other in charge of the dispensation of justice. This may be an indirect reference to the institution of the office of the Archdeaconate in India.
A padiyola (document written on palm leaves), which was previously in the possession of the Pothanikat family at Kothamangalam, mentions an Archdeacon in the early years of the 16th century. The document states that in the year 1509, Archdeacon Ittikuriath effected a compromise between two parties contending for the ownership of the two churches of Kothamangalam, allowing each of the parties a church with a 'yogam' (Administrative council). The Padiyola addressed the Archdeacon as Jathikkukarathavian, which means the head of the St Thomas Christian community. The padiyola puts on record the power of the Archdeacon to judge ecclesiastical affairs. Their bishops following the apostolic tradition dictated themselves almost exclusively for fostering the spiritual growth and orthodox faith of the community193.

4.7.3 The Metropolitanate

In fact, however, living dispersed in several kingdoms and principalities of Kerala, the St. Thomas Christians had the independence and autonomy of a Christian Republic united under the direction of their Metropolitan and Archdeacon194. The Metropolitan was but a figurehead, while the Archdeacon, as the ex-officio regional head of the St. Thomas Christians, was the real ruler. The Metropolitan and the Archdeacon had exclusive competence over all civil and criminal cases involving the St. Thomas Christians and could pass even death sentence in places like Cranganore and Quilon. Before the local kings, they were the ones to represent the Christians in all important matters. Their consent had to be obtained before the kings could levy any tax on the Christians or enlist Christian soldiers in their army. A
Portuguese document, written between 1780 and 1786, speaks of the important position of the Archdeacon. “The Archdeacon…….. is the first among the seventy-two princes of Perumpadappil; the said Archdeacon is, according to custom, the man to crown the king in order that the king may be recognized as king; the coronation consists in this that the Archdeacon puts a gold cross on the neck of the king, and the king must wear this for five days before he is called king of Perumpadapil”\textsuperscript{195}. Their bishops were great ascetics and were held in high esteem and given a very exalted social status. The Archdeacon was accepted as one of the princes of the kingdom enjoying an important role in the decision-taking process within the community and also in their relations with other communities. There are many references in the writings of the missionaries to the fact that the Archdeacon was giving advice to the kings in matters pertaining to the Christians\textsuperscript{196}. Podipara concludes, “From the information furnished by the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, we know that the Archdeacon was the prince as well as the political, social and religious leader of the Syro-Malabarians”. The Archdeacon was considered a chief of priests. The East Syrian traditions presented him as the head of the ministry, the superior of every ecclesial order, the spiritual father and teacher of the faithful, the director, visitor and governor of the churches, the ecclesiastical judge, the confidential vicar of the bishop, etc. The office was permanent and was conferred for life term\textsuperscript{197}. The Archdeacon was elected by the community and confirmed and appointed by the bishop\textsuperscript{198}. In the Malabar Church, the Archdeacon enjoyed greater authority than the East Syrian Archdeacon in both spiritual and temporal matters. The intermittent absence of
the bishops made the Archdeacon, the chief administrator of the Malabar Church. As there was no native bishop in Malabar, the St. Thomas Christians always depended upon the East Syrian ecclesiastical hierarchy for bishops. Since the foreign bishops were not familiar with the language, customs, culture and socio-political set up of the land, they had to depend upon the native Archdeacon for every detail of administration. Hence, they contented themselves with spiritual matters only. Valignano S.J, in his letter to his Superior General, dated September 16, 1577, says that the Archdeacon was the local man; he was even more powerful than the Archbishop. He adds that it is the Archdeacon who did command, govern and maintain the archbishopric. According to Valignano, the Archdeacon wrote to him that the entire Thomas Christian community rested on his shoulders both in spiritual and temporal matters. The Bishop and the Archdeacon, to formulate or update the discipline of the Church, convoked diocesan synods jointly. For example, the Synod of 1583 was convoked by Mar Abraham, the then Archdeacon, in order to make reforms in liturgy and discipline. In the case of the Synod of Diamper, Archbishop Menezes followed the Archdeacon. The Archdeacon presided over the General Assembly of the community and took decisions for the welfare of the entire community. It was he who fixed the amount of each general need of the community. Sometimes, he assumed the role of a judge in religious matters. In ordinary cases, he could take decisions and in matters of importance, a jury assisted him. All categories of persons in the diocese were subordinate to him. He took care of the clerics and decided the number of clerics each church could support. He examined the candidates to priesthood
and proposed them for ordination. In civil matters, too, he enjoyed certain powers.

As noted earlier, the Archdeacon exercised his full powers as the head of the community in the absence of bishops in the diocese. Cardinal Gesuald describes the condition of the diocese of Angamali after the death of Mar Abraham, “In the said city of Angamali, there is an Arch-episcopal church which has an Archdeacon, and the jurisdiction of the Archbishop used to be exercised by the Archdeacon.” It is evident that the traditional Archdeacon enjoyed full authority in the community. The Archdeacon also had considerable influence among the non-Christians, especially before the local kings.

