A Brief History of the Catholics in Kerala:

The Origin of Christianity:-

We do not have sufficient historical data to account for the origin of Christianity in Kerala. The books on the history of Christians very much depend on legends and hypothetical conclusions and certain traditions, and not on historical facts. L.W. Brown deliberately keeps quiet about the history of Christians in the early centuries and begins his book "The Indian Christians of St. Thomas" with an account of the Church in the 16th century.\(^1\) The authors who tried to construct the early history of Christians in this country are divided. Those who hold the Apostolic traditions believe that the foundation of the Church in India was laid by St. Thomas, the Apostle or even by two Apostles: St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew.\(^2\) The other viewpoint supports the traditions of Syrian immigration which attributes the origin of Christianity in this country to the enterprise of Christian merchants and missionaries of the East Syrian or Persian Church.\(^3\)

\(^{1}\) L.W. Brown, The Indian Christians of St. Thomas, Cambridge, 1956, p.11.


Those who support the Apostolic traditions also admit the fact of migration of Christians; but not vice-versa. The supporters of the traditions of Christian migration question the historicity of the Apostle's preaching in India. "There is a strong claim though not supported by any existing records or evidence, that St. Thomas the Apostle brought the faith to India. This claim is based entirely on the apocryphal "Acts of Thomas" and the Malabar and Coromandel Traditions".  

We do not attempt for a historical exploration as to the origins of this community, as facts are not sufficient for the same. Moreover, for a study of caste elements in the Catholic community what people believe (the traditions they hold) are more important than the actual history. Therefore our account depends on a few books on the history of the Christians since they contain the popular belief of the people.

The Apostolic Origins:


4 Acts of Thomas is an apocryphal work written probably at Edessa or somewhere in upper Mesopotamia towards the close of the second or third century.
5 John Arakkal & Co., op.cit., p.18.
6 Mundadan, op.cit., pp.15-16.
According to the living tradition of the Indian Christians orally transmitted from generation to generation, St. Thomas came to India by sea and landed at Cranganore about the year 52 A.D. He converted many high caste Hindus in Cranganore, Palayur and Quilon. He visited the Coromandel coast, crossed over to China and then returned to India where he organised the Christian community of Malabar, appointing a few priests from among the leading families. He established a few places of worship and suffered martyrdom on or near the Little Mount in Madras. His body was brought to the town of Mylapore and was buried in a holy shrine he had built.7

St. Bartholomew, another Apostle of Christ, is also believed to have preached the Gospel in India. There is no living Indian tradition to the Apostolate of St. Bartholomew; but two ancient testimonies - one by Eusebius of Caesarea (early 4th century) and the other by St. Jerome (late 4th century) - support his apostolate in India. But the large majority of the authors are sceptical about this fact.8

Christian Community after the Apostolic Times:

As we depend on traditions for the history of Christians during the Apostolic times, so also have we to draw our sources from tradition till the end of the 15th century. We have also the

7 Ibid, p.18.
8 Ibid, pp.21-22.
testimonies of certain visitors to this country as to the existence of a Christian community here. Theophilus, apparently a native of the Maldives, who was sent in the year 354 to India by Emperor Constantine and Theodore, a monk, who visited India in the 6th century, have reported about the existence of the Church and community at Mylapore and the monastery of St. Thomas in India. In the 16th century varying reports were available to the Portuguese about the origin of St. Thomas Christians. According to one, the origin is entirely the fruit of the Apostolate of St. Thomas on the Malabar coast, and according to another, those who were converted by St. Thomas on the Coromandel Coast migrated to Malabar and still a third version may combine both these opinions and say that the community of the Christians of the Malabar Coast consists of Christians converted by the Apostle Thomas in Malabar and of those who emigrated from Mylapore.

Relations with the Church of Persia:

There have existed some kind of relations between the Christians in India and Persia. Two important events are specially recorded on these relations - the arrival of a group of Chaldean Christians in the company of Thomas of Cana, 345, and the coming of another group headed by Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz in the 8th or 9th centuries.

The division of the Christian community into northists

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9 Ibid, p.22.
10 Ibid, p.23.
and southists - two endogamous groups - is attributed to the arrival of Thomas of Cana. The Catholics of the East sent a merchant called Thomas of Jerusalem (Thomas of Cana) to inquire into the state of the Malabar Christians who were reported to have faced crisis in their faith and left without priests and other leaders. After the visit, Thomas reported of the sad plight of the Malabar Christians to the Catholicos, who was very much moved. Therefore Thomas started for Malabar with the bishop, priests, deacons, men, women and children, from Jerusalem, Bagdad and Nineveh (Mosul). They landed at Maliankara in 345 A.D. The inhabitants of Malabar gave a grand reception to them. Sharhun, the king of all Malabar, gave them land as long and broad as they desired. He invested them with royal honours inscribed on pieces of copper. They erected a Church at Kurammakular (Cranganore). They built a new town where 472 families settled down. 11

From that time onwards the Syrian Fathers used to come to the town by order of the Catholicos of the East because it was he who sent the Syrians to other parts of the world until they were superseded. These Syrian Fathers governed the diocese of India and Malabar. Thus, in tradition, Thomas of Cana appears as the link between the Persian and the Indian Churches. 12

The Southists and the Northists:

There are different versions about the origin of these

12 Mundadan, op.cit., p.27.
two endogamous groups in the Christian community. According to Gouvea, Thomas of Cana had two wives in two residences, one on the southern side of the river dividing Cranganore and the other on the northern side of it. The Southists claim that they are the progeny of Thomas from his legitimate wife and therefore had preserved the racial purity. So they remain strictly an endogamous group even today. They believe that the Northists are the descendants of Thomas from the concubine, who lost their racial purity. But the Northists retort by saying that the Southists are the descendants of Thomas of Cana from a native servant maid.\(^\text{13}\)

Some authors think that the division into Southists and Northists originated not only because they descended from two wives of Thomas of Cana, but also because they lived on the northern and southern sides of Cranganore.\(^\text{14}\)

According to Roz, the Northists alone can be called St. Thomas Christians, since they alone were the descendants of those converted by St. Thomas. These Christians were very much interested in increasing the membership of their Church, receiving converts from any section, while the Southists remained strictly endogamous for the sake of racial purity. When some people who were serving the sons of Cana went over to the other party, probably through conversion, there developed antagonism between the groups. The Southists even labelled the others 'Negroes'. This was followed by many more quarrels and disputes.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) John Arakkal and Co., op. cit., p. 25.
According to Ananthakrishna Ayyar, the Southists are fairer in complexion and have finer features than the Northists and boast of their descent from the parent Church with the genuine Syrian blood in their veins. 16