With regard to the origin of the Archdeaconate, it is generally accepted that it was a Chaldean institution. The Chaldean bishops were assisted by Archdeacons, Chorbishops in the government of their churches. The help of such assistants was all the more necessary for the bishops from abroad. Since they were inexperienced in local affairs, they had to depend upon someone who knew the language, custom, religious-socio-political set up, etc. of the country. According to German W., the Archdeaconate of India was instituted at the initiative of Thomas of Cana, who arrived at Cranganore in 345 A.D, from the Middle East. To the zeal of this Thomas is attributed the reorganization of the then dwindling community of the St. Thomas Christians. The Church was reorganized under the pastoral care of the bishop, who had accompanied the foreign colony, and an archdeacon from among the native Christians. It was then determined that the Archdeaconate
should be the first dignity in the Church of India after the episcopate, and that it should be in the family of Pakalomattom in hereditary succession\(^2\).

The bishops were spiritual, mostly content with spiritual leadership, i.e., liturgical celebrations, conferring of Sacred Orders, hierarchical communion, teaching of Sacred Scriptures, etc. They were following an austere asceticism and their abstention from administration helped them to keep up their spiritual leadership. There seems to have been a contiguous chain of Seleucian bishops coming to India. The Indian Church was practically autonomous. Their Metropolitan was known by the title “The Gate of All India”. The Thomas Christians were not used to any centralized administrative structure of the monarchical pattern at the universal level in the Church.

5 Chapter Division

Besides the Introduction and the Conclusion, this thesis contains Six chapters. The introduction provides the chapter divisions, research design, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, approach to study, the source of the study, review of literature and methodology and style of format and the method employed in the composition of this work. It attempts a study of the origin and growth of Christianity in Kerala in the pre-Portuguese period and the advent of Christian families from Syria and other countries to Kerala, particularly the arrival of Cana Thoma and people from Persia to Quilon. This chapter also deals with the tradition of the St Thomas Christians. It gives an account of the growth of Christianity in Kerala, missionary activities, the political sway of the Kerala chruches in the kingdom of Villiarvattom,
the relation between Kerala and Persian churches, the rise of Nestorianism, and the visit of Marcopolo and the life of St. Thomas Christians of India in the middle ages.

Chapter I traces the historical background of the Reunion Movement. It deals with the division and various denominations of the St Thomas Christians after the revolt following the Kunankurishu Satyam. As a result of this schism in 1653, the St Thomas Christian community of Kerala separated into two groups, viz, majority party and minority party. This chapter analyse the causes of this schism, and gives an account of the St Thomas Christian denominations and the historical background of the reunion.

Chapter II examines the various reunion attempts made by both Catholic and non Catholic organisations and the part played by Jacobites and Catholics to negotiate with the Holy See for promoting reunion. Among the leaders of the period was Dr. Joseph Cariattil, Paremmakal, Mar Dionysius 1 to IV, and Thachil Mathoo Tharakan whose contributions in the reunion dialogue was very important. But the sudden demise of Dr. Cariattil paved the way for the failure of reunion scheme. The attitude of the Rome towards the reunion was sympathetic.

Chapter III discusses the career of Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiry and his efforts for Reunion. He founded the Jathyaiyka Samgham, which provided a common platform for the St Thomas Christians to work together in social and educational fields, and initiated the spirit of Christian Ecumenism.
Chapter IV gives a picture of the St Thomas Christians and their inter-church relations with other organizations. Therefore, the relationship between the various denominations also enriched the development of Ecumenism.

Chapter V shows the successful reunion movement of Mar Ivanios, then Jacobite Metropolitan of the Bethany. He and his supporters rejoined the Catholic Church on 30th September, 1930. Mar Ivanios contributed a new spiritual vision in the capacity as the head of the Syrian Catholic hierarchy. His unique contribution to the socio-cultural and political realms of Kerala, while shepherding the Archdiocese of Trivandrum, will remain an object lesson for generations.

Chapter VI deals with Ecumenism as a new road to the reunion. Before we deal with the teachings of the Churches on Ecumenism, we would like to explain the term Ecumenism and its development in the present atmosphere, especially among the various St. Thomas Christians.

The last portion of the thesis entitled the conclusion, which is summing up of the findings of the preceding chapters. The discussions on church unity will bear no fruit if we don’t agree on a common concept of the church.

The chapters are divided into numbered sections and sub-sections for easy readability. End notes are given for each chapter.

6 Research Design

6.1 Statement of the Problem

The aim of this dissertation is to study the Reunion Movement among the St Thomas Christians during the 19th and 20th centuries in
its historical perspective. Hence, the proposed work tries to address the following questions.