The account given above of the migrant Christians contradicts in certain aspects with the traditions of St. Thomas Christians. If the whole Syrian community descends from Thomas of Cana, the claim of the St. Thomas Christians that they were native Christians, converts at the hands of St. Thomas the Apostle, is to be rejected. According to Malabar tradition, there was a well organised Syrian community with priests and bishops. If this is true, there was no need of the coming of a group of Christians with priests under the leadership of Thomas of Cana for the assistance of the native Christians. "Finally, we are hard put to it to understand how a whole colony of people - men, women and children with priests and a bishop - came to Malabar just to help a community suffering from lack of priests and bishops. The reason given for immigration would seem to be an attempt to harmonize the tradition of immigration with St. Thomas tradition." 17 The authors continue to say that "much about the Thomas of Cana tradition is no doubt legendary. Not much historical value can be given to the copper plates of royal privileges said to be granted to Thomas of Cana, for the plates are not extant. To make matters worse, the so-called translators are at variance. But historians are unanimous about a Syrian

16 Ayyar, 1926, p.50.
immigration to Malabar. The Tarisa Church Plates and the Persian Crosses found at Kottayam and Mylapore give this tradition about the Syrian immigration some historical value.\textsuperscript{18}

**Medieval Christianity in India:**

The Indian Church was influenced both by the Eastern and Western Churches during the medieval period. The development of the Indian Christian community under the influence of the East Syrian Church headed by the Catholicos - Patriarch of the East - who resided either in Iraq or in Western Iran, is to be specially studied. The Catholicos used to send his delegates to India to visit the scattered communities here, to unify, strengthen, and to rejuvenate them. At the time of Catholicos Ishoyab II (628-46) priests and bishops were sent to India. The Church of India obtained its first Metropolitan See sometimes in the 7th or 8th century, presumably in Kerala.\textsuperscript{19}

At least on two occasions Christians migrated from Iran or Iraq to Kerala and joined the then existing communities. A certain bishop Thomas led the first group and reached Kerala about A.D.774/795. The second group was led by two bishops: Proth and Sabor, who landed at Quilon either in A.D.813/825 or a century later in A.D.910.\textsuperscript{20} We have some remnants as a record for the existence and missionary activities of the Christians during these centuries. Thus the two copper plates grant of

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid, p.27.

\textsuperscript{19}Hambye, Medieval Christianity in India; "Christianity in India" (ed.) Perumalil and Hambye, Prakasam, 1972, p.31.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid, p.31.
King Ayyan of Venad over to the Tarisa Church of Quilon, the Persian Cross at the Great Mount at Mylapore and the oldest of two such crosses at Kottayam, the St. Thomas shrine at Mylapore and several Churches in Kerala especially the one in Quilon, are supposed to belong to this period.  

Bishop Jacob was the Metropolitan of India in 1301, under Catholicos Yahballaha III (1281-1317) according to the only preserved Syriac manuscript written in Kerala during the medieval period. It could be assumed that the hierarchical relations between the Indian Church and the Catholicate was kept alive during this period.

The majority of the Indian Christians were concentrated in Kerala, more precisely between Cranganore in the north and Quilon in the south. During the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries the reputation of the St. Thomas shrine at Mylapore was much enhanced so as to attract even Musulman devotees and Western Christian pilgrims to it. It also led to the spread of some attractive but legendary stories concerning fantastic miracles performed by the Saint's hand.

The Metropolitan who stood as the living intermediary between the Catholicos and the Indian communities, had authority both in temporal and spiritual matters. He was appointed and ordained by the Catholicos to whom he had to send taxes and free gifts towards the support of the Catholicos' house.

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21 Ibid, p.31
22 Ibid, pp.32-33.
The Archdeacon, the right-hand man of the Catholicos, was a local priest, who enjoyed considerable influence in the community. Moreover, the Archdeacons were entitled in India, to grant dispensations of all kind to appoint clerics to churches and to prefer candidates to Holy Orders. He was regarded by the local rulers as the secular superior of the Christians, since he administered the Church properties.

"By the 16th century, the office had become somewhat hereditary in the Pakalomattom Clan of Kuravilangadu". The priests of the community also "came from the same families and some of these at least could trace back a sacerdotal genealogy to St. Thomas himself". Here we do find a parallel to the Hindu caste system where the priests were always from the superior caste, the Brahmins. Priesthood was very much respected in the Christian community and it was often traditionally concentrated in certain high status families during this period.

Though vernacular was not used in liturgy, participation of the faithful in it was highly remarkable. They "knew enough of the liturgical language so as to enjoy a measure of participation not only in the Eucharist but also in the canonical prayers. Their devotion to the Church-building, as symbol of the Church itself and to the cross was outstanding. Processions were popular with those gorgeous red, green, white and gold umbrellas still in use today, with the priests carrying

23 Ibid, p.34
hand-crosses, and on great festivals with an especially bound and much revered copy of the Bible.²⁵

They were hard working farmers and some of them were merchants. A good many of them had a military tradition. They kept good relations with the local rulers and enjoyed a high social position. At the end of the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church in India was still in its infancy. In course of time, the tiny Catholic colonies at the court at San Thome and on the shores of Ceylon disappeared from history, while Kerala boasted all through of a Catholic community.

The Origin of the Latin Church:

There are two opinions regarding the origin of the Latin Church in Kerala. According to some, the present Latin Catholics of Kerala are the descendants of the converts by Portuguese missionaries, while others hold the view that the Latin Catholics are the Latinised St. Thomas Christians. The second opinion has been further elaborated and vigorously supported by those Latins who were not happy with the low social status attributed to them in the Christian community. The presence of Latin Christians forming a great majority in certain places where the St. Thomas Christians flourished at one time is brought forward as an argument for the fact of Latinisation of St. Thomas Christians.²⁶

²⁵Ibid, p.36.
Even before the arrival of the Portuguese, India was visited by some foreign missionaries whose activities were followed by conversion and formation of a Latin community. Joannes De Maringoly, Papal Legate who visited Malabar in 1348 testifies to the existence of a Latin Church at Quilon; but Fr. Placid maintains the view that the Latin rite Christians who were in Malabar in the XIV century became extinct before the arrival of the Portuguese. L.M. Pylee also supports this view saying that the Latin rite appears to have disappeared from India and along with it from Kerala before the arrival of the Portuguese.

Thomas Thayil, in his thesis on the "Latin Christians of Kerala: A Study on their Origin", presented and defended in the Ecclesiastical History Faculty of the Gregorian University of Rome in 1960, argues that the origin of the Latin Christians of Kerala could not be attributed to Latinisation of the ancient Syrian Christians of St. Thomas. He feels that the attempt of missionaries during the 16th century to latinise the Syrian Christians was not very successful. "Our survey has shown that the great attachment of the St. Thomas Christians to their priests and bishops stood against any successful Latinisation. The facts we have examined make us conclude that to look for the origin of the Latin Christians of Kerala we must

27 Mathew Vattakuzhy, the Three Rites in Malabar, The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia, op. cit., p. 52.
search somewhere else than in the Latinisation of the ancient Thomas Christian attempted by the Latin missionaries. This origin we find in the successful missionary work of the missionaries who came with the Portuguese to Kerala.  

John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan Missionary with Nicolas of Pistoia a Dominican, landed at Mylapore in 1291 on their way to China. They were impressed by the simplicity and friendliness of the people and peace that reigned in the land. They decided to make that place a midway stop for the China-bound missionaries and gradually, if possible, a centre of apostolate. John of Monte Corvino baptised more than one hundred people in and about Mylapore. Before leaving for China he had to part with his friend who met with a sudden death. In 1306 he appealed to his brethren in Persia to cater to the needs of Indian missions but there was no one to take it up immediately.

Jordan Catalini of Severac a French man, is the founder of the Latin missions in India. He was also the first Latin bishop in India. In 1320 he started with four Franciscan Friars Minor, for India and landed at Thana, Bombay. The few European merchants and the Nestorian community of Thana extended a warm welcome to these servants of God. According to a request to go to Broach in Gujarat, where a number of catechumens were waiting to be instructed and baptized, Jordan started

for Broach, but had to stop at Sopara where there was a Church and a Christian community. He instructed them and baptized about ninety people and administered the Eucharist to them. Before he returned to Thana his companions became martyrs for Christ. This massacre changed the whole situation providing better facilities for Jordan to continue his missionary work. In about six months he baptised a hundred and fifteen persons in Broach alone and thirty-five between Thana and Sopara. Jordan thought that many more could be converted if there were more missionaries to work. At his request, five Dominicans were sent to Kanara, Mysore, Malabar and Travancore. By about 1328, there were more than ten thousand conversions. The occasional outbreak of persecutions took the life of many a Dominican. After the death of the last of his Dominican companions, Jordan proceeded to the papal court at Avignon and convinced the Pope of the need of establishing regular ecclesiastical government in the new mission field and sending more missionaries to the area. Pope John XXII appointed Jordan as the first bishop of Quilon. As a bishop he continued his missionary activities with more zeal and many more conversions took place which was not tolerated by the Muslims. Jordan was stoned to death at Thana by the Muslims probably in the year 1336.

The last missionary to visit India during the middle

31George M. Moraes, Latin Church. Christianity in India, op. cit., p.43.
ages was the Papal Legate, John De Maringoli, a Franciscan. He arrived at Quilon probably in 1348 and spent sixteen months in the country. The efforts of the Latin missionaries during the Middle Ages were stupendous if we consider the material and moral difficulties they had to encounter. 32

The Portuguese in India:

The Christian community in India underwent drastic changes under the influence of the Portuguese. In 1498, Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India, and landed at Calicut. Thousands of merchants and soldiers came to India every year from Portugal. Many of them were not married and others had to be separated from their wives during their stay in India. This gave rise to the development of marital relations with the native women. Alfonso de Albuquerque the conqueror of Goa (1510) was the most zealous promoter of marriages between the Portuguese and the native women. Thus a new set of half breeds originated called Eurasians.

Missionary work continued hand in hand with other business activities. Between 1535-1537 a group of Paravas on Fisher coast was converted to Christianity who sought protection under the Portuguese against the threat of the Mohamedans. Some other groups followed the very same procedure. In 1444, a group of Mukkuvas in Travancore become Christians.

The Portuguese colony in India was officially established

32 Ibid, p.45.
in 1505 and Goa was conquered in 1510 which became in 1530 the capital of the Portuguese in India. Cochin was their headquarters till that time. The important centres of the Portuguese activities were Goa, Cochin, Bassein, Diu (Gujarat), Chaul, Quilon, Colombo in Ceylon, Tuticorin, Nagapatanam, San Thome-Mylapore etc. 33

The Portuguese Padroado (Patronage):

Padroado or Patronage is a distinction given to Portugal by the Holy See as a recognition of her missionary activities. "This distinction resolved itself in concrete terms into the honour accorded by the Holy See to the Patron of the right to present a candidate for a bishopric or other ecclesiastical benefice in the newly discovered territories and the corresponding duty to protect the Christians in the regions wherever Portugal would establish herself." 34 According to the promulgated bull, Portugal and Spain had sole right to sail the sea, to conquer the new lands that had been or would be discovered and to take possession of their riches under the condition that they would be Christianised and that full responsibility would be taken for the financing of all phases of cultic life. 35 In 1514, Pope Leo X by his bull "Dum Fidei Constantiam", placed the new territories in India and all houses of worship already

34 George Mark Moraes, A History of Christianity in India, op. cit., p. 123.
35 Wicki, S.J. The Portuguese Padroado in India in the 16th century and St. Francis Xavier, op. cit., p. 49.
erected there or which would be erected, under the jurisdiction of the vicar of Tomar and all Churches and ecclesiastical benefices were reserved to the king of Portugal. The territory of India was separated from the Diocese of Funchal in 1534 and Goa became the seat of the new bishopric. In 1558, Goa was given the status of an Archdiocese, Cochin and Malacca being its suffragans. The diocese of Cochin included the Dravidian South and Bengal whereas the Molucas, China and Japan were placed under Malacca. Thus Cochin became the second Latin diocese of the Padroado in India. The importance of Cochin as the seat of a Hindu king, as a harbour of great importance for the total development of India, and as a place of a large number of new Christians is mentioned in the bull establishing Cochin as a diocese. The first bishop of Cochin, Don Jorge Temudo O.P., came to India in 1559 and governed his see till 1567. His successor Don Henrique de Tavora, O.P., as bishop of Cochin visited his diocese going as far as Quilon and fishery coast.

Different religious congregations worked for the propagation of faith and for the general welfare of the people under the Padroado. Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and the Augustinians were the four important religious congregations that worked in India. Their activities in the educational field starting from the introduction of printing press, establishment of schools, colleges, hospitals and orphanages are to be specially commended.
Some of this Portuguese Mission Legislation had lasting consequences in the country. When slaves of Mohamedans or Hindus became Christians, they had to be sold to Christians for a suitable sum. Many of the laws enacted provided a relatively high position to the Christians with regard to money and power. Official positions were reserved for Christians against the Brahmins. The law of inheritance was changed in favour of daughters in cases where there were no male heirs. Non-Christian orphans were to be educated in Christian schools and were later to make a personal decision as to which religion they desired to belong. Converted Christians in Goa were to have the same privileges as the Portuguese there. The construction of Pagodas to worship idols and the practice of non-Christian ceremonies were forbidden under the pain of punishment. Thus the over-zealous activities for the propagation of Christian religion created an antagonism between Christians and non-Christians. The sincere activities of the Portuguese kings had both merits and demerits. "It must be stated that, generally speaking, during this period when the Portuguese kings held sway in India, the relations between Church and State were quite good. It was precisely during those years that the foundations of the Latin Church in India were laid." 36

St. Francis Xavier:

Taking into account the impact of his missionary

36 Ibid. pp. 60-61.
activities in India and the number of conversions made by him, St. Francis Xavier is known as the second Apostle of India. The history of the Latin Catholic community of Kerala is indebted to him for its establishment and growth. The majority of the Latin Catholics are the descendants of the converts from the fishery coast at the hands of Francis Xavier. "The natives of the coast - the Paravas - were poor and ill able to defend themselves against tyranny and aggression. When the Portuguese first came to India and indeed down to a short time before the mission of St. Francis Xavier among them, they had been made subject by the Mussalmans - retaining, however, their own nominal chief - and fisheries had been carried on by them for the benefit of their masters." 37 The work of the missionaries among these poor illiterate class of fishermen liberated them from many a socio-economic bondage.