1. How did the church participation in the reunion movement affect the St Thomas Christians as a divided people?
2. What were the important causes for the division among the St Thomas Christians? What were the prevailing hindrances to the Reunion?
3. How did the reunion movement bring all divided Christians into the unity of one fold and one shepherd, as it existed prior to the 16th century?
4. Was there any regional affinity, before the division of the Churches in Kerala?
5. Did the St. Thomas Christians have any racial, cultural, linguistic and national differences?
6. How far was the Reunion a real reunion?
7. How can the churches of Kerala with different concepts hope to achieve unity?
8. How are the different concepts to be reconciled?
9. Has the encounter between the churches in the ecumenical movement brought to light any general solutions?

6.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are:-

1. To make an indepth study into the life of the St Thomas Christians in the pre-Portuguese period. An attempt is also intended to evaluate
the development of this community in Kerala, its nature, organisation, social and religious conditions, doctrine, liturgy and relation with other churches.

2. To study how, before the advent of the Portuguese, the St Thomas Christians in Kerala were a single community, and how they were divided afterwards. The history of the St Thomas Christians from an early period of the Christian era up to the Portuguese period is a common possession of all Christians in Kerala. The story of the Kerala Church is continuous.

3. To assess the various attempts of the St Thomas Christians to regain the lost unity.

4. To make an exhaustive study of the efforts of Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiry for the reunion of the divided Christian communities through the Jathyaiyka Samgham (The Syrian Christian National Association).

5. To examine the reunion realized among the Syrians in 1930 and the establishment of the Syro-Malankara hierarchy under the leadership of Mar Ivanios in 1932.

6. To assess the significance of the inter-church conversations of the St Thomas Christians, from the ecumenical perspective.

7. To deal with Ecumenism and its development in the present atmosphere.

6.3 Hypotheses

The study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. The St Thomas Christians were only one community before the arrival of the Western colonial missionaries.
2. The unity that existed during the first quarter of the 16th century almost completely vanished in the next few centuries of the western colonial rule. This was entirely due to the imposition of Latin rule and latinization policy of the Portuguese.

3. The Western colonial missionaries opposed and blocked every effort to reunite the divided St Thomas Christians.

4. The persistent and relentless fight of Dr. Cariattil, Fr. Emmanuel Nidhiry and finally Bishop Mar Ivanios convinced Rome of the need for granting union. Thus Cariattial and Fr. Nidhiry envisaged the Reunion Movement but it failed. But the successful attempt of Mar Ivanios was more important than the previous attempts. As a result of the successful Reunion with the Catholic Church, Mar Ivanios’ long struggle for Reunion came to an end. But complete reunion was not yet achieved. Even now, the rest of the dissident St Thomas Christians remain to be reunited. But there are certain hindrances to the reunion, mainly related to the material aspects of the church. The St Thomas Christians are even now a microscopic minority, but they are all in power in politics. They thought that they were not in a position to reunite with the Mother Church. If they reunite they fear that their property and all their wealth would go into the hands of the Mother Church. That is the big problem they are facing today.

7 Approach to the study

Since the study of the Reunion Movement among the St Thomas Christians 19th and 20th centuries is made from the historical perspective,
it calls for a historical, analytical and interpretative approach. The examination of the historical background of the St Thomas Christians will serve as a key to the subsequent investigation into the Reunion Movement. The investigation will bring out factors that promote or inhibit Reunion. The Reunion of 1930 was a partial realisation of the continuous efforts of St. Thomas Christians for more than 300 years. The structural evolution of the Malankara Catholics reached a level of progress with the establishment of a hierarchy. The Malankara Catholic Church remains a model for communion among the Malankara Churches as well in the Catholic Church. The Malankara Catholic Church is a bridge between the Catholic and other Malankara Churches.

8 Reasons for the study

The principal reason for taking up this study is the researcher’s personal interest in the subject and the conviction that such a study is valuable from a historical point of view. The author of this dissertation has the privilege of belonging to the community of the St Thomas Christians of Malabar, and he also entertains a sincere desire to learn the truth about the various stages in the evolution of the Reunion Movement.

9 Methodology

The study is largely historical, and it supports the main assumption of the thesis. The style is mainly descriptive, with occasional comments where the ideas have to be placed in a theoretical perspective.
Notes and References


3. Such a position is held by all those who deny the apostolate of St. Thomas (and of St. Bartholomew) in any part of India and attribute absolutely no value to the Acts of Judas Thomas or to the references, in other works of early centuries, to India. This attitude proceeds, it seems, from the assumption that, in the state of communications then prevailing, a Palestenian Jew would not be likely to travel to India in the first century A.D. C F. C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (1960) p.14.