The missionary works of Francis Xavier among the fishermen of Kerala took place during a few visits he made to different parts of Kerala followed by a brief stay at each station. During his first visit in 1542 he spent about an year, laboured untiringly, trying to convey to them in their own mother-tongue the most important truths of the faith and baptizing children. "At the end of 1544 Xavier went to Travancore when with the permission of the local authorities he

37 The Hand of Xavier in The Pearl of Fishery Coast or a Summary of St. Francis Xavier's Marvellous works, Letters and his A B C for Missionaries, South India; Compiled by a Son of St. Francis Xavier, Hoe & Co., Madras, 1920, p. 1.
baptized within a month over 10,000 Mukuva fisherfolk, and thereby laid the foundation of Latin Christianity in Travancore". 38

In Quilon, the Saint built a Church and the fame of a miracle he wrought by raising a dead man to life brought about many conversions. 39 In 1552, he came back to Cochin and baptized the king of Maldives who had previously been instructed by Jesuits. 40 During the year 1548-49, new Jesuit houses mushroomed in Cochin, Bassein, Quilon and S. Tonu (Mylapore). These houses were all very modest and could be maintained without stable financial backing. Lancilotto, Antonio Criminale and Henrique Henriques were few other important missionaries who stood by Francis Xavier and worked in the Fishery Coast. In 1549, Francis Xavier was appointed the Provincial of the Jesuits in India and the East, with all the powers and privileges of the General of the Jesuits except that of admitting members of the society to the profession of the four vows. 41 In 1552, he left India for good and reached the Far East where he ended his life in the same year.

By founding schools at important places, Xavier contributed to the spread of education in India. He took special interest in the poor and the needy. He had special concern

40 Ibid, p. 79.
for the growth of a native clergy and catechists. His attempt to communicate Christian faith in the local languages of Tamil and Malayalam is to be specially appreciated. "It must be admitted that he knew very little about the genius and wealth of the Indian culture. Actually his contacts with India were only through the coastal regions of the south-west and south-east and with its less educated people."  

Missionaries belonging to the different religious congregations continued their work actively after the death of Francis Xavier. In 1557, Cochin became a diocese. Many more conversions took place in Cochin and parishes were established within the walled town, which were entrusted to the diocesan clergy. In 1560, the Franciscans built a Church at Vypeen Island and a second one in 1606. Quilon, at this time, was inhabited both by the Syrians and Latins. Diocesan priests were in charge of the main churches and Jesuits and Franciscans maintained residences within the fortified area.

Though Christian Theology does not support the caste system, conversion to Christianity did not automatically take off the caste distinctions and discriminations. Many missionaries had to tolerate it and even support it for the sake of avoiding further problems in their apostolate. DeNobili who tried to Indianise himself that he may be accepted easily by

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42 Wicki, S.J., op.cit., p.64.
43 Meersman, OFM. Development of the Church under the Padroado, 'Christianity in India', op.cit., p.69.
44 Ibid, p.70.
the people of Madurai Mission, had to accept the caste practices. "Like St. Paul, who did not attempt to abolish slavery, so also did DeNobili not insist on breaking down the caste distinctions. This would only come about with a deepening of Christianity and a change in society." 45

The Syrian Christians under the Portuguese (16-17 centuries).

The Syrian community underwent drastic changes under the Portuguese influence especially in preserving their cultural identity. The relation between the Syrian Church and the Portuguese Padroado may be viewed as struggle for the unification of the whole Catholic Church eliminating all the differences from the Portuguese point of view and for preservation of their own culture from the point of view of the Syrian community. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese the Syrians were living as if in two worlds: the geographical, political and social world of the Malabar and the ecclesiastical world which was more or less Chaldean in character. Though the Syrians could preserve a strong Christian tradition an account of their dependence on the Chaldean Church for ecclesiastical administration, it prevented them from developing an Indian Christian culture with an Indian Theology and Indian Liturgy. 46 The Syrians had the chief of the Villarvattom dynasty as their special protector-king and their socio-ecclesiastical life was organised under the combined leadership


46 Mundadan, The Eastern Church - 16 and 17 centuries; "Christianity in India", op.cit., p.82.
of the Metropolitan, who was always a foreigner and the Archdeacon who invariably was a national leader. Thus the Portuguese found the Syrian Christians enjoying a high social status parallel to that of the high caste Hindus with unique ecclesiastical and social customs. The contact with the Portuguese opened a third world – that of Western Christendom, to the Syrian community.

The initial relations between the Syrian Christians and the Portuguese was peaceful and hopeful of mutual benefits. The Portuguese thought that they were doing a wonderful mission in bringing the Western and Eastern Churches closer and therefore were very happy. The Syrian Christians found a powerful and strong protector in the Portuguese and had a spontaneous relief and joy. But sooner or later the hopes were shaken and the aspirations had to be relinquished when the relation became one of tension and mutual fight.

It seems that the attitude of the Portuguese towards the Syrians was one of superiority since they were convinced that their's was the true form of Christianity to which all the others should conform in order to be perfect Christians. The local customs and particular practices of different rites were considered adulterations and abuses and therefore are to be eradicated. They did not hesitate to ask the Syrians bluntly, to conform to the Portuguese in everything, arguing that as the Mohammedans and Jews, wherever they lived had their own uniform customs and practices, so also the Christians.
The Thomas Christians, on the other hand, were proud of their practices which were sacred to them. They were ready to tolerate the Latin Church and its customs, but were not ready to relinquish their own and to accept the other. They believed that the universal Church could very well contain many local Churches with different customs and traditions. "The Law of Peter" and "The Law of Thomas" could co-exist in perfect harmony. Moreover, the Thomas Christians were ready to respect the Portuguese as their brethren in Christ, but not willing to accept them to their own community, which was a closed one like a caste group. Therefore the Portuguese were "strangers" and "outsiders" to the Syrians and perhaps the high caste Hindus of Malabar were closer to them. This attitude is basic to the understanding of the inter-group relations of the Syrians and the Latins. Fr. Penteado's (a Portuguese diocesan priest) letter to the Portuguese expresses the mentality of the Thomas Christians. "The Christians of St. Thomas do not care for the communication with the Portuguese not because they were not happy that they are Christians as we are, but because we are among us. As regards their national customs their will is corrupted by their priests who say that just as there were twelve Apostles, even so, they founded twelve customs".

Cranganore, where the Portuguese erected a fort, was a

48 Ibid, pp.86-87.
centre of the Syrian Christians. In 1540, the Franciscan Friar Vincente de Lagos started a seminary at Cranganore, where systematic attempt to Latinize the Syrian Christians was made. Though the seminary was started for the Syrian students, the training was given after the Portuguese model and Syriac was not taught there. The Latinised priests who came out of this seminary were never assimilated into the community, but were kept out, treated just as the other Latin priests. In 1577, the Jesuits opened a seminary in the neighbourhood where Syriac also was taught. This seminary was so well known for its academic excellence that even priests used to attend lectures on Moral Theology to update their knowledge. The policy of Latinisation and bringing the Syrians under the Padroado Bishop was pursued even in this seminary. Since some Jesuits were for preserving the Syrian tradition and culture, the transformation could not be sudden. The Third Provincial Council of Goa (1585) enacted certain decrees concerning the Syrian clergy and their formation. A translation of the Pontifical and Sacramentary from Latin to Syriac for the use of the Malabar Church was recommended. The Chaldean bishops were asked to present their letters patent to the Archbishop of Goa before proceeding to Malabar.

The Synod of Diamper:

The Synod of Diamper has a unique position in the history of the Malabar Christians in widening the gap between the Syrians and Latins and in creating feelings of antagonism between these
communities because of the forced Latinisation of the Syrians. Though the Archbishop Menezes had the intention of eliminating all the heretic and schismatic beliefs and practices from the Syrian community through a process of unification of the Catholic Church, it resulted in aggravating the problems.

The Synod was held in the Church of Diamper (Udayamperur) in 1599. The validity of the Synod is questioned by authors on the ground that it is convened without authority and conducted not according to Canon Law and was never approved by Rome. It ratified and consolidated the Latinising efforts of the Portuguese which had begun early in the 16th century.

Roz S.J. and Campori S.J. who were present at the Synod, have challenged the validity of the Synod and pointed out the illegality of its procedure in their letter to the General of the Jesuits and to his assistant in Portugal.

The decrees of the Synod deal with the abuses which Menezes had found during his visitation and also a collection of positive teachings of the Church with detailed regulations for the Church administration. The decrees intended for the reformation of Church were for the elimination of Nestorian doctrines and customs of Hindu origin. All the books were called for correction and when it was difficult, they were

49 Ibid, p.96.
totally destroyed. Nestorius was condemned and the Roman Church was declared as the only true Church.

The Hindu customs which the Portuguese thought inimical to Christianity were forbidden for the Christians. Certain ceremonies at marriage and the attendance of Hindu musicians in Church during Mass were forbidden. No reverence must be paid to idol and heathen shrines. Superstitious practices, belief in omens were forbidden. Even the laws of inheritance, dress, drink and such like practices were modified.  

The Archdeacon's thesis of an essential difference between the 'Laws of Peter' and the 'Laws of Thomas' was condemned in the third session of the Synod. The Syrian Church was declared subject to the Inquisition at Goa which had no previous dealings with the St. Thomas Christians. The final decrees asked the King of Portugal to take charge of the Christians. All the vicars were asked to keep a copy of the proceedings of the Synod to be read regularly to the people so that the Church might be governed by them in all things. The Synod had arbitrarily severed all the ties of the Indian Church with the Chaldean Patriarch. Bishops under the Padroado jurisdiction were appointed to rule the St. Thomas Christians. The first bishop thus appointed was Francis Roz who ruled them from 1600-1624. Stephen de Britto (1624-41) and

51 L.W. Brown, The Indian Christians of St. Thomas, op. cit., p. 36.  
52 Ibid, p. 37.
Francis Garcia (1641-1659) followed him. Archdeacons George of the Cross and Thomas Parampil (Thomas de Campo) assisted them respectively. Now the Portuguese Jesuits were the superiors and the Archdeacons became their subordinates. The conflict between the Portuguese and the Malabar Christians under the leadership of Archdeacons continued, now and then taking a violent outbreak.

The Coonan Cross Oath (1653)

In 1652, there arrived at Mylapore one Ahatallah, originally hailed from the Jacobite Church of Syria, later converted to Catholicism. Till his death, it seems he remained faithful to the Catholic allegiance. The Syrian Christians took him as a Patriarch or Metropolitan sent from the East Syrian bishop with the approbation of the Roman Pope. But for the Portuguese he was a Nestorian or East Syrian intruder. The Archdeacon went to Cochin with a number of soldiers and demanded to see the Patriarch (Ahatallah) and to examine his credentials. He even said that he would not demand the release of the Patriarch, if his credentials were false. The Portuguese did not consider his request and deported the Patriarch to Goa. A false rumour was spread that Ahatallah was drowned by the Portuguese off the coast of Cochin. Being emotionally charged by these happenings, the Syrian Christians moved to Mattancherry near Cochin, tied a long rope to the

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Mundadan, The Eastern Church, 16 and 17 Centuries, op.cit., p.99.
open air cross called the "Coonan Cross" and, holding the rope, swore they would never be under the Paulists (Jesuits). This was a demonstration caused from the deep seated conviction that the right of the Archdeacons to local autonomy was flouted. 54

They further convened a meeting at Edappally and then again met at Alengadu on May 22, 1653 and swore on the Gospel that they would not obey the Archbishop Gracia S.J. Twelve priests imposed their hands on Archdeacon Thomas calling him Archbishop Mar Thomas I. The assembled were made to believe that they were empowered to this by the order of Ahatallah whose letter (a falsification) was also read aloud. 55 Many did not approve this step. The Pope sent two groups of Carmelites headed by Joseph Maria Sebastian and Hyacinth of St. Vincent to settle the dispute between the Archdeacon and the Archbishop. Sebastian succeeded to win back many to obey the Roman Pope and to accept the Portuguese Archbishop.

In 1662, the Dutch defeated the Portuguese and captured Cochin and forced all other Europeans to leave Malabar. Sebastiani then consecrated Alexander Parampil as titular bishop, who was one of the councillors of the pseudo Archbishop and even closely related to him by blood. The pseudo Archbishop was solemnly ex-communicated; who brought down a foreign

Jacobite bishop by name Mar Gregory in 1665, with the intention of receiving from him valid episcopal consecration. Mar Gregory taught them Jacobitism and made them deny the Roman Primacy. Those who accepted the new faith (Jacobitism) were and are still called 'Puthenkuttukar', while those who kept their old faith were and are still called 'Pazhayakuttukar'.