6. Veeradian Pattu has remained oral rather than written for a long time. It was in the possession of a Hindu caste from which it takes its name and the St. Thomas Christians gave presents for the singers on certain occasions. That it is the property of non-Christians is significant.

8. Keralolpathies are treatises on the origins of Kerala or Malabar as the word signifies. There are different versions and recensions and it is difficult to assign any definite date to any of them.

9. An important place today where there is a shrine dedicated to St. Thomas, which attracts many pilgrims especially during the week after Easter. A few popular pieces of information about this place and shrine will be found in St. Thomas 19th Century Souvenir, Malayattoor 1972 (Malayalam, 1972).


11. Hyppaulus is an Egyptian mariner who found the shortest route to India by sea in a ship, with the help of the Trade wind. It was in A.D.45.

12. Western business people.


32. Tippu Sultan was the king of Mysore who invaded Kerala in 1789.


41. Bernard of St.Thomas, *The St.Thomas Christians*, 2 vols (1916-1921); Brown; ECI; E.R.Hambye, “The Syrian Church in India” (1952) and “Medieval Christianity in India :1 The Eastern Church” (1972)

42. Merchant cum missionary from Cana who reached India in A.D 345.

43. Mundadan, *op.cit*, p.90.

44. C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, Delhi, 1961, p.28.


47. Zoroastrianism is a Persian religion founded by Zoroaster and Zend Avasta is their bible.


49. Bishop of Edessa.

50. Four hundred Syrians comprising Mar Joseph, priests, deacons, men, women and children.
51. C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, I.S.P.C.K., Delhi, 1961, p.29. “From the date of the death of St. Thomas the faithful diminished little by little in our country. At that time, St. Thomas appeared in a vision to the Metropolitan of town of Edessa” and said to him “Wilt thou not help India? and he was also appeared to Abgar king of Edessa, who was the King of the Syrians and then by order of the king, the bishop three hundred and thirty six families composed of children and grown up people, clerics, men and women, came to India under the leadership of Thomas the Cananite, from Canan, which is Jerusalem. All these sailed in the sea and entered Coringalare, our country. They inhabited it by special permission from the king Shiramon Pirumal who was ruling India at that time. All this took place in 345 A.D. From that time, the church of our country spread in all directions, to the number of seventy-two churches.”

52. Roman Emperor from A.D 306 to 337.

53. It was an important synod which met in the year A.D 325, which discussed the state of various churches founded by the disciples of Jesus Christ.


56. Ruler of Malabar.


60. Firth, *op.cit.*, p.34.


64. E.M Philip, *op.cit.*, p.70.


68. By this grant a piece of land in Cranganore to the extent of 264 elephant cubits was made over to Thomas, with special social privileges, remission of certain taxes, and lordship over certain classes of low caste artisans. It was received on Saturday the 29th March, A.D. 345.


75. C.B. Firth, *op.cit.*, p.32.


79. K.V. Koshy, *St. Thomas and the Syrian Church of India*, ISPCK, Delhi, 1999, p.34.


82. C.B. Firth, *op.cit*, p.30.


84. *Ibid.*, p.75

85. David Daniel, *op.cit.*, p.44.


87. King of Venad and a vassal of Sthanu Ravi of the Chera dynasty.

88. David Daniel, *op.cit.*, p.44.

89. K.V. Koshy, *op.cit.*, p.38.


91. C.B. Firth, *op.cit.*, p.32.


100. K.V. Koshy, *op.cit.*, p.33.


109. Belongs to Antioch and became the bishop of Constantine on 10th April 428.

110. According to which “Christ is double in nature and single in dignity” He taught (1) duality of the two natures (Godhead and manhood) and the integrity of each in Christ; (II) the notion of the Theotokos (bearer of God) which would assume that the Godhead in itself had been borne, which was certainly worse than heretical, and (iv) the Godhead dwells only a garment of the Godhead and the latter was not born of Mary at the same time with the former, but only passed through Mary; it did not suffer along with humanity but it remained impossible in the suffering of man.”


117. Firth, *op.cit.*, p.25.


123. *Ibid*.


129. Ibid., p.87.
130. V.C. Samuel, op. cit., p.86.
131. F.E. Keay, op. cit., p.28.
133. V.C. Samuel, op. cit., p.88.
142. C.J. Fuller, op. cit., p. 58.
146. Mundadan, op. cit., P. 192.


150. Ibid.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid.


157. Ibid., p. 201.


159. *Cathay and the Way Thither* III, 216.


161. *Indian Antiquary* for 1924 pp185-195, 219-229, 244-251.


165. Ibid., p. 160.

168. E.M.Philip, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas*, pp. 73-75.
177. Quoted from *Indian Antiquary* 1924, p. 259.
185. Xavier Koodappuzha., *Christianity in India*, p.71.


192) E.R. Hambey, some Eastern evidences, p. 189.


197) A.M. Mundadan, History, p. 18.