The Malabar Christians under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda:

To organize and to unify the work of evangelisation and to promote adequate formation of future missionaries, Rome decided in the 17th century to send missionaries directly to places where the Portuguese had jurisdiction. The foundation of the Congregation for the Propaganda of faith or 'Propaganda' in 1662, and starting of the urban college as a seminary of the Missions in Rome in 1627 were the decisive steps according to the new policy of Rome. Most of the missionaries sent out by the Propaganda in the following centuries had come out of those institutions. When the Portuguese Padroado failed in many places in carrying out its mission, it was highly necessary to have a central body immediately responsible to the Pope for directing Mission work all over the world.

During the following centuries we find continuous struggle between Portuguese Padroado and Propaganda with regard to the issue of jurisdiction. Since the policy of the Propaganda was not different from that of the Portuguese Padroado in

56 Ibid, p.156.
57 Fr. Dominic, OCD, The Latin Missions under the Jurisdiction of Propaganda, Christianity in India, op.cit., p.102.
their relation to the Malabar Church, we do not find any significant change in the relation between the Syrians and Latins of Kerala.

"The relations between the Discalced Carmelites (O.C.D.) and Malabar (Kerala) were provided by the revolt of St. Thomas Christians against the Padroado missionaries, i.e., the Jesuits. Fr. Mathew of St. Joseph OCD started a house for his order at Chathiath in 1673 and later on at Verapoly. Because of the generosity of the Dutch East India Company, many more Carmelite missionaries could come and settle down in Malabar since 1676. "Though the main task of these apostles was to look after the Catholic St. Thomas Christians, they soon dealt with the Latin Catholics."59

St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye:

St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye, has been the bone of contention for the Syrians and the Latins from its beginning and it continues to be the same today. In 1764, the Propaganda decided to start a seminary common to Syrian and Latin clerics, in the Vicariate of Malabar. It started to function in 1766 in two places, separately for Latins and Syrians, at Verapoly and Alengadu respectively. In 1774, the Syrians and Latins were brought together to Verapoly according to the decision of the Propaganda. In 1866, the Seminary of Verapoly was raised to the category of a major seminary for

58 Ibid, p.112.
59 Ibid, p.112.
the whole of Malabar. The place and premises were not suitable for a seminary. Therefore it was shifted to Mangalapuzha in 1932. As the number of students increased, a new Philosophical section was opened at Carmelgiry in 1955. 

"The bishop of Cochin is no longer the administrator of the place and the seminary is under the Sacred Oriental Congregation as it was before also; it is, as before, entrusted to the Carmelite missionaries, and was declared Pontifical in 1964". Being an important major seminary for the training of clerics in Kerala, the Latins and the Syrians continue their fight in controlling its administration and in capturing the exclusive possession of it by either party. Though Syrian and Latin clergy were trained under the same roof for more than a century, because of the pressure of the general caste structure and the type of relations cherished between the Syrian and Latin Churches, the institution could not be a solution to the inter-rite rivalry in Kerala.

"Latin-Syriac Rite"

The first Catholic Directory of India published in 1887 contains an important statement with the new concept "Latin-Syriac Rite". "The Malabar Vicariate was erected on the 3rd December of 1659 and it embraced all the churches of the Latin-Syriac and Syro-Chaldaic rites". "The expression, no doubt, succinctly and happily describes a great historical circumstance

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60 George Koilparampil, Dropouts, Department of Social Science Research, Loyola College, Trivandrum, 1974, p.29.
that had come to exist, namely, the adoption of the Latin rite by a section of the original Syrians". 63 In 1887, the Archdiocese of Verapoly was divided into the Archdiocese and Syrian Vicariates. "Those who were following the Chaldean rite having been placed, for administrative purposes, in the latter, the residue retained in the former were clearly the "Latin-Syrians" and they do really continue in that jurisdiction to this day". 64 Moreover, when the Padroado Diocese of Cochin was reorganised, certain churches of the Latin-Syrians of Verapoly were transferred to it, by the Apostolic delegation.

"Logically, therefore, it follows that the congregation of the Archdiocese of Verapoly, together with the parishioners of those few churches that were transferred to Cochin, constitute the distinct community designated as the "Latin-Syrian", i.e., the community that originally followed the oriental or Chaldean rite, but subsequently became branched off into a distinct social entity by the adoption of the Western or Latin Rite." 65

The definition of the concept 'Latin-Syrian' adopted by the very same community in an address presented to the then Delegate-Apostolic of India in 1914 is as follows: "Latin-Syrian is a shibboleth where the word Latin is only a qualifying epithet without any conjunctive force in the compounding. It simply

64 Ibid, p. 60.
65 Ibid, p. 61.
means one of the Syrian nations following the Latin rite as distinguished from a pure Latinite of foreign extraction or of later indigenous conversion". 66

The search for and the attempt to establishing a Syrian origin, even after the adoption of the Latin rite and its practice for centuries, is a proof for the relative high social status the Syrian Christians enjoyed in the social system.

Malabar Christians in Dutch Times

The Dutch found a large community of Syrian Christians spread all over Malabar, enjoying free exercise of their religion and a high social status. Their social position which had been very high when the Portuguese arrived was not worse when the Dutch held their sway in Malabar.

There were non-Syrian Roman Catholics also in the State who are called "Inland Christians" by Rheede and "New Christians" by Moens. 67 Native Malabarees of all races were being converted to Christianity who were grouped into seven parishes under the bishop of Cochin. They became subjects of the Dutch East India Company when Cochin was conquered by the Dutch. They were mainly fishermen and soldiers called Lascars who rendered much service to the Dutch company. To escape the oppression by the Hindus, they requested the Dutch to allow them


to live in the Company's islands and gardens as tenants. Since they were faithful, brave and friendly, the Dutch were happy to protect them and to accept their service in return.

Topass Christians:

The Topass Christians were the sons of Indian mothers and fathers from diverse European nations. The word "Dwibhashi" (interpreter) is sometimes applied to them as they acted as interpreters between Europeans and Indians. This job could be efficiently done by them since they knew one of the European languages in addition to their mother tongue.

L.K. Ananthakrishna Ayyar attributes a different origin to the word Topasses. "The community of 'Three Hundred' or 'Munnuttikkar' are the Latins or 'Topasses' so named from the wearing of hats". It is true that they wore a small hat, while others who were not of European descent wore the 'romali', a white turban of the finest muslin. "The Topasses are said to have sprung from the old Portuguese settlers and the low caste women of the soil. Quite a large number of them were said to have been the descendants of the enfranchised slaves with whom the Christians of the Romish persuasion were also included. They rather belong to the native than to the foreign element. It is said that they were proud of their descent from the Portuguese and Spanish families and bore the name of De

68 Ibid, p.44
69 Ayyar, op. cit., p.257.
Silva, Rodriguez, Pinto, Gomez, etc. They called the Portuguese 'our people', but were nevertheless looked upon with contempt. Their ancestors are said to be extravagant and fond of show". 70

They usually went bare footed. They engaged themselves in different trades. They were carpenters, brick layers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, tailors and shoemakers. They excelled in making decorations for the Roman Churches on feast days, also for wedding and other special occasions. Some of them were cultivators and soldiers. "But as a rule, they were lazy and worthless people who did not know any trade and refused to work." 71

Struggle for Independence:

The deliberate attempt for Latinisation, the conflict between Padroado and Propaganda jurisdiction, the attitude of the foreign missionaries to the natives, etc., made the Thomas Christians to work for autonomy. The situation was further complicated by the rivalry and dissent among the different groups of the missionaries themselves. The Syrian Christians, who were fed up with all these developments, met in a council at Angamaly in 1787 and drew up a list of grievances against the Carmelites. The two priests deputed were Joseph Kariattil, a former alumnus of Propaganda College, and his friend Thomas Paremakkal who was working under the Padroado, to seek redress

70 Ibid, pp.257-258
71 Punnan, T.I., op. cit., p.44.
of their grievances. They wanted to get Rome's assistance for the reunion of the Catholics and the Jacobites and also an Archbishop for Cranganore. Kariattil was elected Archbishop of Cranganore in Lisbon and was duly consecrated according to the Latin Ordinal. He came back, but only to die in Goa, exhausted by the voyage and likely by dysentery. 72 Thomas Paramakil became Governor of the Archdiocese, until his death in 1799. From Angamaly, his last residence, he exercised such an influence as to have, for a while, nearly all the Syrian parishes under him. The Syrians wanted to appoint again an Archdeacon and to obtain an Eastern Prelate, even a Chaldean, in case Paramakil did not become bishop. Hanna Hormez, the chief Catholic Chaldean bishop, gave the episcopal order to a Malabar priest, Paul Pandari. Though he was accepted as bishop in Changanacherry, he was not successful. 73

The Padroado jurisdiction was discontinued from 1838, in which year Pope Gregory XVI, suppressed the Sees of Cranganore and Cochin and put all the faithful under the Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. The Portuguese authorities did not submit to this decision, and the defenders of the Padroado were in virtual schism for some time. 74

In 1831, the foundations for an indigenous religious

73 Ibid., p.177
74 Mundadan, History of the Thomas Christians in India to the Present Day, St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia, op.cit., p.50.
community, the present Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, was laid at Mannanam. The role played by some eminent Carmelite Tertiar­ies, especially by Emmanuel Nithiry and Cyriac Elias Chavara for the autonomy of the Malabar Church is to be specially men­tioned. Fr.Cyriac Elias was appointed Vicar General for the Syrians with extraordinary powers to deal with the schism of Roccors.

The first positive step Rome adopted towards the inde­pendence of the Catholic Syrians was to appoint in 1877 Fr. Marcellinus Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic with special charge of the Syrians. In 1887, the Syrians were completely separated from the jurisdiction of Verapoly and were constituted into two Vicariates Apostolic: Trichur and Kottayam, with Adolf Medlycot, an English Prelate and Charles Lavingne, a French Prelate as Vicars Apostolic. A reorganisation of the Vicariates into Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry took place in 1896 with native prelates: John Menacherry, Aloysius Pazheparampil and Mathew Makil respectively. Unfortunately the appointment of Mgr.Mathew Makil for Changanacherry, who belonged to the Suddist group, did not please the majority of his flock, the Nordists. Though the Malabar Christians were fighting for a common cause, the internal difference between ethnic groups could not be easily forgotten. This was the only reason why in 1911 Pope Pius X gave to the Suddists a special Vicariate, making Kottayam as its centre. Thus the existence of caste difference among the Catholics was formally and canonically confirmed by the Catholic Church. In 1923, the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy was constituted with Ernakulam as the Metropolitan See.
With the elevation of the Vicariate of Malabar into the Archdiocese of Verapoly in 1886, when the Catholic Hierarchy of India, Burma and Ceylon was established and with the separation of the Syrian Catholics from the Archdiocese in 1877, the Latin Church of Malabar attained its full distinctiveness. The Latin community came under the indigenous regime in 1933 with the appointment of late Archbishop Joseph Attipetty who was the first Indian bishop of the Latin Rite. The community grew rapidly and today it is one million strong. The Catholics of Kerala are today completely divided into Latin and Syrian communities for administration. The Syrian dioceses are under the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Latin dioceses under the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. The Syrian dioceses are further divided into three provinces: Ernakulam, Changanacherry and Trivandrum. The dioceses under Ernakulam are Ernakulam, Trichur, Tellicherry, Kothamangalam, Mananthavady and Palghat. Changanacherry, Kottayam, Palai and Kanjirappally come under the province of Changanacherry. The diocese of Kottayam has a special jurisdiction over all the Suddists wherever they may be, thus it remains exclusively a caste group. The two Syro-Malankara dioceses - Trivandrum Archdiocese and Tiruvalla - come under the province of Trivandrum. The seven Latin dioceses, namely, Verapoly, Alleppey, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon, Trivandrum and Vijayapuram are under the province of Verapoly. Thus a glance

at the present classification of the Catholic community would reveal the fact that all the ethnic groups were to be given due recognition with separate jurisdiction.

After the attainment of autonomy, the Syrian Christians were very active in their missionary apostolate and the community had tremendous growth in all its spheres. They could not restrict their activities to Kerala. A great number of religious men and women went out into different parts of India in search of new pastures. It was from 1962 that the Holy See began to entrust to the Syro-Malabar Church, certain mission regions in North India. Thus now there are seven missions under these missionaries, namely, Chanda, Ujjain, Satna, Sagar, Jagadalpur, Bijnor and Rajkot. 76

"In the present century, the Syrian Catholics of Malabar have shown an unusual vitality. They supply hundreds of priests and religious to other parts of India. However, even in evangelisation they do not seem to be entirely free from communalism. On the other hand, the aggressive attempts to bring new converts, not only into Christianity, but also into the Syrian version of it, reflect partly at least, the still strong caste sentiments of the conservative section of Kerala's Syrian Catholics." 77

We may conclude this chapter on the Catholics of Kerala with a brief account of the three dioceses: Cochin, Ernakulam

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76 Mundadan, History of Thomas Christianity in India to the present day, The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia, op.cit., p.50.
77 John Arakkal & Co., Alienation or Liberation, Jeevadhara, 1977, 37, p.53.
and Verapoly, from which we have drawn the sample for our study.

**Diocese of Cochin:**

It is the first diocese that was erected in Malabar, after the advent of the Portuguese. Pope Paul IV by a bull "Pro-Excellenti", dated 4th February 1558, made Cochin a diocese under the Portuguese Padroado. Till the year 1819, not less than 30 bishops have ruled the diocese. But on account of conquest of Cochin and expulsion of the Portuguese by the Dutch, the scarcity of Portuguese missionaries began to be felt very keenly in the 19th Century, and therefore by the Brief "Multa Praeclara" of Pope Gregory XVI, in 1838, the See of Cochin was temporarily annexed to Verapoly. In 1886, diocese of Cochin was reorganised and was separated from Verapoly by Pope Leo XIII. In 1952, the present diocese of Alleppey was formed and separated from Cochin. The same year, the diocese of Cochin came in the hands of indigenous clergy, Alexander Edezhath being its first Indian bishop. The territory of the present diocese is situated between the Arabian Sea on the west, and the Archdiocese of Verapoly on the east, the parish of Cruz Milagres on the north and Kuthiathode on the south. It has an area of 236 sq.k.m. with a Catholic population of 136,000, distributed in 24 parishes. Fifty-three diocesan priests and ten religious are working in these parishes. The religious societies working in the diocese are First Order of Discalced Carmelites, Order Friar Minors, Canossian Daughters of Charity, Congregation of the Third Order of Mount Carmel and Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. The diocese has 28 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 13 high schools, 4
technical schools and 1 training school. The social welfare activities of the diocese have a creditable record. It is running 5 hostels (74 inmates), 1 hospital (30 beds), 2 dispensaries, 8 orphanages (439 inmates) and one creche. 78

Archdiocese of Ernakulam:

The Archdiocese of Ernakulam was established as a Vicariate in 1896 by the Bull, "Quae Rei Sacrae" of Pope Leo XIII. The diocese includes many places of historical importance, essentially related to the growth of the Malabar Church. Diamper, where the famous Synod of Diamper was convoked by Dom Menezes, Archbishop of Goa in 1599, Chendamangalam where existed the ancient Vaippicotta Seminary of the Jesuits, Puthenpally where the Spanish Carmelites conducted a seminary for the Syro-Malabar Clergy, Kottakkau, Kokkamangalam and Malayattoor - places associated with the Apostolate of St. Thomas, Angamaly, the headquarters of the first Syrian Archdiocese of Kerala (estd. 1565), Edappally, where a session of the Synod of Diamper was conducted, Koonammavu where Fr. Chavara Kuriakose Elias worked for a number of years, Pallippuram where the native Carmelites conducted a seminary, etc., are within the area of the diocese. 79

It has an area of 1500 k.m. with a Catholic population of 387,217. There are 264 diocesan priests and 157 religious working in 117 parishes. In 125 chapels Holy Mass is celebrated for the faithful every Sunday, in addition to the established

parishes. There are 197 shrines, 23 monasteries and 130 convents in the diocese. 2743 nuns and 52 brothers take part in the various activities of the diocese. It has made a record of distinction in the field of education, by running 3 colleges of Arts and Science, 1 training college, 1 training school, 30 high schools, 56 upper primary schools, 105 lower primary schools, 3 nurses training schools and 46 technical and industrial schools, 13 hostels and 13 boarding houses. There are 7 orphanages (523 members) for boys and 20 (813 members) for girls. There is a leper asylum with 213 beds and 17 houses of refuge with 731 inmates. The diocese has 33 hospitals and 11 dispensaries, the total number of beds being 2825. There are 11 printing presses and the diocese owns a Catholic daily and 13 Catholic weeklies and monthlies.80

Archdiocese of Verapoly:

The Vicariate of Malabar was established in 1659 by Pope Alexander VI. This Vicariate was transformed into the Archdiocese of Verapoly in 1886 by Pope Leo XIII. On the 19th March, 1887, the Syrians of the diocese were placed under a separate administrator, Marcellino Bernard of St.Teresa, OCD. In the year 1930, the Archdiocese came to the hands of the Indian clergy with the exception of the head of the administration. Dr. Joseph Attipetty, the first Indian Archbishop of Verapoly and the head of the Latin hierarchy of Malabar, was

80Directory, the Archdiocese of Ernakulam, 1976.
nominated on 29th November, 1932, and he took charge of the diocese in 1934.

The diocese has an area of 4800 km. with a Catholic population of 233,291. The 57 parishes and 61 mission stations are looked after by 121 diocesan priests and 80 religious. There are 723 sisters and 34 brothers working in the diocese. It has 20 hostels (1451 inmates), 5 hospitals (483 beds), 5 dispensaries, 21 orphanages (1127 inmates) and 1 creche.

Activities of the diocese in the educational field are to be specially commented upon. There are 117 elementary schools, 38 middle schools, 18 high schools, 5 colleges, 36 technical and industrial institutes and 4 training schools. It has 1 Malayalam daily and 1 weekly and 2 monthlies. There are 3 printing presses owned by the diocese.

Conclusion:

From this brief sketch of the history of the Catholics in Kerala, there emerges a definite trend in the inter-communal relations of Syrians and Latins. Their relationship was one of continuous competition and conflict. Until the Latin community had its own local leaders, it was protected and supported by the Western Latin missionaries. Historically the Latins and Syrians have distinct origin to which their traditions attach superior and inferior statuses. 'Earlier the date of conversion to Christianity, greater the social status', seems to be a generally

accepted trend in their beliefs and behaviours. Hence the Syrian Catholics claim a position superior to that of the Latins in the social hierarchy.

The pre-Portuguese Church in Kerala was chiefly Syrian. The Latin community has its members from Hindu converts and Latinised Syrians. The Portuguese missionaries tried every means to Latinise the local Syrian community under the pretext of maintaining uniformity in the whole of the Catholic Church. The Syrians were ready to tolerate the emergence of a Latin community at the hands of the missionaries, through conversion, but they were totally unwilling to abandon their native customs, beliefs and worship system for the sake of an ideal uniformity. When Latinisation was imposed on them by those Latin Prelates in power, the Syrians violently reacted to it and the difficulty to accept an alien culture, stimulated their community sentiments and deepened their 'we' feeling. They became fully aware of the need for liberating themselves from the hands of the foreign missionaries and thereby making the Syrian Church independent with their own priests and bishops. Thus the relation between the Syrians and the Latins became tense and occasionally it had certain violent outbursts. This liberation struggle led to the declaration of autonomy to the Syrian community by Rome. But the struggle between Syrians and Latins continued and was further extended to the socio-economic, political and educational fields. Thus the Syrian-Latin rivalry is not a recent phenomenon, but it has its origin traced back to the early history of the Catholic Church in India. It is in this background that we examine the present Latin-Syrian relations.